



THE EIRGRID FILES

EIRGRID'S WEEKLY BRIEFINGS

Update - 12 January (2018)

North-South

- EirGrid Mobile Information Unit is due to be in Castleblaney next Thursday. This has been highlighted in articles in the Northern Standard this week.
- Court decision by the High Court to uphold planning approval in relation to the North South Interconnector. In addition the High Court today refused the appeal sought for in the first judicial review. A statement was issued following this news: <http://www.eirgridgroup.com/newsroom/high-court-upholds-planni/index.xml>
- A number of media articles appeared on the High Court including the Irish Times and the Examiner.
- FOI received from representative of NEPP in relation to aspects of the project.

Update - 19 January

North-South

- EirGrid Mobile Information Unit was in Castleblaney on Thursday. Good level of engagement with a follow up onsite meeting requested to discuss access/right of way
- The mobile unit will be in Kingscourt, Co. Cavan Thursday 25th January.
- Further regional coverage of the High Court's dismissal of two legal challenges to NSI, including Meath Chronicle and Anglo-Celt. Article in Meath Chronicle quotes opposition groups warning of "impending conflict". EirGrid interview with LMF on decision and what this means for the future of NSI.

Update - 25 January

North-South

- EirGrid Mobile Information Unit was in Kingscourt on Thursday. A group of people opposed to the project were present at the EirGrid Mobile Unit for over 2 hours. There was some positive engagement with the group but they emphasised their opposition.
- Communications plan was implemented following the announcement of the NI planning decision. This included the issuing of a press release along with updates being provided to local Cllrs, TDs and MEPs.
- A number of Sinn Féin representatives issued states criticising the decision.
- EirGrid spokesperson appeared on the current affairs programme on Wednesday in relation to the announcement.
- A number of statements were issued in support of the decision including:
 - <http://www.northernirelandchamber.com/2018/01/23/ni-chamber-welcomes-north-south-interconnector-planning-approval/>
 - <https://www.eaireland.com/eai-welcomes-north-south-interconnector-planning-approval/>
 - <https://www.ibec.ie/IBEC/Press/PressPublicationsdoclib3.nsf/vPages/Newsroom-ibec-welcomes-progression-in-north-south-interconnector-23-01-2018?OpenDocument>
 - <http://www.chambers.ie/media/news/2018/01/23/chambers-ireland-welcomes-approval-of-the-north-south-interconnector-in-northern-ireland/>
- The NI planning announcement was raised with the Taoiseach at the Order of Business.

Update - 2 February

North-South

- Local media coverage of Minister's meeting with group of elected representatives from Cavan-Monaghan.
- EirGrid Mobile Unit is scheduled to be in Trim next Thursday to answer questions and provide information on the project.

Update - 9 February

North-South

- In the Dáil on Tuesday during Taoiseach's Oral PQ's the Taoiseach stated: "Approval is now in place for the North-South interconnector, which will integrate our energy markets."
- Mobile Information Unit was in Trim, Co Meath on Thursday. A group of people opposed to the NSI protested at the unit. The protest lasted approximately 1 hour. Due to one threatening protester, the Garda were called.
- A response issued to NEPP representative clarifying recent statements in relation to statutory rights in terms of land access.
- LMFM issued a tweet on Friday following an interview with Minister McEntee which stated: "I dont think any land owner should have anything forced on them whatsoever."

Update - 16 February

North-South

- Mobile Information Unit was scheduled to be in Navan next Thursday.
- Local media coverage of meeting request from Monaghan Anti-Pylon to the IFA to attend a meeting on Monday evening next.
- Engagement with a number of landowners along the route with queries about proposed structures on their land.

Update - 22 February

North-South

- Mobile Information Unit was in Navan today(Thursday) with a low level of callers.
- Meeting took place with between Monaghan Anti-Pylon and representatives of the IFA and ICMSA on Monday evening.
- EirGrid representative was interviewed on Northern Sound this week with issues focusing on land access issues.
- Engagement at project level with the ESB in relation to the publication of a tender in coming months for construction works on the project.

Update - 2 March

North-South

- Coverage in local media in NI and in Monaghan of support expressed by Sinn Féin MP Francie Molloy for the project. He welcomed the recent planning approval and stated that "Mid Ulster needs the Interconnector as soon as possible."

