



An Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí Bonneagair
Athchóiriúcháin Seirbhíse Poiblí agus Digiúcháin
Department of Public Expenditure Infrastructure
Public Service Reform and Digitalisation

Accelerating Infrastructure Report and Action Plan

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Table of Contents

Foreword by Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Minister Canney	2
Foreword by Minister Chambers	4
Executive Summary	7
Actions to Accelerate Infrastructure	11
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Chapters	
1. Introduction	18
2. Barriers to Infrastructure Development	24
3. Project Development and Consenting Process for Infrastructure	29
4. Blueprint for Reform - 4 Pillars:	36
I. Legal Reform	38
II. Regulatory Reform and Simplification	45
III. Delivery and Coordination Reform	56
IV. Public Acceptance	65
Action Plan	71
Detail on 30 Actions Adopted	72
Oversight and Accountability	103
Statement from Independent Members of Taskforce on Accelerating Infrastructure	105
Appendices	108
Background Chapters on Electricity, Transport and Water	109
International examples of reforms introduced in other jurisdictions	128
Acronyms and Glossary of Terms	132



Foreword by Taoiseach, Tánaiste and Minister Canney

When we agreed the Programme for Government, *Securing Ireland's Future*, we committed to delivering a strong and stable economy that provides the homes that people need, high-quality public services, and the infrastructure required to sustain a growing society.

The new National Development Plan provides the investment, with over €110 billion of new public capital investment planned by 2030. This report kickstarts the reform agenda that is necessary to deliver this investment speedily and effectively.

Ireland has a population that is growing, an economy that is competing globally, and climate obligations that demand urgent action. Infrastructure is the foundation for all of this – homes, energy, water and transport are the backbone of a modern economy. That is why this Action Plan matters. It is a whole-of-Government response to the barriers that are slowing progress to the detriment of the common good.

This complements the work taking place across Government such as *Delivering Homes, Building Communities*, which will ensure that serviced land and enabling infrastructure are delivered at pace to support new homes across the country.

The Action Plan will also complement the Action Plan on Competitiveness and Productivity, which creates the conditions for investment-ready sites, improve construction sector productivity, and reduce cost pressures on enterprise. It will also support the work of the Accelerating Renewable Electricity Taskforce and the Offshore Wind Clearing House which are driving the acceleration of Ireland's decarbonisation. Joined-up thinking is at the heart of this approach: housing, climate, energy, and competitiveness are interconnected, and this Action Plan ensures that infrastructure delivery supports all of these priorities.

This Plan sets out how Government will remove obstacles; but also how it will foster a culture of delivery. Legal reforms will rebalance rights and responsibilities so that vital projects are not unduly delayed by minor procedural issues. Regulatory changes will simplify and streamline approvals, replacing complexity with clarity and pace. Coordination measures will embed a delivery-first culture across Government, ensuring that funding translates into outcomes. And public engagement will build trust and transparency, creating a shared national mandate for infrastructure.

This Plan is about instilling confidence – in our people, in our civil and public service, in our economy, and in our shared future. By accelerating infrastructure delivery, we will unlock the homes that families need, the transport networks that connect communities, and the energy systems that power our economy and drive our decarbonisation. We will strengthen Ireland’s competitiveness, attract investment, and support sustainable growth. We will also deliver on our climate commitments, ensuring that infrastructure plays its part in the transition to a low-carbon future.

We believe this is the time to act radically. Against an uncertain global backdrop, Ireland must show that it can deliver for its people and for the next generation. This Action Plan is a statement of intent: to match record investment with real outcomes, to strengthen competitiveness, and to secure Ireland’s place as a leader in sustainable growth. Together, we will make it happen – and we will do so with urgency, ambition, and accountability.



Micheál Martin T.D.
Taoiseach



Simon Harris T.D.
*Tánaiste and Minister for
Finance*



Seán Canney T.D.
*Minister of State at the
Department of Transport with
responsibility for International
and Road Transport, Logistics,
Rail and Ports*



Ministerial Foreword

I am pleased to present this Report and Action Plan on Accelerating Infrastructure. It sets out a comprehensive programme of reforms to speed up the pace of infrastructure delivery in Ireland. This is a statement of intent. It signals Government's determination to break through inertia and deliver the infrastructure that our people, communities, and businesses urgently need.

