

## EirGrid Criticised for Slow Response to Submissions

EirGrid has confirmed that an underground route for the Grid Link Project will be published later this year.

An underground route for Grid West was unveiled last week.

Earlier this year, EirGrid committed to conducting a detailed assessment of a fully underground option for both the Grid West and Grid Link projects.

According to a spokesperson, EirGrid is currently working at responding to the 35,000 submissions received in relation to the Grid Link project.

“EirGrid is continuing to respond to over 35,000 submissions received during the public consultation on the Grid Link Project and many of those who sent in feedback will be receiving responses in the coming weeks,” said Dan O’Boyle.

However, according to local anti-pylon campaigners, EirGrid has so far responded to just 4,000 of the 35,000 public submissions it has received.

John McCusker of the Comeraghs Against Pylons (CAP) group said that members of the group recently had a meeting with officials and were told that just 4,000 submissions had received responses.

The group claims that this represents the slow pace of interaction with the public.

EirGrid’s original plans caused a storm of anti-pylon protests throughout the country.

In January, the government appointed an independent panel to carry out an examination of whether cables could be placed underground.

The panel, chaired by former Supreme Court judge Justice Catherine McGuinness, will review both overhead and underground options.

Speaking on RTE Radio last week, EirGrid’s chief executive Fintan Slye said that putting the cables underground could cost a “multiple” of having pylons overground.

Mr Slye warned that the cost would ultimately end up on consumers’ electricity bills.

He said the cost had not yet been fully assessed, compared to the €240m overground option.

However, he acknowledged that it could be up to two or three times the cost.

Ferrybank based Fine Gael TD John Paul Phelan said EirGrid was finally listening to the public by investigating putting power lines underground.

“They’ve finally listened to the people of rural Ireland by investigating the option of putting the Grid Link Project power lines from Cork to Kildare underground. It is proposed now that the underground route, along with the overhead corridor, will be announced at the end of the year,” he said.

“Communities up and down the country have been in limbo for months and at last Eirgrid has started to listen in some way to the 35,000 people who made submissions to them during the public consultation process over the last number of months.”

He added: “The potential environmental damage that pylons and overhead lines would have caused was enormous. They would have completely destroyed the quality of life enjoyed by countless families living in rural areas right across the southeast. It has been an incredibly stressful time for families along the proposed corridors. Many of the distraught people I met had threatened to leave their homes if the pylon plan went ahead.