Update - 9 March

North-South

- An FOI response has issued to the the Northern Standard in relation a range of issues related to the project. Some of the queries relate to expenses incurred by EirGrid staff. It is expected that there will be coverage in the paper next week.
- Landowner engagement has commenced in Northern Ireland.
- Both ICMSA and IFA have made comment in relation to land access and engagement with EirGrid over the past week.
- Discussion at Meath and Monaghan Council this week in relation to engagement by Council Executive with EirGrid.
- Article in Meath Chronicle carrying quotes from NEPPC saying "the end-game is upon us". The article carried a response from EirGrid which clarified that county councils are not involved in any future discussions and agreements with landowners over land access

Update - 16 March

North-South

- A 2nd community newsletter is currently being finalised for circulation landowners and communities in the area of the project to update them. This is expected to be posted next Friday.
- Article appeared in Northern Standard covering material issued under FOI which focuses on the costs incurring during the planning phase of the project.
- A presentation was made to Cavan Chamber of Commerce this week explaining the role of EirGrid with focus on NSIC and on the economic role that the grid plays in regional development.
- Sinn Féin Energy Spokesperson issued a statement this week on the project following a meeting with the NI Dept of Infrastructure

Update - 23 March

North-South

- A 2nd project newsletter is due to be circulated to landowners and local stakeholders commencing next Wednesday to provide an update on the project. One item from the newsletter is the indication that ESB is due to issue a tender in relation to the construction works. The qualification that no constructions works will be carried out during this time and that procurement process can be cancelled at any time if necessary.
- Article in the Northern Standard this week following an interview with SF President where she reaffirmed SF's opposition to the project as an overhead project.

THE HEADLINES AS REPORTED BY THE NORTHERN STANDARD

January 11th 2018

Humphreys arranges meeting with Minister Naughten on interconnector County Councillors stand united on undergrounding Council to meet Minister Naughten on interconnector plan New Members of EirGrid Team

EirGrid Ad: We're here to talk. Main St Castleblaney, 18 January

January 18th 2018

High Court rejects appeal by anti pylon campaigners over interconnector

EirGrid wants to move to next stage of project

January 25th 2018

Anti pylon groups set to oppose EirGrid's interconnector plan

Campaigners say compensation offers to landowners are a 'declaration of war'

Line gets planning approval in the North

February 1st 2018

Interconnector proceeding as planned

Monaghan representatives express disappointment after meeting Minister Naughten

Battle over North South interconnector

Concerns over interconnector raised with Environment Minister

Anti pylon campaigners meet Sinn Féin's Gerry Adams

Kingscourt confrontation

Power station to close (Kilroot)

EirGrid Ad: We're here to talk. Carrickmacross Office

February 8th 2018

Sinn Féin says Minister Naughten 'sleep walking' into interconnector conflict

Farmers and landowners determined to deny access to contractors

EirGrid prepares to consult in Cork but not the North East

Why EirGrid insists the line must be overhead

County Council to pursue further meeting with Minister Naughten on interconnector as opinions vary on delegation's reception

Minister Naughten expresses disappointment at 'very disingenuous' comments by a Monaghan Cllr

EirGrid promises 'full consultation' on new interconnector to France

Sharp contrast to Monaghan where public were not consulted: CMAPC

EirGrid Ad: We're here to talk. Carrickmacross Office

February 15th 2018

Anti pylon campaigners invite IFA to meeting over interconnector

Queries over EirGrid's right to access lands raised in Dáil

Minister says he will publish two reports without delay when completed

EirGrid Ad: We're here to talk. Carrickmacross Office

February 22nd 2018

Landowners prepare to tackle EirGrid over pylons

Strongly resolved to block access to land for overhead line...

But EirGrid insist construction will begin by end of year

EirGrid Ad: We're here to talk. Carrickmacross Office

March 1st 2018

Veteran Sinn Féin politician (Francie Molloy MP) breaks ranks over interconnector in North ... but Monaghan representatives reaffirm party policy on undergrounding the line

Sinn Féin reaffirm party policy on undergrounding interconnector

March 8th 2018

County Council obliged to uphold conditions of interconnector planning permission – Chief Executive

Fight starts now: NEPPC

IFA President says no dealings with EirGrid over interconnector

Further meeting planned between IFA and CMAPC

March 15th 2018

EirGrid's other interconnector costs revealed company spent at least €1 million on advertising, sponsorship and planning

Details of EirGrid's expenditure of €1,063,779

Interconnector planning application documentation

NEPPC says landowners united in solidarity against interconnector

Sinn Féin President confirms opposition to interconnector

Francie Molloy MP 'accepts party position'

MPs told North South interconnector could be up to five years away because of legal challenge

March 22nd 2018

IFA reaffirms position on pylons

March 29th 2018

Minister distances himself from decisions on interconnector

'An operational matter for EirGrid': Naughten

EirGrid plan for Ireland's energy future

April 5th 2018

The interconnector: various planning implications of EirGrid's north south electricity interconnector project were raised by members (of Monaghan Co. Council) during the discussion (on new County Development Plan)