It has been developed in an evidence-based manner, incorporating feedback from extensive public consultation, and with expert advice and input from the Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce. I would like to extend my warmest thanks and appreciation to the members of that Taskforce. They have been an invaluable and inexhaustible source of knowledge, and their drive and commitment has focused the actions contained in this report to a razor-sharp edge.

This Government has committed unprecedented levels of capital investment to infrastructure for the years ahead – the challenge is ensuring that this investment translates into timely, coordinated, and effective delivery.

The systems that have been built over time to underpin infrastructure development in Ireland, whether legal, regulatory, or within Government, have been built with the best of intentions in mind. They arose to protect people's rights, promote transparency, protect the environment, and to ensure that taxpayers' money is not wasted. These are all valid aims. What has been missing is consideration of the cumulative impact that each additional requirement imposes on the development of infrastructure, the risks of delay this creates, and the resulting cost that delays impose on society.

There is the direct cost, a project that is delayed will see its construction costs rise over time. Since infrastructure is financed either by taxpayers or the users of infrastructure, every delay means higher taxes or less funding available for other projects or priorities. Arguably of even greater importance are the indirect impacts of delays. Inadequate electricity, transport, or water infrastructure impedes our ability to deliver housing, all other forms of social infrastructure from schools to hospitals, and the continued growth of our economy, which is necessary to fund infrastructure investment.

In many cases, the delays imposed by overly strict environmental protection requirements are likely to result in worse environmental outcomes. The report by Mario Draghi on competitiveness in the European Union (EU) specifically called out Ireland for having the slowest approval processes for renewable electricity in the EU. It is difficult to reconcile how the status

quo is compatible with the achievement of Ireland's climate and energy targets, which are amongst the most ambitious in the EU.

There needs to be a fundamental reappraisal of the balance between the competing pillars of the protection that regulation affords and the timely provision of infrastructure that benefits all of society. I believe that there is a clear need for judicious and targeted deregulation. This does not mean slashing and burning protections but it does mean taking a cold, hard look at which steps of the regulatory process remain fit for purpose and which ones may trap infrastructure investment in process without purpose. In parallel, there are many steps outlined in this report that can make the application of regulation better coordinated and consequently more efficient.

Any examination of regulatory processes must include the legal system. I have often heard it said that judicial reviews only consider whether a decision has been made in accordance with the law. It is difficult to reconcile this with the number of judicial reviews taken. This is completely disproportionate with other common law jurisdictions, to say nothing of other EU Member States.

What is particularly worrying is that the number of judicial review cases is also rapidly growing. 2024 saw a 43 percent increase compared to 2023, and already 2025 has seen a further 30 percent increase in the number of cases brought to the Planning and Environment Court. As of today, An Coimisiún Pleanála is facing 135 individual judicial reviews. These range from objections to planning permissions granted to a single house, to the Metrolink project which is fundamental to reducing traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions in Dublin.

This is unsustainable. Absent reform, an ever-increasing tide of judicial reviews could drown our courts system, paralyse infrastructure development and prevent the effective administration of justice. This can be tackled by addressing the incentives, unique to the Irish legal system, that drive an excess reliance on the courts to adjudicate on planning or regulatory matters. It can also be addressed by ensuring that the remedies applied by the courts are fit for purpose and balance the rights of the applicant appropriately against the common good.

Changes will also be required to improve how our public administration deals with infrastructure. We must ensure that the decision-making processes applied within Government, including assessing value for money, are proportionate and are efficiently applied. Government must be prepared to step up to the plate and to state that sometimes, we are prepared to accept a higher degree of project risk in exchange for a faster delivery cycle. I am confident that doing so will be in the best interests of citizens, as it will avoid the costs of delay not currently factored into our decision-making processes. My Department will play a key role in this, including by ensuring that other Departments have the multi-annual capital funding certainty they need to plan projects effectively, along with expert support from the National Development Finance Agency. In return, requests for additional Departmental resources, sanctions, or consents will only be progressed where satisfactory delivery of assigned actions is demonstrated.

