8.6.2 Electricity

**The Government Policy Statement on the Strategic Importance of Transmission and Other Energy Infrastructure (July 2012) acknowledges the strategic and economic importance of investment in networks and energy infrastructure. The Government endorses the major investment underway and proposed in the high voltage electricity system under Eirgrid's Grid 25 Programme.** The Council acknowledges the need to utilise electricity for domestic and commercial use within the county.

The demand for electricity continues to grow at a national, regional and local level. Ireland's electricity network is currently undergoing a programme of renewal and upgrade of the existing network, plus construction of new lines and transmission/distribution stations.

Kildare is one of the best served locations in terms of transmission network and has the following notable features:

* One of the two 400kV lines from Moneypoint terminates at Dunstown, Naas, in the county.
* Dunstown steps down from 400kV to 220kV and transmits power through Kildare and into Dublin via a network of 100Kv and 220kV lines.
* The highest voltage lines of the Eirgrid Transmission System serve Kildare and thus enable the county to have the potential to be in a position to meet future electricity demands [[1]](#footnote-2). However it should be noted that there may be a future requirement to reinforce the local network in order to support or optimise Dublin flows.

One of the major projects in the current investment programme by the ESB is the Medium Voltage Network Renewal Project. It will see all of Ireland's MV (Medium Voltage) overhead electricity network either converted to 20kV or refurbished, in order to ensure a secure, high quality supply with adequate capacity for existing and future loads.

Upgrading Low Voltage (LV) lines throughout the country to improve the quality of electricity supply, particularly in rural areas is also ongoing.

GRID 25 is the Development Plan of Eirgrid, the national transmission system operator and operator of the wholesale power market. Eirgrid’s development plan recognises the need to strike a sustainable balance between cost, reliability, security and environmental impact in the provision of electricity transmission networks.

Future development of the grid network is of vital strategic importance. The GRID 25 Plan contains a number of planned investments including:

* Reinforcement works on the network to cater for expected growth in Kildare and North Wicklow.
* Development of a new 400/111kV station near Portlaoise, Co. Laois which will reinforce the network in Kildare and will be connected into a planned 110kV line between Portlaoise and Athy.

**Eirgrid are seeking to progress the Grid Link Project comprising a 400Kv voltage line linking Leinster and Munster (Knockraha, Co. Cork - Great Island, Wexford to Dunstown Co. Kildare). There are three key drivers to the Grid Link Project comprising:**

* **the integration of new renewable generation,**
* **ensuring that security of supply is maintained and**
* **the facilitation of possible future interconnections with Great Britain or France.**

**In addition to the foregoing the Draft Transmission Development Plan 2013-2023 published in November 2013 also states that *"Eirgrid is currently investigating the expansion of the 400Kv network into the Greater Dublin. This reinforcement could be by the alteration of existing routes or with new overhead line or cable routes entirely."* It is the Transmission Development Plan (TDP) which documents Eirgrid’s infrastructural programme for the period of the TDP and is subject to constant review.**

**It is recognised that the development of transmission line for electricity interconnectors will contribute to the on-going development of a single European Electricity Grid and single European Electricity Market in compliance with Directive 2009/72/EC concerning common rules for the internal market in electricity and Regulation 714/2009 on conditions for access to the network for cross-border exchanges in electricity. The development of electricity interconnectors will be informed by the 10 year Network Development Plan managed by the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity (ENTSO-E).**

**It is anticipated that growth in the metropolitan area of Dublin will give rise to demand for energy supply and a pressure to connect the region with other regions via the hinterland area that includes County Kildare.**

8.7 Service Providers and Energy Facilities

The Council will support and facilitate the requirements of the major service providers, such as Bórd Gáis, Eirgrid and the ESB, where it is proposed to enhance or upgrade existing facilities or networks or to provide new infrastructure subject to landscape, residential amenity and environmental considerations including where appropriate environmental assessments in accordance with EU Directives i.e. EIA, Habitats and Floods Directives. The Planning Authority recognises the need for the development and renewal of transmission networks, in order to meet both economic and social policy goals.

