

Gas Networks Ireland
Gasworks Road,
Cork,
T12RX96.

27th February 2026

Re: Gas Networks Ireland Stakeholder Engagement Plan 2026

To whom it concerns,

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the public consultation on Gas Networks Ireland's Stakeholder Engagement 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 energy system is a key priority area for Cork Chamber members, critical to enabling future economic and population growth, as well as leading the transition to climate neutrality. With this in mind, we welcome the opportunity to provide feedback on Gas Networks Ireland's Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

Gas Networks Ireland's three strategic ambitions for 2026, resilient network, net zero transition and customer driven, represent timely and welcome areas of focus.

Resilient Network

Ensuring a secure, resilient network in the years ahead is critical as energy demands evolve and likely increase in line with projected population and economic growth across the country. Particular consideration should be given to areas where large-scale growth is forecast, such as the Cork city region, for example, where the population is projected to grow by upwards of 50% by 2040. Investments in the network to ensure security and scalability must be aligned with priority areas for housing and industrial growth.

Furthermore, the evolving geopolitical landscape has resulted in a much greater focus on energy security from a business perspective. In order to sustain and grow both FDI and domestic enterprises of scale in Ireland, it is vital that security of supply continues to be prioritised in order to provide greater certainty for businesses already operating in Ireland, as well as prospective investors.

Safeguarding supply into the future has become an increasingly important element of Ireland's overall economic competitiveness. In this regard, laying the infrastructural foundations to accommodate future growth is important, with a view to supporting long-term investment. Gas Networks Ireland's focus on the delivery of new assets is critical and will help to ensure that the growth of the network keeps pace with population and economic growth, and the resulting increase in demand. This will also help to support the growing supply of biomethane and hydrogen, ensuring the timely integration of renewables into the gas network.

Finally, the current geopolitical environment has led to increased concerns regarding the security of critical infrastructure and assets, and Gas Networks Ireland's focus on safety is particularly welcome in this context. Both cyber security and physical security are key areas of focus, and ensuring sufficient engagement on these topics will be critical in the coming years to mitigate security concerns and reinforce security of supply for the future.

Net Zero Transition

The journey to deliver a net zero network will be an important milestone in the wider green transition. Collaboration with stakeholders working across other initiatives that support decarbonisation in the wider economy and community should be prioritised in this regard to ensure a coordinated approach to the net zero transition that will help Ireland to reach its climate goals as quickly as possible.

Initiatives like the EU Mission Cities can help to support these aims; Cork was awarded the EU Climate Neutral and Smart Cities Mission Label in 2025, with a range of projects and initiatives underway in the city to progress climate neutrality. These initiatives bring together local authorities, stakeholders such as Chambers of Commerce, and the broader community to work together in pursuit of climate neutrality.

Gas Networks Ireland's commitment to ongoing sustainable impact through the SDG Ambassador role is also welcome, promoting greater awareness of the UN SDGs. As a fellow SDG Ambassador, Cork Chamber welcomes any opportunities for collaboration on shared aims that may arise.

Planned integration with the rest of the energy industry is welcome in this regard, and commitments to continuous collaboration with ESB, EirGrid and others are critically important. Further collaboration with local stakeholders and communities should also be explored. Ensuring collaboration with the broader renewable energy sector is also

important, and the commitments to scaling biomethane and enabling hydrogen are welcome in this regard. Consideration should also be given to other growing renewables, such as offshore wind, which is developing at pace off Ireland's south coast.

Cork Chamber coordinates the work of the Cork Offshore Renewable Industry Forum (CORIF), which brings together industry actors in the offshore renewable energy space in the Cork region to identify and advocate for the policy and infrastructure enablers required to realise the full potential of offshore renewables for Cork and Ireland as a whole. CORIF already benefits from close collaboration with Gas Networks Ireland through GNI's membership of the forum and active participation in all CORIF activities, and would welcome any further opportunities for engagement on relevant topics as they arise.

Finally, ongoing collaboration at an international level will also be important as the net zero transition continues, particularly engagement with UK counterparts, as well as those in other EU Member States.

Customer Driven

Ensuring that activities remain customer driven is critically important. With the transition to net zero underway, it is vital that there are no adverse impacts on customers' security of supply, particularly given ongoing geopolitical developments. Gas Networks Ireland should ensure that resilience and security are prioritised throughout the transition to net zero, helping to protect and enhance Ireland's competitiveness from an economic perspective. Affordability also remains a concern for many business customers, particularly SMEs, and ongoing engagement with regard to energy costs should also be considered.

Ongoing engagement with customers will also be vital, particularly large business customers, as well as state agencies such as IDA Ireland and Enterprise Ireland. The establishment of a customer solutions team in 2024 is welcome in this regard. Gas Networks Ireland's recognition of the limitations of electrification and the corresponding need to facilitate an alternative pathway for other sectors is welcome, and engagement with businesses in the sectors concerned should be prioritised.

In addition, the implementation of related policies that impact Large Energy Users (LEUs), such as the Large Energy User Action Plan (LEAP) should also be considered in the broader context of energy system development. Helping to support policy aims such as the co-location of green energy parks with supply should be factored into Gas Networks Ireland's future planning and infrastructural development.

Conclusion

Gas Networks Ireland's commitment to provide details and timings of proposed engagement mechanisms over the course of 2026 is very welcome. Providing information

on engagement opportunities in a timely manner will allow for a greater level of stakeholder input and more valuable exchange. The setting out of clear measures of success for each area of focus is welcome, and Gas Networks Ireland should endeavour to provide regular updates to interested stakeholders on this progress where relevant.

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Stakeholder Engagement Plan 2026 and looks forward to continued positive engagement with Gas Networks Ireland over the lifetime of the plan and beyond.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Cathal McSweeney', written in a cursive style.

Cathal McSweeney

Director of Public and International Affairs