Finally, behind all of this stands the role played by the public and wider society. The benefits of infrastructure are wide but some of the impacts, particularly during construction, are local. Government must do a better job at communicating the societal benefits of infrastructure to communities. This includes expanded roles for key utilities and some of the trusted agencies who need adequate infrastructure to meet their mandate. I believe that right across the political spectrum there is a shared imperative to better provide for the infrastructure needs of our people and communities. Steps will be taken to ensure that information on infrastructure development is made more readily available to public representatives at local, regional and national level.

Measures to address legal reform, regulatory reform and simplification, coordination and delivery reform, and public acceptance constitute the four pillars of this Action Plan. Taken together, I am convinced that the reforms set out in this Action Plan are among the most ambitious ever adopted by an Irish Government. I am equally convinced that they are absolutely necessary. Accelerating infrastructure is needed to unlock serviced land for new homes, expand and decarbonise the electricity grid, reduce the time we spend in traffic and provide sustainable jobs. Reform is fundamental to our shared prosperity and to building a society that can adequately provide for the needs of its people

We are not alone in this. Right across the developed world there is a growing acknowledgement that the development cycles for infrastructure are too long. Virtually every common law jurisdiction is taking action to redress the balance between the rules applied to infrastructure development versus its timely delivery. The EU too has acknowledged that its rulebook needs to be rationalised through the new simplification agenda. Ireland will ensure that this agenda is core to our Presidency in 2026 and we will continue to engage with colleagues in other jurisdictions who share a similar legal tradition so that any lessons learned can be incorporated into our reforms.

There is now a systematic whole-of-Government commitment to reform and to the timely delivery of the suite of actions set out in this plan. It demands urgency, collaboration, and accountability at every level – and it will happen. The people of Ireland deserve no less, and this Government will deliver.



Jack Chambers T.D.

*Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure,
Public Service Reform and Digitalisation*

Executive Summary

With the publication of the most recent National Development Plan, capital investment in Ireland has never been higher. An estimated €17 billion in direct State capital spending will take place in 2025, rising to more than €19 billion in 2026. In total, the State expects to invest €275 billion in capital funds by 2035. This investment is translating into tangible, real world impacts. In the education sector alone, 300 vital school building projects are underway. These will provide 22,300 new school places in modernised and newly constructed facilities, with the majority projected to be available in 2026 and 2027.

This investment is addressing Ireland's legacy of underinvestment in capital infrastructure. The underinvestment was driven by economic circumstances and, in particular, the relative lateness of Ireland's industrialisation. This gap has narrowed considerably over time, nearly halving from 1995 to 2022. However, in recent years increasing capital investment has been combined with greater than expected population growth, slowing the elimination of this gap. Soon to be published research by the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) suggests that Ireland's population could grow by one third between 2015 – 2035. This is contributing to economic growth and prosperity but the practical challenges this imposes are clear to see as our infrastructure development lags this growth.

This is compounded by the strong evidence that the development lifecycle for infrastructure, i.e. how long it takes to develop a project from inception to completion, is lengthening considerably. Uisce Éireann has assessed that the development time for a small Wastewater Treatment Project in Ireland is 7-10 years. This is 4-5 years longer than the delivery timeline for similar sized projects in other EU Member States. ESB Networks note that the development cycle for a basic electricity substation has now reached 5–6 years for a typical project, while a more complex development may take 8½ years. Major road projects can now have a development cycle of up to 15 years. In summary, it appears that development timelines have in many cases approximately doubled compared to the development cycles typical of just 20 years ago.

A report¹ published by DPER in July 2025 assessed why this is the case, identifying twelve key barriers impeding the efficient delivery of infrastructure. These barriers are summarised in Chapter 2 of this report. They range from the ever-increasing number of judicial reviews that drive uncertainty and risk aversion, to the growing complexity and fragmentation of our regulatory system. If these barriers are not addressed, despite significantly higher Government capital investment, the expected continued economic and population growth will outpace our ability to deliver the infrastructure that is needed to close Ireland's infrastructure deficit.

