EirGrid

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Community Benefit Policy





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Introduction

Who we are and what we do

EirGrid develops, manages and operates Ireland's electricity grid. We are responsible for the safe, secure and reliable supply of Ireland's electricity. EirGrid is also leading the secure transition of the grid to a sustainable lowcarbon future.

The grid brings power from where it is generated to where it is needed throughout Ireland. It supplies power directly to industry and businesses that use large amounts of electricity. The grid also brings power from generators to the domestic network that supplies the electricity you use every day in homes, businesses, schools and hospitals.

This critical infrastructure supports the current development of our society and economy. But just as importantly, work carried out now to improve the grid will help to create a more sustainable future for future generations.

Summary of this policy

When we are upgrading or adding new transmission infrastructure in your area, to help make the grid more efficient and sustainable, this will involve some disruption for your community. However, the benefits of safe, secure and sustainable energy will be long lasting. EirGrid in putting communities at the heart of our engagement will work closely with all stakeholders to minimize the disruption and maximize the benefit to those most impacted by our projects.

Our Community Benefit Policy recognises the importance of the local communities

who support our work. Under this initiative, we create a community benefit scheme in proportion to the scale of the project and establish a Community Forum to ensure that the scheme is designed for the local community, by the local community.

This Community Benefit Policy document explains how the community benefit scheme and fund is:

- calculated,
- set-up,
- managed,
- and distributed

Public engagement

This new and enhanced community benefit policy is delivered as part our new 'Public Engagement Strategy' which reinforces our commitment to putting communities at the heart of our decision making through early and regular engagement.

What types of initiatives are funded?

This policy will support initiatives that incorporate the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Further information on SDGs on Page 12.

There are currently three funding streams:

- Community
- Sustainability
- Biodiversity

How we will calculate funding

The funding we will provide is directly related to the type of work we are carrying out.

- For every kilometre of new overhead line of 110 kV that we put in place, we will contribute €45,000 to local community projects spread across the three streams.
- For every new transmission substation with a voltage of 220 kV, we will contribute €90,000.
- For every underground cable project that we put in place, we will contribute 3% of the capital cost of the cable.

You can see more details about this on page 15.

We want to deliver long-lasting benefits

It is important to us in EirGrid that our community benefit fund supports and supplements existing funding streams that local communities have access to. For projects to be sustainable, collaboration is key. Our team will work closely with communities, local authorities, NGO's and State agencies to ensure that communities maximise the opportunities open to them in transforming their area to meet their needs.

Changing the thinking on energy

Ireland's Climate Action Plan sets out a new path to achieving net-zero emission targets by 2050. Central to this transition is the need for decarbonisation of our energy sector with Ireland's pledge that up to 80% of its electricity will come from renewable sources by 2030. Communities have told us through our extensive consultations that they want to be part of the solution. EirGrid are committed to working with all partners in helping communities transition to a cleaner energy future.



What is a Community Benefit Fund?

EirGrid operates thousands of kilometres of power lines across the island of Ireland. When upgrading or adding new transmission infrastructure to help make the grid more efficient, economic and sustainable, many factors are considered. These include the need to protect the interests of individuals, households, businesses and communities whilst ensuring long lasting benefits of safe, secure and sustainable energy. EirGrid aims to create as little disturbance as possible, but at times this work can involve some disruption to communities.

For this reason, a dedicated fund for new grid development is made available to provide direct benefits to communities who are closest to new transmission infrastructure. These funds, which are proportional to the scale of the project, support local good causes, help communities transform their area, and provide the opportunity to each community to become or remain a 'sustainable energy community'. The overall aim is to leave a positive legacy in the communities hosting electrical infrastructure.

The community benefit scheme becomes live once a project receives planning permission. The community benefit for each project is managed by the project team. This team supports the setup of a local Community Forum.

When is Community Benefit Funding Available?

Projects that qualify for community benefit

When we carry out the following work, we will provide community benefit funds.

This work includes:

- new overhead transmission lines,
- new underground cabling schemes,
- new station projects,
- increasing the voltage of lines that have a significant visual impact or involve significant new works,
- customer connections where EirGrid is the lead developer, and
- projects of strategic interest.

A project of strategic interest is a transmission network project that is critical to the future of the grid network. Examples of these projects include, the Celtic Interconnector electricity connection, the Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade and North South Interconnector.

Projects that do not qualify for community benefit

We do not provide community benefit for schemes that involve small improvements or refurbishing existing infrastructure.

This includes projects like the following:

- complete line rebuilds,
- transmission line changes, and
- small station developments on existing station sites.

