



Press release – Irish Academy of Engineering (IAE) MacGill Summer School 2025 - Embargo until 13.00 Thursday 17th July 2025

The Irish Academy of Engineering (IAE) is pleased to support this year's McGill Summer School held in Glenties Co Donegal from 17th to 19th July 2025.

Academy President Sean Finlay took part in a Panel to discuss Ireland's Business Model 2.0 in the context of this year's Theme - **"A Fractured World"**. **Central to Ireland's continuing economic success is the provision of critical infrastructure.**

There is a widespread recognition that barriers to the delivery of infrastructure must be addressed as a matter of urgency. Proposed measures to address barriers to delivery were outlined in June 2025 by IAE in a Response to a consultation by the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation (DEPR). The IAE response on the three high level solutions sought by DEPR were as follows;

- 1. Provide multi-annual funding for water and energy for housing and additional ring-fenced funding for water.** To Increase capacity to c. 50,000 housing units/year will require an additional ring-fenced investment of the order of €2 Bn. This includes €1.7 Bn. for high density housing in Cities and large towns to maximise the number of housing units coupled with €300 m. to support small schemes in rural towns and villages. Multi Annual funding for key programmes such as housing should be ring fenced to those areas with high density housing with specific ring- fenced funds for smaller rural development and must be additional to existing programme funding.
- 2. Prepare a new Housing Infrastructure Statutory Instrument (SI) for water and energy connections.**
- 3. Prepare and deliver a national electricity infrastructure masterplan.** Government should bypass the administrative bureaucracy it has created in the energy and electricity sectors and directly ask EirGrid and ESB to prepare and deliver the national electricity infrastructure masterplan. Importantly, this would not preclude private sector investment as individual projects could be delivered by way of concession contracts.

In the context of the review of the National Development Plan currently underway, **our Academy believes that the focus should be on a number of programmes and projects that can be realised in the short to medium term and which are pivotal to enabling more ambitious objectives.** Many of these projects will enable urban housing and industrial development. These projects include;

Transport- Roads

- (a) Limerick Northern Distributor Road Phase 2 to open up lands for housing, economic and educational development, and provide public transport routes and relief for congestion in Limerick City
- (b) Cork R624 Belvelly Bridge — Great Island/Cobh: to support development at Marino Point freeing up sites in Cork docklands for 1000+ housing units and would also support housing and economic development on Great Island and Cobh.
- (c) Cork Northern Distributor Road; Project would open up access to extensive land for housing and economic development on the north side of Cork city; it would upgrade the current inadequate access to the 6000 strong Apple campus and provide connections to the National Road network, including then N/M20 Cork - Limerick .

Transport - Rail

- (a) Dart + West; planning secured; JRs abandoned.
- (b) Dart+ North; twin-tracking and station relocation at Malahide to facilitate further development of Dart. A planning decision is expected in Q3.
- (c) Restore twin-track Galway to Oranmore and expedite the study on upgrading the Portarlinton – Galway line (likely part twin track to provide hourly /faster service).

Water

- (a) Political support required to expedite the Greater Dublin Drainage (GDD) project for which planning has been recently granted.
- (b) Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region.

Energy

- (a) North South Interconnector.

Visionary Projects completed in the past have included:

- **1906** –Dublin had one of the most modern waste water treatment plant built and commissioned in Europe.
- **1929** - The Shannon hydroelectric Scheme was a major development by the Irish Free State in the 1920s to harness the power of the River Shannon. Completed within 7 years of Irish independence in 1922 at a cost which was equivalent to one fifth of the Irish State’s annual budget, the plant enabled delivery of electricity across the country and demonstrated the ability of the new government to develop during a very difficult financial period.
- **1995- 2010** The National Roads Programme which delivered over 900km of Motorways.
- The **current** National Broadband Rollout to over 500,000 premises and 1.1m persons.

The North South Interconnector, Greater Dublin Drainage (GDD) project, the Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region and the M20 motorway are listed in the Project Ireland

2040 and represent the same visionary thinking similar to these earlier projects. Ireland has capable agencies which can deliver these challenges.

In answering the panel question “**What is the One Big Idea - What SHOULD Ireland do?**” Sean replied “*Ireland is now in a unique position where Government and the people agree that housing is essential to support the common good and delivery of housing and the supporting infrastructure is essential. Ireland now has commercial semi -State companies TII/Eirgrid/Uisce Éireann which have the capacity/knowledge and experience to deliver these game changing projects; **provide them with the multi annual financial and political support to deliver.***”

Throughout Europe there is wide acceptance that the common good should prevail. Our Constitution seeks to promote the common good and strong political support for game changing common good projects to ensure we continue to deliver the aspirations of our people”

NOTES FOR EDITORS

About the Irish Academy of Engineering

The Irish Academy of Engineering (IAE) is dedicated to advancing the wellbeing of the island of Ireland by marshalling the expertise and insights of eminent engineers to provide independent advice to policy makers on matters involving engineering and technology. Our membership is made up of eminent engineers, all leaders in their fields, based both in Ireland and abroad. The IAE regularly publishes research and guidance on matters relating to engineering, technology, and the development of Ireland. The Irish Academy is a member of the European Council of Academies of Applied Sciences, Technologies and Engineering (Euro-CASE) which is an independent non-profit organisation of national academies of Engineering, Applied Sciences and Technologies from 23 European countries. and is also a member of the International Council of Academies of Engineering and Technological Sciences (CAETS) with member Academies from 33 Countries. Visit our website www.iae.ie for more information.

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