The practical consequences of an infrastructure deficit translate into real world consequences for all of society. Without adequate water and electricity supplies, our ability to build enough homes for our population is restricted. An inability to provide secure, affordable and decarbonised energy supplies impacts energy poverty, competitiveness, jobs and our ability to deliver climate targets. Inadequate transport infrastructure means more congestion on our roads, higher bills and more wasted time.

1. https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/Report_on_Engagement_and_Barriers_to_Infrastructure.pdf

This report therefore focuses on a series of actions that can accelerate the provision of critical infrastructure. Critical infrastructure, for this purpose, means electricity network, water and transport infrastructure. The report is focused on these areas, as this is the infrastructure that is necessary to support the development of all other social and economic infrastructure right across society. However, many of the actions and resulting reforms will bring important benefits to infrastructure delivery more broadly.

This Report sets out 30 headline actions, grouped into 4 key pillars:



Pillar 1: Legal Reform

Reforms to the legal system will better balance towards the common good by addressing the incentives that drive a disproportionate reliance on the courts

The first pillar of reform focuses on the legal system. It aims to restore proportionality in how judicial reviews affect infrastructure delivery. While access to justice remains protected, the reforms will reduce incentives for excessive litigation, clarify rules on standing and remedies, and introduce fast-track pathways for nationally significant projects that are in the common good through the development of new legislation. These changes will ensure that the legal system continues to safeguard rights but does so without becoming a bottleneck for progress, enabling critical infrastructure to proceed with greater certainty and pace. Legislation will be progressed to reduce the extent that nationally significant projects cannot be subject to undue procedural delay.



Pillar 2: Regulatory Reform and Simplification

Regulatory simplification will cut back regulation where it adds only to process rather than outcome, reforms to regulatory bodies and how they fulfil their mandate will be introduced

The second pillar addresses regulatory reform and the root causes of many judicial reviews. Ireland's regulatory landscape has become fragmented and overly complex. Regulatory approvals are too often sequential, adding unnecessarily to development timelines with risk aversion, driven by increasing judicial reviews of regulatory decisions, contributing to delay. This pillar introduces actions to simplify and streamline regulatory processes. This means examining the structure of our regulatory environment, the practices applied by regulatory bodies, and how they communicate with one another and applicants. In practical terms, there is scope for improved outcomes by applying parallel processes, mandating statutory timelines, and measuring the performance of our regulatory bodies. These reforms will reduce duplication, improve consistency, and enable infrastructure providers to navigate the system more efficiently, without compromising environmental integrity. The era of slow, sequential approvals will be replaced with a system that works in parallel and at pace. This will be progressed in parallel to the EU simplification agenda that aims to achieve a simpler and faster Europe.



Pillar 3: Coordination and Delivery Reform

Leadership and coordination on infrastructure delivery will be embedded in the heart of Government with more certainty on funding, project pipelines and procurement reforms driving more effective outcomes

Despite increased investment, infrastructure delivery remains hampered by fragmented governance, sequential decision-making, and risk aversion. This pillar introduces a new central coordination role for the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation as envisaged by the Programme for Government, multi-year funding commitments to underpin 5-year sectoral plans, and reforms to procurement and approvals that will more effectively convert funding into outcomes. It will also build the capacity of the construction sector and enable better sequencing of major projects, ensuring that infrastructure is delivered on time, within budget, and with minimal disruption. We will embed a delivery-first mindset across Government, backed by clear governance and real-time oversight.