When we carry out certain other work, we will assess each project to see if it qualifies for community benefit funding.



What is a Community Forum?

The community benefit scheme becomes live once a project receives planning permission. The community benefit for each project is managed by the project team. This team supports the setup of a local Community Forum.

Local Community Forum

A local Community Forum will be established for each project that qualifies for an EirGrid Community Benefit scheme. Many projects will already have a community forum in place from the consultation and design stages of the project. Each community forum will develop a strategy for their community.

What will the community forum do?

- Ensure communities are at the heart of the decision making over the project lifetime.
- Provide relevant input and key local knowledge to assist the project team in decision making.
- Work with community groups and organisations to build trust, identify local needs, grow partnerships and deliver on local projects.
- Provide governance and transparency around the implementation of Community Benefit.
- Receive regular updates from EirGrid team members on project delivery.
- To advise EirGrid on the most effective approach to communicating feedback and key milestones to the wider community.

The role of the forum in relation to the Community Benefit

The Community Forum provides advice and guidance on all aspects of the Community Fund. This includes:

- Working with EirGrid in identifying organisations and potential projects to ensure maximum impact of the community benefit in the area.
- Identifying partnership and collaboration opportunities.
- Agreeing the criteria and parameters of the fund.
- Accessing proposals for discussion and consideration.
- Inputting key local knowledge around area needs and priorities.
- Provide feedback at key stages in the process.

Forum members will actively promote the Community Benefit in their area and encourage organisations to engage.

Community forum chairperson

The community forum will have an independent chairperson who is experienced in facilitation, capacity building, community development or rural revitalisation. The chairperson will facilitate meetings and support the activity of the community forum.

Community forum members

Members of the community forum will be made up of local stakeholders.

This may include representatives of:

- community councils,
- local community groups,
- sustainable energy communities,
- local authorities,
- chamber of commerce
- local development companies,
- other relevant state agencies, and
- other relevant people depending on the project.



How is the Community Benefit Fund structured?

Community Benefit Strategy

The local community forum will lead the development of a local community benefit project strategy. This will be agreed before the community benefit funding is released. Part of this strategy will be developed based on the work of the appointed external fund administrator. The fund administrator is an independent entity appointed through a procurement process.

This strategy will be relevant to the geographical area of the project and its development will include:

- interviews with Forum members;
- interviews with key community leaders;
- a short survey to community groups;
- consultation with the Local Public Participation Networks (PPN's), Local Development Companies, Local Authorities and other relevant strategic stakeholders;
- appropriate data sets from the CSO, Pobal, etc;
- SWOT analysis of the area (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats);
- Community needs analysis (including socio-economic analysis);
- Mapping of community benefit priorities;
- Mapping of potential complementary initiatives and partnerships (for example, LEADER, Town and Village Renewal Scheme, Sports Capital);
- Proposed fund structure and mechanisms (for example 3 separate funds, participatory budgeting scheme, single grant round, and so on); and
- other relevant information; or whatever other methodology is proposed as appropriate.

Partnerships

EirGrid and the local community forum will work with relevant partners such as local authorities and public participation networks (PPNs), local development companies, Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland (SEAI), and NGOs that promote SDGs.

For each local community benefit fund these partnerships will ensure a coordinated and enhanced approach to the development of the local community benefit strategy. This will align with wider policies and enable local communities to benefit from access to a broader range of supports.

Funding the setup

We will fund the establishment of the local community forum, including appointing a chairperson and an independent fund administrator. The fund administrator will work closely with EirGrid and the relevant community forums to develop a community benefit strategy relevant to the geographical area of the project.

Distributing the funds:

When the strategy and partnerships are put in place the community benefit fund application process will begin.

