

2 March, 2026

Re: Public Consultation on Eirgrid innovation strategy

To whom it concerns,

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on the Eirgrid innovation strategy.

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.

Reliable, resilient, and sustainable electricity infrastructure is critical in supporting regional competitiveness, economic development, climate action, and social cohesion. Cork Chamber has consistently highlighted, through its National Development Plan submissions, annual Budget submissions, and sectoral consultation responses, the critical importance of strategic energy infrastructure investment as an enabler of balanced regional growth, decarbonisation, industrial competitiveness, and climate resilience.

In recent months, Cork Chamber published its new Sustainability Strategy, which commits to supporting the advancement of climate action and sustainable growth.

Within this context, Cork Chamber broadly supports the ambition and direction of EirGrid's Innovation Strategy and recognises the central role innovation must play in delivering a secure, flexible, low-carbon electricity system.

Furthermore, through our interactions with our partners, members and board, and our engagement with external stakeholders and decision-makers through various forums, including the Cork Offshore Renewable Industry Forum and the Cork Development Forum, it is clear that energy security is a growing concern in the region.

Businesses, developers, and all other stakeholders need to be confident in the security and stability of the energy grid and in their future energy supply to deliver the housing, transport infrastructure, and commercial developments needed in the short-, medium-, and long-term in Cork and across the entire southern region.

As such, Cork Chamber supports significant investment in our energy grid and the wider ecosystem, including offshore and onshore renewables and supporting infrastructure, investment and cooperation with education providers to ensure a pipeline of skills and talent to support and grow these industries, and the adoption of innovative and new technologies where appropriate.

Over the coming years, the ongoing trends towards greater electrification across many sectors, including transport, is likely to have a significant impact on Ireland's electricity network. With the deadline to achieve climate goals approaching and the uptake of EVs and other technologies increasing, sufficient capacity in Ireland's electricity network to support this growth will be required.

Large-scale decarbonisation and electrification projects should be given particular consideration in this regard. In Cork, Irish Rail has ambitious plans for the electrification of commuter rail, while Luas Cork is also progressing at pace. Cork has also been awarded the EU Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities Mission Label, supporting larger decarbonisation projects within the city.

The growth of certain sectors should also be considered. As digitalisation and demand for AI grows, the electricity demands of the tech sector and data centres will also increase. While Large Energy Users (LEUs) such as data centres are regulated by the CRU's LEU Connection Policy and government's Large Energy User Action Plan (LEAP), Eirgrid's innovation strategy should seek alignment with the broader policy framework to ensure the network is as integrated as possible and new developments can be accommodated in a timely manner.

In addition, the growth of renewable energy in the coming years should also be considered. With offshore developments underway as part of the South Coast Designated Maritime Area Plan (DMAP), it is likely that there will be a considerable increase in the level of renewables coming on-stream in the period to 2030.

Q1: Do you agree with the proposed future potential for projects that are ongoing or initiated? Are there any additional considerations EirGrid should make in their plans for next steps?

The focus on digitalisation, system flexibility, data-driven network management, and renewable integration aligns with Ireland's decarbonisation objectives and the long-term needs of the economy. The plan-led approach mapped out in the Price Review 6 (PR6)

consultation process supports the development of industry and housing in the southern region.

Cork Chamber encourages closer alignment between all utility providers, including Eirgrid, and local authorities, in particular during the process of revising zoning plans and Local Development Plans in the coming years in order to identify opportunities and issues in development at an early stage.

Additional considerations for next steps include:

- Regional system capacity and spatial planning alignment: Innovation projects should be explicitly aligned with regional development strategies and spatial planning frameworks. Cork Chamber has consistently highlighted that grid constraints in key growth regions risk undermining investment, enterprise expansion, and climate objectives.
- Demand growth forecasting linked to industrial policy: EirGrid's innovation pipeline should integrate scenario planning that reflects the electrification of heat and transport, the growth in data, life sciences and advanced manufacturing, and the advent of offshore wind and green hydrogen development.
- Climate resilience and adaptation: Projects should embed climate resilience as a core design principle, addressing flood risk, extreme weather events, cybersecurity, and infrastructure redundancy, reflecting Ireland's growing climate vulnerability.
- Business engagement frameworks: Innovation pathways should include structured engagement with business users to ensure solutions are practical, scalable, and aligned with operational realities, particularly for energy-intensive sectors and SMEs.