Pillar 4: Public Acceptance

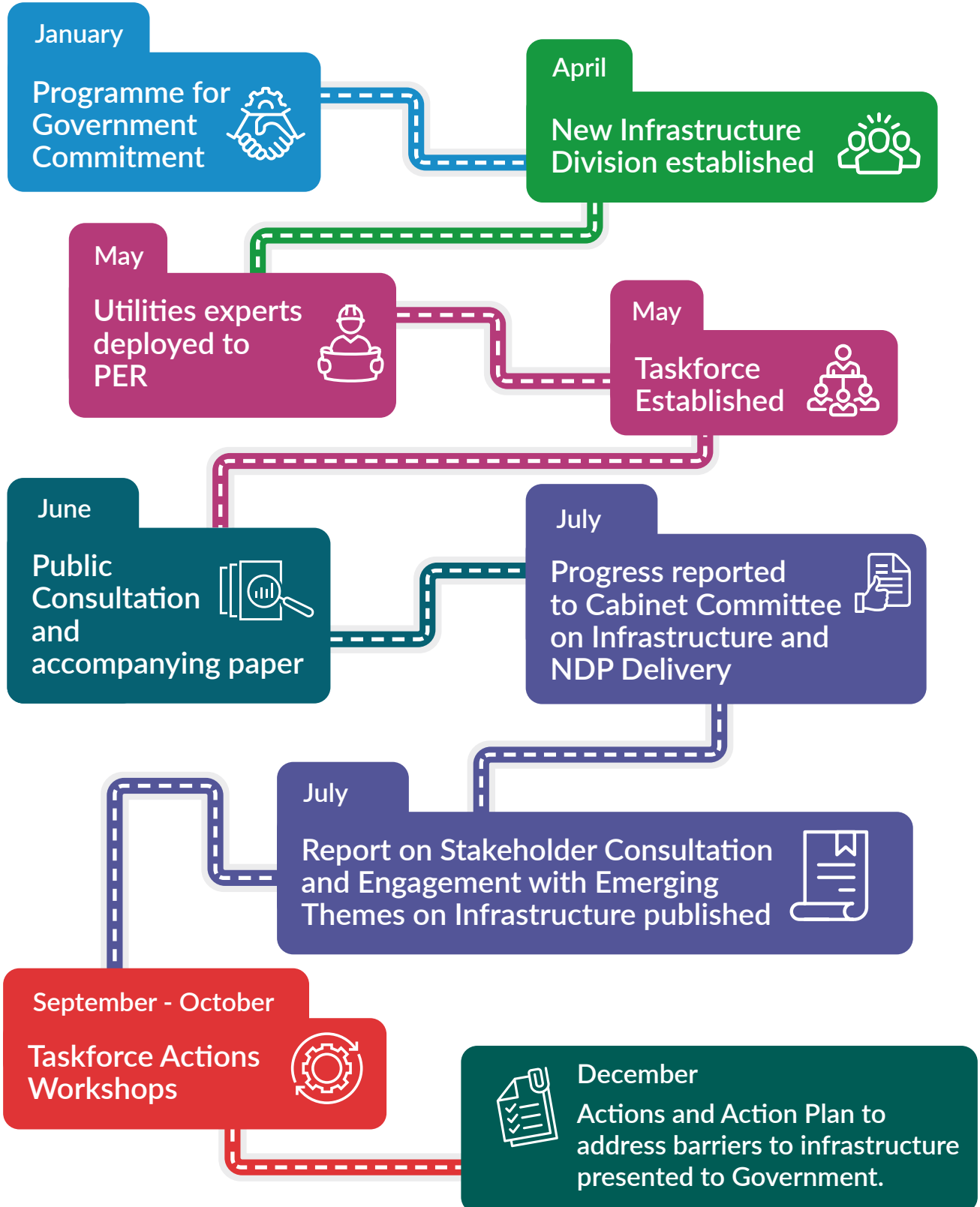
The State will provide better information to support a more informed debate but without improved public acceptance critical infrastructure will be subject to delays, leaving broader society worse off

Local input is built into the planning system. Too often however, opposition to critical infrastructure is magnified, while the broader benefits are disregarded. Fundamentally, we need adequate infrastructure to underpin everything we value as a society from homes, to jobs, to the preservation of our environment. There needs to be more effective structures to better communicate and weigh the societal value of infrastructure with local concerns. As such, this pillar introduces measures to strengthen cooperation between utilities and local authorities and build a national narrative around the benefits of infrastructure, as well as more practical measures to improve the coordination of land sharing in the public sector. By fostering trust and transparency, these reforms will support a more informed debate around the provision of infrastructure. Government will make the case for infrastructure openly and honestly, and ensure that communities see the benefits early and clearly.