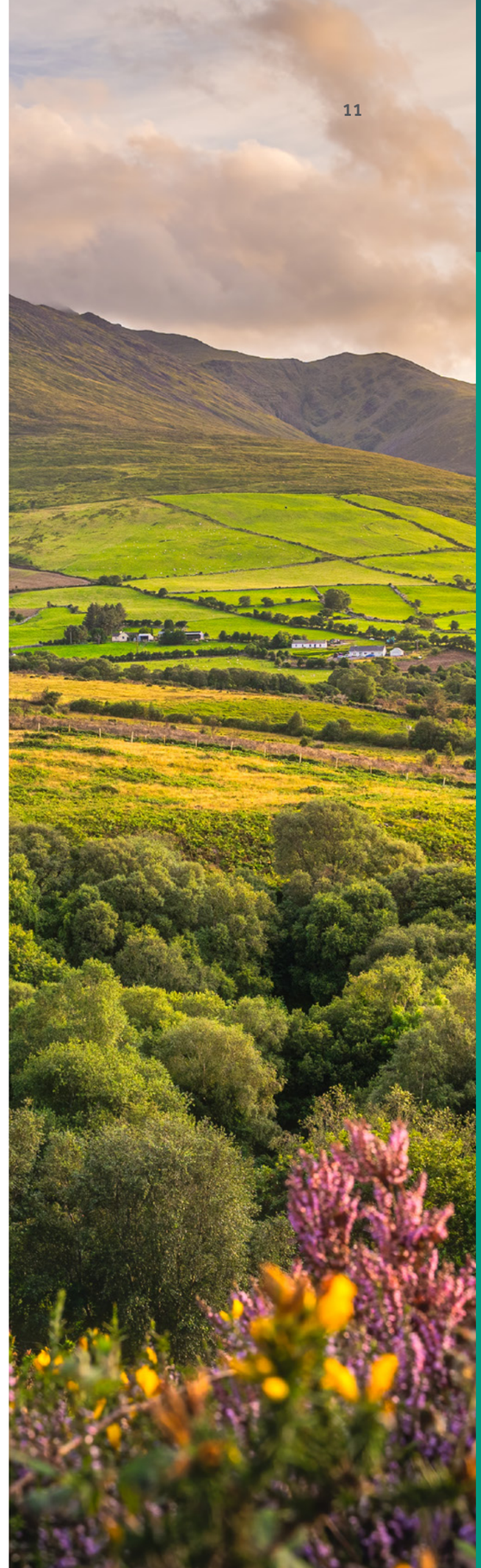
This includes:

- Opening the fund for applications;
- Hosting information sessions on the application process, inviting community groups to attend;
- Providing support for community groups if required; and
- An external evaluation panel will assess the applications, selecting the successful applications, and agreeing on the level of funding to be awarded.

How will the applications be evaluated?

An evaluation panel will be responsible for assessing all applications and ensuring a fair and objective distribution of grants across the project area. This evaluation panel will include representatives from EirGrid as well as independent evaluators.

The Evaluation Panel will seek to ensure that the benefits of the fund are received by communities along the transmission line, and consideration will be given to the geographic spread of applications. The Panel will also seek to ensure a broad mixture of projects are funded, which serve a range of demographics.



Sustainable Development Goals

In 2015, Ireland was one of 193 countries from across the world that signed up to and committed to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. The SDG framework involves seventeen goals that are universal (applies to every country and community) and interdependent (each goal has connections and relationships to other goals). Each call for funding will require grant applications to be aligned to the goals and explain to EirGrid how your proposal contributes to the achievement of the goals in your community.



Community Benefit Streams

There are three streams:

Sustainability | **Community** | **Biodiversity**

Sustainability Stream

The sustainability stream aims to transform how communities think about, generate and use energy.

For each community that qualifies to be a part of an EirGrid Community Benefit scheme, we will provide the opportunity to:

- set up a Sustainable Energy Community(SEC), and
- develop an Energy Master Plan (if an overall plan does not already exist).

Our sustainability funding can help local communities get started with a project, so that they may be eligible to apply for co-funding or additional funds from other funding bodies.

Sustainable energy projects that may apply for funds include:

- sustainable energy community activity,
- community energy initiatives,
- low carbon society initiatives,
- energy advice,
- insulation and heating improvements, education initiatives,
- renewable projects,
- microgeneration projects (example: community solar project),
- behavioural change initiatives,
- community building energy performance, and
- employing a sustainable energy specialist.

Community Stream

The community stream aims to reinforce community cohesion, wellbeing and education.

We will apply the following broad criteria to the categories of local initiatives eligible for community funding:

- arts, language, local heritage and cultural initiatives,
- community-based research,
- education initiatives,
- initiatives and facilities that increase access to education,
- enhancements to community amenities,
- initiatives led by sporting organisations,
- providing leisure amenities,
- meeting particular local needs,
- providing environmental awareness measures,
- providing amenities for children and young people,
- providing amenities for older people, and
- Tidy Towns and Villages initiatives.

Biodiversity Stream

The biodiversity streams aims to leave the biodiversity of an area in a better condition than it was before we built a project.

EirGrid will work with the community through the community forum to propose biodiversity projects that will benefit the locality and leave a lasting positive biodiversity legacy.

