



**THE IRISH ACADEMY OF
ENGINEERING**
ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IN A TIME OF GREAT CHANGE



Tithe an
Oireachtais
Houses of the
Oireachtas

**An Comhchoiste um Bonneagar agus Seachadadh ar
an bPlean Forbartha Náisiúnta**

**Joint Committee on Infrastructure and National
Development Plan Delivery**

**Submission by the
Irish Academy of Engineering (IAE)**

8th October 2025

Academy team



Sean Finlay – President.



Tom Leahy – Special Advisor, Director & Past President.



Tim Corcoran – Chair of Infrastructure Standing Committee/Treasurer.



Anne Marie Connibear – Fellow IAE.

The aim of the Irish Academy of Engineering is to advance the wellbeing of the country by marshalling the expertise and insights of eminent engineers to provide independent advice to policy makers on matters involving engineering and technology.



- Members (called Fellows) are Irish Engineers of distinction, drawn from a wide range of disciplines and from all regions across the island of Ireland.
- All are, or have been, leaders in their field and give of their time and expertise on a pro bono and independent basis in the public interest.
- Academy members are drawn from Academia, the Public Sector, Industry and Engineering Consultancy

Academy Affiliations



European
Council of
Applied Sciences
and Engineering



European non- profit organisation, with 19 to 20 European national academies and a forum for exchange and consultation between European institutions, industry, research, and governments. www.eurocase.org



Worldwide International **C**ouncil of **A**cademies of **E**ngineering and **T**echnological **S**ciences(CAETS) provides an independent nonpolitical and non-governmental international forum including 31 Academies from all continents. www.newcaets.org



The Presidents of IAE and RAE signed a joint Memorandum of Undertaking(MoU) to work together on matters of shared interest. www.raeng.org.uk



The Academy signed an MoU with Engineers Ireland, agreeing to undertake joint research projects

Academy Perspective



- **Engineers are problem solvers**
- **Ireland now has the correct structures** to deliver key infrastructure, notably by the establishment of commercial State companies
- The freedom of these organisations (**ESB / EirGrid, TII, GNI and Uisce Éireann**) to deliver the infrastructure they are responsible for has been hindered by barriers.

Reforms needed

- Government are responsible for setting out the policy and objective and should then hand this over to the State Companies and Local Authorities to deliver on the Governments policy objectives
- While this is a challenge across many elements of infrastructure delivery, for this presentation we are using housing as a case study. **The IAE have set out policy reforms in a broad range of areas, and we are more than happy to go into detail during the Q&A.**

Recommendations on Strategic level interventions(1)



- **Policy alignment is required across all Government Departments.**
- All State bodies need **Strategic plans to 2050** for Water, Energy and Roads/Transportation

Under these strategic plans to 2050:

- **Sectoral Masterplans**, as appropriate, should be prepared
- Accompanied with **National Planning Statements**

Recommendation - These should be **adopted by Ministers** and **signed into law by Statutory Instruments (SI's)** following debate and approval in the Oireachtas and they can only be altered by a subsequent Dail approval.

These should then cascade and align with

- The **National Planning Framework**
- Feed into **National , Regional and Local Plans.**



Recommendations on Strategic level interventions(2)

- **Multi annual funding** must be provided for infrastructure delivery
- **Explicit Government support** is required for the delivery of critical national infrastructure projects including the removal of policy target conflicts



The Academy welcomes Reforms of the Infrastructure Guidelines by reducing the number of National approval gates to 3(Tii/UE). However, there are still too many approval gates at Agency level

- **Recommendation** – Let the major semi-state companies(ESB / EirGrid, TII, GNI and Uisce Éireann), which report to Ministers, get on with their job.
 - They have full governance and accountability and robust documented internal procedures.
- **The only approval at Agency level should be by the appointed Board at “approval to proceed to implementation/construction”**
- **This will save substantial time and money.**



Recommendations on Reform of Planning

- Include “**infrastructure delivery**” in the mandate of all State Agencies by Government direction.
- Ensure the individual processes in Planning Authorities, MARA, NPWS and EPA include “**infrastructure delivery**”
- Minor upgrading to existing utility facilities should be proportional and designated as exempted development
- There should be a much greater emphasis (understanding) of the Societal cost of capacity deficits
 - A €1 Bn. Project delivered over 10 years, with construction inflation of 7% per annum, will cost the State €2 Bn.
 - Delivering faster will allow the extra €1 Bn. saving to deliver extra infrastructure

Recommendations on Reform to Legal system



- **The system of Environmental consents is incredibly complex** - It would greatly assist the Courts if this environmental legislation can be streamlined by referral to the Law Reform commission.
- **The new Planning Act 2024 Commencement Orders should issue immediately**
- **Procedures should be simplified for small capital investment** –Why should the approval process for a small waste water treatment plant extension or an ESB sub station serving a population of less than 1,000 people be the same as that serving over a million people?
- **Legal powers under the Water Services Act 2007 to address excessive leakage on private property should be vested in Uisce Eireann by new Statutory Instrument(SI).**



Recommendations on The Common good

- Throughout Europe there is wide agreement that central authority should balance the rights of individuals with the common good.
- Ireland differs from most other EU Countries, where third party appeals are rare. Ireland allows those who lose JR cases to have all their costs fully covered.
- There is **no specific legislation** to enshrine “the common good” in Ireland and no legislation that can be taken into account by the Irish Courts in hearing any Judicial Review process
- All people now agree that infrastructure is essential to deliver housing.
- **Recommendation** – Provide legislative underpinning by Statutory Instrument to infrastructure investment identified by Government as being “essential for the common good”.

Visit our
website
www.iae.ie



Links to key relevant Academy documents for JOC:

Report November 2024 - [Strategic Infrastructure - Major Project delivery](#)

Academy response to DPER accelerating infrastructure unit- [Academy response to DPER](#)

Academy 2025 Annual Report - [2025 Annual Report](#)



Q/A