8.8 Transmission Infrastructure

Planning applications involving the siting of overhead cables, should seek to minimise visual impact by seeking to avoid areas of high landscape sensitivity, sites and areas of nature conservation and / or archaeological interest. The route of the lines should also follow natural features of the environment, with preference given to undergrounding services where appropriate. All electricity lines of 38kV and over shall comply with all internationally recognised standards with regard to proximity to sensitive receptors including dwellings, nursing homes, hospitals, other inhabited structures and schools/crèches. The removal of significant lengths of hedgerow should be avoided where possible. However if hedgerows / trees are removed during construction they shall be replaced with native species that reflect the species occurring in the surrounding area.

8.11 Energy Policies

High Voltage Transmission Power Line Policies

**It is the policy of the Council:**

**HT 1: To support the sustainable improvement and expansion of the high voltage electricity transmission power lines and distribution network, subject to human health*,* landscape, residential amenity, tourism, equine industry and environmental considerations.**

**HT 2: To require developers to outline in any proposed planning application for high voltage transmission lines:**

**(a) the key drivers for the project**

**(b) the manner in which the preferred technological solution has been arrived at, including considerations of alternatives , and**

**(c) How environmental assessments have informed options relating to undergrounding / partial undergrounding / overgrounding of transmission infrastructure, and**

**(d) how the preferred route and substation requirements within the county were selected and justification for same, having regard to paragraph (c) above**

**(e) the cumulative impact of the proposal with other planned projects.**

**Where impacts are inevitable mitigation measures shall be clearly outlined.**

**HT 3: To have regard to the requirements of the service providers in the provision of strategic infrastructure whilst also seeking to ensure that development, including the location of high voltage transmission power lines, is controlled particularly adjoining existing dwellings, except where no other alternative can be shown to exist. (Also ER 4 in CDP).**

**HT 4: To ensure that the ability of the area to absorb overhead transmission lines is considered with reference to landscape character designations of the county as outlined in Chapter 14 of the County Development Plan 2011-2017 or as maybe amended under the review of the County Development Plan or following any forthcoming National Landscape Guidelines issued pursuant to Section 28 of the Planning Acts 2000-2014.**

**HT 5: To ensure that the landscape and visual assessment of any proposal shall focus on the potential of the development to impact upon county landscape designations and important designated sites. Proposed overhead lines shall as far as possible seek to avoid areas of sensitivity (e.g. areas of high amenity, high sensitive landscape designations, scenic views, protected structures etc). Where avoidance is not possible full consideration shall be given to undergrounding the lines.**

**HT 6: To ensure that the developersof high voltage transmission overhead lines seek to minimise the visual impact of the lines. In this regard detailed consideration shall be given to appropriate support structure designs and the reason for the selection of particular support structure design over other designs. Where appropriate alternative solutions including monopole designs or such other designs or mitigation measures shall be given due consideration.**

**HT 7: To ensure that additional infrastructure and / or substation sites required to accommodate high voltage transmission power lines shall be detailed including consideration of alternatives. Mitigation measures shall be outlined to minimise the visual impact of the multiplicity /convergence of overhead lines including any associated tie-ins at substations. Where there is a multiplicity and or convergence of overhead lines that the undergrounding of existing and / or proposed lines shall be investigated by applicants.**

**HT 8: To have regard to the potential impact of proposed overhead high voltage transmission power lines on the established equine industry in the County, such as the sporthorse and the thoroughbred bloodstock sectors, and to ensure that appropriate mitigation measures are provided to mitigate any adverse impact on this important industry.**

**HT 9: To ensure that proposals for development which would be likely to have a significant effect on nature conservation sites and /or habitats or species of high conservation value will only be approved if it can be ascertained, by means of an Appropriate Assessment or other ecological assessment, that the integrity of these sites will not be adversely affected except where there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI).**

**HT 10: To seek compliance with any statutory government guidelines issued by the DECLG pursuant to Section 28 of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2014. This includes the review by the expert group on “Health Effects of Electromagnetic Fields", published in 2007 by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources”, and any further reviews.**

1. Source: *Availability of Services in Kildare County* Draft MDM Consulting Engineers 13/01/10 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)