The following are examples of biodiversity projects:

- biodiversity nature trails,
- community wetlands,
- 'grow your own' community allotments,
- wildlife-friendly gardening initiatives,
- buildings for nature,
- pollinator-friendly (bee-friendly) initiatives,
- invasive plant removal projects, and
- wildlife education programmes – 'talks and walks'.

Biodiversity projects must comply with relevant licensing

Proposed biodiversity projects must comply with relevant environmental licensing. While communities will own their projects, they must have a strict inspection schedule and comply with relevant regulations.

Assessing the Value of Community Benefit Fund

The funding we will provide is directly related to the type of project we are carrying out. For example:

For every kilometre of overhead line of 110 kV that we put in place, we will contribute €45,000 to local community projects. See Table 1. For every underground cable we put in place, we will contribute 3% of the cost of the cable (this cost is different for every project). See Table 2.

For every transmission substation with a voltage of 220 kV we build, we will contribute €90,000. See Table 3.

The funding we will provide is spread equally across three streams (see page 13)

Table 1: Overhead lines

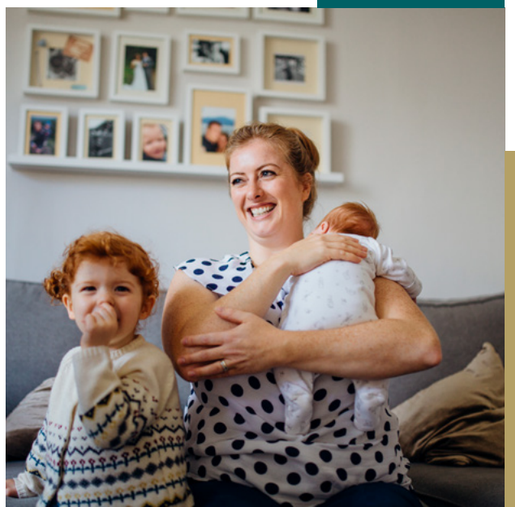
Overhead Lines		
There is a set amount of community funding provided based on the voltage and length of the new overhead lines we put in place.		
Voltage of overhead line	Amount of community funds we will provide per kilometre of line	Example of community funds for 50km line
110 kV	€45,000	€2,250,000
220 kV	€90,000	€4,500,000
400 kV	€120,000	€6,000,000

Table 2: Underground cables

Underground Cables		
There is a set amount of community funding provided based on the voltage and capital cost of the new underground cables. For every underground cable, we will provide community funds to the value of 3% of the cost of the cable. The following costs are indicative and may change from time to time depending on the cable type.		
Voltage of under-ground cable	3% of cost per kilometre	Example of community funds for 50km line
110 kV	€23,400	€1,170,000
220 kV	€36,600	€1,830,000
400 kV	€47,100	€2,355,000

Table 3: Transmission substations

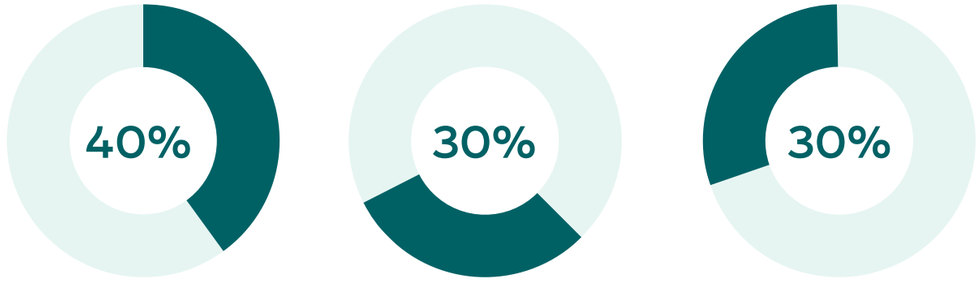
Transmission Substations	
For every new substation that we build, we will allocate funds to a community benefit fund.	
Voltage of substation	Amount of community funds we will provide per station
110 kV	€45,000
220 kV	€90,000
400 kV	€120,000



Funding Release

Community Benefit will be released on a phased basis as the project progresses.

We will release payments as follows:



Phase 1: 40%

When we start constructing our project.

Phase 2: 30%

When we start line stringing or cable jointing.

Phase 3: 30%

When our project goes live (when the line becomes a part of the electricity grid and electricity runs through it).

How You Can Find Out More

If you want to learn more about a Community Benefit Scheme near you, please get in touch with our community liaison officers.

You can contact them using the details on our website: www.eirgrid.ie.

You can get a copy of our Public Engagement Strategy at www.eirgrid.ie.



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