Oifig an Rialaitheora Pleanála
Office of the Planning Regulator

Energy Infrastructure: The Challenges and Opportunities

Training Webinar – 13 March 2026

Q&A Sheet

Speaker: Jennifer Boyle	
Question	Response
Is there adequate existing Grid Infrastructure to transmit the existing and proposed renewable energy generation from the West/Northwest region (north of Galway) to the main grid?	Overall, there is not enough existing infrastructure for the targets that we need to meet. New infrastructure is going to be vital to meet those targets but there is a really key role to play for existing infrastructure that's in place and the country as a whole, needs to use existing grid infrastructure as much as we can and this relates to maintenance and uprate works to increase the capacity for electricity to be transmitted on those lines. However, new infrastructure is going to be needed throughout the whole country and as we can see, renewable energy comes from different parts of the country and we need to accommodate those and get electricity to where the demand is as well, which is true for the whole country. So, absolutely, new infrastructure is needed as the grid isn't sufficient as it is.

Speaker: Leah Kenny	
Question	Response
Can EirGrid/ESB share datasets for the electricity network so that we can include these within our own GIS internal systems? **These would be helpful for policy development and DM planning.**	Yes, certainly and we have shared the existing transmission network, and we also have some of our proposed networks available on GIS. It is also possible for this information to be shared by the ESB, who see it as a two-way street as the ESB sometimes seek spatial data from local authorities as well (Brendan Allen).

Speaker: Brendan Allen	
Question	Response
Could you outline the procedures for engaging with ESB Networks during the preparation of masterplans, and how planners should factor power capacity requirements into the early stages of planning for new neighbourhoods?	We have a Network Planning Team with responsibility for assisting councils with zoning and planning for new development areas, such as the Nass northwest quadrant Plan, which we assisted Kildare County Council with. Feel free to contact Brendan directly at brendan.allen@esb.ie and he will put you in touch with the Network Planning Team. The team will be able to assist with identifying future needs based on the quantum of housing being planned for. If you are organising collaboration workshops, the ESB can attend, bring the right people and talk through requirements and any issues.

Speaker: Brendan Allen	
Question	Response
Local authorities are preparing framework plans for large greenfield areas, many of which are constrained by existing 38 kV and 110 kV overhead lines. But there is not much guidance on how to plan around these constraints……is there recommended guidance we should follow?	ESB Networks staff can advise on issues that may arise at specific locations. 38kv lines are much more flexible and can be undergrounded quite easily. They can usually be undergrounded within estate roads or open space for new developments. The 110kv lines and high voltage infrastructure is however more difficult. This is the transmission system, and it is very expensive to relocate. There are procedures and processes however in place around how this can be done and who pays for it. Contact the ESB for more information.
In terms of ESB infrastructure upgrades, especially in rural areas and following severe storms, is there more of a focus on undergrounding infrastructure to reduce the impact from future storms?	A lot of the rural network will continue to remain overhead. Whilst I understand where the question is coming from, if we have lines going the last kilometre, for example, there could be two houses on that line and the cost of putting that infrastructure underground is just excessive and ultimately these costs are borne by the electricity customer. So, whilst it's understandable and desirable, ultimately a lot of rural Ireland will still be served by overhead networks.

Speaker: Aoife Sheridan	
Question	Response
Fingal County Council seem to have very good structures in place for collaborating with ESB Networks – is there similar collaboration with other utilities and what advice would you have for local authorities seeking to improve their engagement structures?	Yes, we have quite good relationships in Fingal with various companies and wind energy is certainly one that has come up because we're a coastal local authority. Like any relationship, it has been building over time and have been engaging now for 3 or 4 years and it's still moving forward. With other utilities, it can be challenging to get the right people in the room, it is helpful if you can get the contacts for the right people. Once you have the right contacts, then it's a matter of keeping the relationship going. The relationship with the ESB has gone from strength to strength and it's in our mutual interest.

Speaker: Nathan Smith	
Question	Response
How do you address the key concerns of the community in terms of environmental impacts and besides early engagement, is there any other advice?	Matters regarding environmental impact from a project should already have been addressed in documentation submitted by the applicant at the planning application stage, which would inform the decision on whether the proposed development is or is not acceptable. If an application is granted, at the compliance stage, the documentation submitted by the applicant is uploaded onto our system related to the relevant planning application. This is considered by the case officer in a timely manner to ensure that all matters referenced in a condition are adhered to by the applicant. This would include early and, where necessary, regular engagement.

Note: Query received regarding meaning of RFI – Request for Further Information. This can be issued as part of the planning process where further information is required to facilitate the assessment of a planning application.