Q2: For completed projects are there any additional steps you believe EirGrid should be pursuing?

- Replication and scaling: Identifying transferable solutions that can be deployed regionally and nationally.
- Commercialisation pathways: Enabling market uptake of proven innovations where appropriate.
- Knowledge-sharing platforms: Creating accessible repositories of lessons learned for industry, regulators, and stakeholders.
- Independent impact evaluation: Assessing economic, environmental, and system resilience outcomes, not only technical performance.

Q3: Do you have any suggestions for additional projects EirGrid should be pursuing?

- Regional flexibility markets: Enabling local balancing, storage, and demand response solutions.

- Grid-readiness for green hydrogen: Integrating future hydrogen production and storage into network planning.
- Port and industrial cluster electrification: Innovation programmes focused on port infrastructure, industrial estates, and enterprise parks.
- AI-driven grid management: Predictive analytics for congestion management, maintenance, and outage prevention.
- Skills and workforce innovation: Training pipelines and digital skills development for future energy systems, including deeper integration with further and higher education institutions.

Q4: Are there Innovation Management procedures that EirGrid should be investigating?

- Open innovation frameworks with academia, SMEs, start-ups and research centres.
- Challenge-based innovation programmes linked to defined system problems.
- Agile governance models allowing faster progression from pilot to deployment.
- Innovation procurement models that support SME participation.
- Cross-sector innovation partnerships with transport, water, telecoms and data infrastructure providers.

Q5: Do you support EirGrid's choice of key projects that should be focused on?

Cork Chamber supports the strategic focus on projects that enhance grid flexibility, integration of renewable energy, digital infrastructure, data-driven system management and security of supply.

We stress that project prioritisation must be regionally balanced, economically enabling, socially equitable and future-proofed for demand growth, and also aligned with national climate targets.

Q6: How well do you think our incremental innovations including improved collaboration tools and automation and new data methods support everyday business operations and drive efficiency?

Cork Chamber recognises the strong value of incremental innovation in improving operational efficiency, transparency, and system reliability. These improvements are critical to reducing system costs, improving response times, enhancing data availability, and strengthening stakeholder engagement.

In particular, early stage and meaningful stakeholder engagement can identify and help to resolve issues with major developments which can be resolved and lead to quicker implementation and development of such projects.

However, incremental innovation must complement, not replace, transformational innovation, particularly in the context of climate action and energy transition.

Q7: What are your thoughts on the Strategic Innovation Programmes (SIPs)? Should there be any additional SIPs added? Is there redundancy between existing SIPs?

Cork Chamber supports the SIP framework as a coherent structure for long-term innovation planning. The Chamber recommends consideration of additional SIPs focused on climate resilience and adaptation, industrial decarbonisation infrastructure and energy workforce and skills transformation.

Some overlap between SIPs is inevitable; however, integration should be viewed as a strength rather than a weakness, provided governance structures avoid duplication and fragmentation.

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on Eirgrid's annual innovation strategy.

We consistently emphasise that energy infrastructure is not solely an environmental issue but a competitiveness issue. Innovation investment must be seen as economic infrastructure investment that underpins enterprise growth, inward investment, regional development, and social progress.

Innovation must support spatially balanced growth, avoid over-concentration of infrastructure capacity and ensure regions such can compete on an equal footing for investment and employment.

Innovation should deliver social as well as technical value, ensuring affordability, access, skills development, and community benefit.

Cork Chamber strongly supports the ambition of EirGrid's Innovation Strategy and its role in enabling Ireland's transition to a low-carbon, resilient, and competitive energy system. By embedding innovation at the core of system planning and infrastructure delivery, EirGrid can play a transformative role in delivering sustainable growth, climate action, and long-term national competitiveness.

Yours sincerely,



Conor Healy

CEO