

ESB Networks,
Three Gateway,
East Wall Road,
Dublin 3,
D03 R583.

29th January 2026

Re: ESB Networks Stakeholder Engagement Strategy & Plan 2026

To whom it concerns,

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on ESB Networks' Stakeholder Engagement Strategy & Plan 2026.

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 recently been appointed an SDG Ambassador by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment.

Our advocacy is shaped by the views and priorities of our partners, and is informed by our continuous engagement with members, our Board and key stakeholders in Cork city and county.

The development of renewable energy and the implementation of sustainable practices are key priorities for Cork Chamber members. Cork Chamber has recently published a comprehensive Sustainability Strategy and Report¹, outlining the Chamber's internal activities and targets in this area, as well as collaboration with members and the wider community to progress sustainability goals more broadly.

In addition, Cork Chamber coordinates the work of the Cork Offshore Renewable Industry Forum (CORIF), which brings together industry representatives from the offshore renewable energy sector in the Cork region to advocate for the delivery of critical policy

¹ Cork Chamber, [Our Dedication to Sustainability: Cork Chamber's Sustainability Strategy and Report](#)

and infrastructure enablers required to progress the development of offshore wind energy in the region at pace and at scale.

Through CORIF and the Cork Development Forum (CDF), Cork Chamber enjoys regular and constructive engagement with representatives of both ESB Networks and ESB Generation & Trading. Cork Chamber also welcomes the opportunity to engage with ESB Networks through public consultation processes and has made submissions to a number of other recent public consultations, including ESB Networks Innovation Annual Consultation.²

We strongly support ESB Networks' commitment to net zero in the years ahead and commitment to deliver a net zero ready electricity network by 2040. Given the fast-approaching climate targets at both national and EU level, it is vital that all relevant stakeholders continue to work together to ensure these ambitious targets are met. Collaboration, across government, industry and communities, is critical to the timely achievement of targets, and in this regard, ESB Networks' comprehensive Stakeholder Engagement Strategy & Plan is particularly welcome.

With considerable investment in the network anticipated under ESB Networks' Price Review 6 plans, Cork Chamber looks forward to continued productive engagement with ESB Networks over the course of the programme from 2026 to 2030, particularly with regard to planned projects in the Cork region. Collaboration regarding energy needs and availability is critical for business customers and growing industries in the region to enable effective future planning and development. Alignment between providers of critical utilities, such as ESB Networks, local authorities, developers and other relevant stakeholders is also essential to meeting government housing targets and supporting ongoing population growth.

The inclusion of Chambers Ireland within the 'Industry Bodies' stakeholder grouping is particularly welcome; consideration could also be given to further developing ESB Networks' engagement with regional bodies such as Cork Chamber to support effective collaboration.

Alignment with other policy frameworks in the broader energy sector should be prioritised to support the transition to net zero. The recently-published Large Energy User Action Plan (LEAP)³ is an important example of the integration of energy and enterprise policy to support economic growth and energy security in the coming years, and continuous engagement regarding plans for developments such as green energy parks co-located with energy supply will be critical to the success of the plan.

² Cork Chamber, [ESB Networks Innovation Annual Consultation 2025](#)

³ Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, [Large Energy User Action Plan](#)

With regard to ESB Networks' focus areas for engagement for 2026, the focus on decarbonised electricity is particularly welcome. Ensuring the successful integration of renewable generation into the network over the coming years is vital as sectors such as offshore wind develop at pace, and continued engagement with stakeholders involved in the renewable sector will be vital to ensure a smooth transition to the increased usage of renewable energy. The Cork Offshore Renewable Industry Forum would welcome increased collaboration with ESB Networks in this regard as the region's offshore wind sector continues to grow.

ESB Networks' focus on resilient infrastructure is also welcome. With increased geopolitical uncertainties, ensuring Ireland's energy security and independence is crucial to the country's continued competitiveness, supporting Ireland's ability to attract investment. In addition, the increasingly pronounced impact of climate change and extreme weather events underlines the importance of continued investment in grid resilience. Investing in sustainable, resilient infrastructure is now both a climate and economic imperative.

Finally, the focus on empowered customers for 2026 represents a timely and important area of focus. With considerable changes expected in the coming years as additional renewables come on stream and further electrification takes place, alongside increased external pressures on energy security, it is important that consumers are brought along the energy transition journey. Information and communication is vital in this regard, and proactive engagement with non-domestic customers should be prioritised over the lifetime of the plan, with a particular focus on Large Energy Users (LEUs) who may have particular concerns regarding energy security and infrastructure, as well as SMEs, many of whom may not have the resources in-house to engage proactively with sustainability measures and energy upgrades. Ensuring that engagement strategies are tailored to different groups such as SMEs and LEUs, and potentially tailored on a regional basis, will be critical to ensure the success of ESB Networks' goal of empowered customers for 2026 to 2030.

In conclusion, ESB Networks' outline of planned public consultations and engagements with stakeholders is very welcome and sets out a clear plan for the period 2026 to 2030. Cork Chamber particularly welcomes the inclusion of planned meetings with Cork City Council's Mission City Leadership Team in 2026, and with the EU Mission Cities National Mirror Group. Large-scale projects like the Mission Cities initiative have a key role to play in progressing decarbonisation in an inclusive manner and should be a core focus for engagement as 2030 and 2040 climate targets approach.

Given the development of offshore renewables in the region, alongside Cork's existing infrastructure, industry and educational offering, the Cork region has a clear role to play in the achievement of national climate and renewable energy targets and should be prioritised in ESB Networks' engagement plans. Considering Cork's excess of available

energy supply and grid capacity, particularly in comparison to other more constrained areas of the country, ESB Networks should also work to raise awareness of the region's positive energy story through its engagement efforts with relevant stakeholders, with the help of Cork's local authorities and key regional stakeholders, including Cork Chamber.

Cork Chamber looks forward to ongoing positive engagement with ESB Networks on shared areas of focus for business customers and the wider community in the Cork region over the lifetime of the strategy.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'CH', is positioned above the printed name.

Conor Healy

CEO