EirGrid Ad: We're here to talk. Carrickmacross Office

April 12th 2018

Revealed: how EirGrid spent over €1.7 million during interconnector planning hearing

Co Council executive to review planning statements in EirGrid circular

New Chief Executive for EirGrid Group

Sport: EirGrid announces sponsorship of Monaghan United Cavan football partnership

EirGrid Ad: North South interconnector What's happening now? Spring update 2018 (see previous week)

EirGrid Ad: We're here to talk. Carrickmacross Office

April 26th 2018

New energy storage facility for Monaghan

Renewable energy reaches record level

Single market delay (to October)

Independent studies on interconnector to be published in a number of weeks

Armagh Tyrone landowners launch legal challenge over electricity interconnector

May 3rd 2018

Anti pylon groups 'ready for battle'

No landowner consent for access needed to build interconnector

Interconnector plans took precedence over 'cash for ash' in energy planning in north

May 10th 2018

Grid operator (SONI) claims new interconnector pylons will reduce visual impact

EIRGRID'S WEEKLY BRIEFINGS

Update - 29 March

North-South

- A 2nd project newsletter is being circulated on Tuesday next to landowners along the route of the project. An email will also issue to local Cllrs and Oireachtas members is also due to issue today. A number of paper advertisements have also been taken in the local papers to coincide with the newsletter. A copy of the newsletter is attached.
- Article in the Northern Standard this week covering a recent PQ headlined: "Minister distances himself from decisions on interconnector".

Update - 6 April

North-South

- A project newsletter was circulated to Cllrs, Senators and TDs in the area on Tuesday. It was also posted to landowners. Adverts in local papers also appeared this week. NEPPC reacted to the newsletter on their Facebook page.
- Following the circulation of the newsletter, there was an increase in footfall to the local office and increase in call queries received by locally based ALOs/CLO's.
- Media response provided to the Anglo Celt newspaper in relation to questions they raised on the issue of land access.
- An FOI was received this week from NEPPC seeking details of engagement and correspondence with ESNB.
- NEPPC this week have lodged a notice for appeal to the Supreme Court on seven grounds. The Supreme Court will now make a determination as to whether they will allow the appeal to be heard.
- Article appeared in Northern Standard focussing on various compensation schemes that will be associated with the project. **

Update - 13 April

North-South

- Ongoing coverage in the Northern Standard following a recent FOI in relation to EirGrid expenditure. Article this week focuses on the spend during the Oral Hearing for the project and, in particular, to the legal fees paid.
- Acknowledgement letter to recent EirGrid Newsletter from Minister of State McEntee's office.

Update - 20 April

North-South

- A new brochure on EMF is has been finalised and available for residents and stakeholders to allay any concerns on this issue.

Update - 27 April

North-South

- SONI were this week advised by the DFI in Northern Ireland that they had received notice of an application for leave to apply for a Judicial Review of the Northern Ireland planning decision. The case is expected to be listed for a preliminary hearing before the summer.

Update - 10 May

North-South

- Landowner engagement has commenced in NI in relation to landowner easements. Positive engagement from the majority of landowners visited to date.

*** This appears to be a reference not to an article in the news section on 5th April but possibly an EirGrid advertorial containing the Winter/Spring 2018 Update issued by the company, which noted the following:*

Ad: North South interconnector: What's happening now?

Spring update 2018

The North South interconnector has now received planning permission in Northern Ireland

Land access and what that really means

ESB issues tender notice for works relating to the North South interconnector

The High Court upholds An Bord Pleanála's decision and highlights EirGrid's consultation as 'meaningful' and 'effective'

Supporting the community, landowners and people living nearby the North South interconnector

Our engagement team has two new members

The Northern Standard obtained a total of 66 weekly bulletins over an 18 month period from EirGrid to the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment following an FOI request. Comparing them with our headlines, they fail to reflect the determined opposition to the project on the ground. They also appear to discount the moves by local politicians and Councillors who called for the interconnector to be placed underground.

EirGrid say the material published in this paper shows the openness with which the company reports to the Department on the project. It should be noted that the only reason the extent of the communication between EirGrid and the Department became clear was through the freedom of information request made by this newspaper. The weekly briefings are not openly published by the company. They are part of ongoing correspondence which has been uncovered between the state owned company and civil servants in the Department responsible for EirGrid, by reason of the state being the sole shareholder.

EirGrid continue to claim that they have taken people's views about the interconnector on board. However there are few references in any of the correspondence to the outright opposition to the plan that has been manifested over the last three years by landowners and residents in Monaghan, Cavan and Meath. Instead there are frequent mentions of the deployment of the mobile information unit to towns near the proposed route including Castleblaney, Navan, Kells, Trim, Kingscourt and Shercock in an attempt to engage with local communities.

Michael Fisher