

EirGrid Draft 2026 Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Do you have any suggested amends or additions to EirGrid's Draft 2026 Stakeholder Engagement Plan?

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on EirGrid's Draft 2026 Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

Cork Chamber represents 1,200 members together employing 130,000 people throughout the city, metropolitan area and county. Our vision is to lead a transforming and ambitious Cork City and County, and our purpose is to unite, represent and support our members and community. At Cork Chamber, our direction is guided by our formal pledge to uphold the UN SDGs, five of which have been identified as priority areas by the Chambers Ireland network. Cork Chamber has also been designated an SDG Champion by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment for 2024 – 2025.

Cork Chamber's advocacy efforts are shaped by the views and priorities of our partners, and are informed by our continuous engagement with members, our Board and key stakeholders in Cork city and county.

We value our continued positive engagement with EirGrid in this context and welcome the opportunity to respond to EirGrid's Draft 2026 Stakeholder Engagement Plan. The plan makes a number of welcome commitments to ongoing engagement and collaboration across sectors; continued engagement with the business community is critically important in this regard. At such a pivotal time for the energy sector and the development of renewables in Ireland, it is vital that all relevant stakeholders have a voice in the development process and that an appropriate balance is struck between the needs of communities, businesses and the State in the context of Ireland's climate targets.

Are there other stakeholders that you think that EirGrid should be undertaking in order to deliver on our core remit and deliver Government renewable energy targets?

As EirGrid takes on its new role as transmission asset owner in the area of offshore wind, engagement via relevant channels and industry groups should be prioritised to ensure cohesion and cooperation. Cork Chamber coordinates the work of the Cork Offshore Renewable Industry Forum (CORIF), which brings together representatives of the offshore renewables industry in Cork to advocate for the key policy and infrastructure enablers needed for Cork to realise its full potential as a renewable energy hub. Continued engagement at both regional and national level with organisations such as CORIF should be prioritised and further developed over the course of 2026, particularly with projects like the Celtic Interconnector and developments under the South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan continuing apace. In this regard, CORIF was pleased to

engage with EirGrid's Powering Up Offshore South Coast team earlier this year. We also welcome the continuing planned engagement with the local community for 2026.

The inclusion of industry as a key target group for stakeholder engagement is particularly welcome, as is the reference to Chambers Ireland as an example of an industry stakeholder group. It is vital that consideration is also given to the role of regional organisations in stakeholder engagement activities, particularly those in locations where EirGrid is undertaking significant projects, such as the South Coast. In addition, particular consideration should be given to engagement with SMEs as a distinct stakeholder group, ensuring that they have access to relevant information on local and national developments.

Do you have any feedback on EirGrid's focuses for effective stakeholder engagement?

Meaningful and transparent engagement is key to successful stakeholder engagement, alongside a commitment to collaboration and innovation. EirGrid's focuses for effective engagement are welcome in this regard. Open engagement at all project phases is critical to the success of any development, and engaging with a broad range of stakeholders is particularly important in the energy sector with so many projects and developments currently underway.

With regard to EirGrid's 2026 stakeholder engagement plans, the emphasis on grid upgrade projects and an accompanying programme of proactive stakeholder engagement is particularly welcome. Building out the grid to facilitate much-needed housing and industrial developments, as well as the expansion of renewable energy, is critical in the years ahead and all relevant stakeholders should be brought along as part of this process.

The focus on the development of offshore wind is also of particular importance, and Cork Chamber supports the aim of working collaboratively in the delivery of offshore infrastructure and the connection of renewables to the grid. Close cooperation with developers, ESB Networks, local authorities and others will be key to the success of offshore developments. Initiatives such as the Tri-Party Forum are particularly welcome in this regard.

EirGrid's emphasis on security of supply is also welcome. Recent geopolitical developments have brought security of supply to the fore as a priority for Ireland's ongoing competitiveness and ability to attract investment and talent.

Finally, EirGrid's focus on sustainability is critically important. All developments in Ireland's energy sector take place against a global backdrop of climate change, the effects of which are having an increasingly profound impact on communities. Integrating effective and meaningful climate action in all initiatives and engagement is vital,

alongside continuous engagement with international counterparts across the EU, in the UK and further afield.

Is there any feedback you would like to provide on EirGrid's methods of engagement including this consultation?

Cork Chamber has engaged with EirGrid through a number of different channels in recent times, including direct meetings and engagement via Chamber-led forums such as CORIF and the Cork Development Forum (CDF). EirGrid's continued commitment to engaging with the business community is positive, with grid capacity and other issues becoming increasingly important for businesses across the country. Such engagement is particularly important at regional level to identify and mitigate specific issues and challenges.

The wide range of engagement initiatives undertaken to date by EirGrid and those proposed in this plan is welcome and essential in order to ensure all relevant audiences are reached. Alongside ongoing engagement with business, industry and other key stakeholders, a continued emphasis on community meetings and effective, accessible communication strategies will be important. Further development of digital engagement methods could be explored in this regard to ensure a multi-channel approach to engagement that reaches a wide range of target audiences.