The actions contained in each of these pillars were arrived at following the conclusion of a short but extensive development process with the expert input of the Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce, chaired by Minister Chambers.

The actions will be implemented over 2026, with the majority targeted for completion in Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 of 2026. There will be robust oversight of the Government's performance in achieving these targets. The Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce, chaired by Minister Chambers, will review on a regular basis the status of actions, with reports provided to the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure.

Accelerating Infrastructure





Actions to Accelerate Infrastructure

List of Actions



Action 1:
Reform Judicial Review



Action 2:
Enact Legislation to Accelerate Critical Infrastructure and Provide for Emergency Powers



Action 3:
Implement Other Targeted Legislative Reforms



Action 4:
Progress Domestic Reforms to Environmental Assessment in Parallel with EU Simplification Agenda



Action 5:
Increase Exemption Thresholds for Critical Infrastructure



Action 6:
Respond Rapidly to Precedent



Action 7:
Enact Civil Reform Bill to Legislate for Judicial Reviews



Action 8:
Develop and Publish National Planning Statements for Critical Infrastructure



Action 9:
Establish a Regulatory Simplification Unit



Action 10:
Rationalise Legislation Underpinning Regulatory Processes



Action 11:
Reform Processes Applied to Critical Infrastructure within Agencies/Regulators



Action 12:
Implement Early Warning System re EU Legislative Change on Critical Infrastructure



Action 13:
Advocate for new approach to legislation at EU level on critical infrastructure



Action 14:
Advise on Alternative Methods of Transposing EU Legislation



Action 15:
Enable Developer-led Infrastructure



Action 16:
Review the Role and Functions of the Office of the Planning Regulator and drive performance in the planning system, including consistency in decision making



Action 17:
Target Investment at Priority Sectors through NDP Review



Action 18:
Publish Sectoral Investment Plans to Promote Project Pipelines



Action 19:
Enhance Infrastructure Coordination Function in DPER



Action 20:
Introduce Risk Appetite Statements



Action 21:
Improve Utility Coordination at National and Local Level



Action 22:
Increase Construction Sector Capacity and Productivity



Action 23:
Accelerate Projects through Consenting Processes



Action 24:
Provide expert assistance for key Infrastructure projects



Action 25:
Reform Procurement Processes



Action 26:
Apply AI and Digital Tools to Support Infrastructure Rollout



Action 27:
Create a Duty for State Bodies to Cooperate in Making Land Available and Accessible for Critical Infrastructure



Action 28:
Build Leadership Support for Critical Infrastructure Projects at National and Local Levels



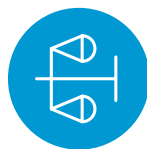
Action 29:
Enhance Government Communication to Promote the Importance of Infrastructure Delivery



Action 30:
Establish a Benefits Realisation Framework for Infrastructure Projects

Accelerating Infrastructure Delivery – Actions


Pillar	Impact	Action	Links to Barriers	Indicative Timeline
Legal Reform	<p>These legal reforms will reduce delays and uncertainty in infrastructure delivery by streamlining judicial review processes, clarifying legal thresholds, and enabling faster responses to legal precedent.</p> <p>By rebalancing access to justice with the public interest, the actions will create a more predictable, efficient legal environment that supports timely progress on critical infrastructure projects.</p>	<p>1. Reform Judicial Review A series of reforms to the judicial review process which will reduce the number of judicial reviews, improve the efficiency and timeliness of proceedings and reduce costs for all parties.</p> <p>2. Enact Legislation to Accelerate Critical Infrastructure and Provide for Emergency Powers A statutory framework will require the prioritisation of all decisions, licences, permits, consents or agreements from state entities. Legislation will also be drafted to provide an emergency powers framework for critical infrastructure projects.</p> <p>3. Other Targeted Legislative Reforms This includes examining overly burdensome or overlapping matters that developers or authorities must have regard to, simplifying processes around compulsory purchase orders and applying the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2024 to Transport Projects.</p> <p>4. Progress Domestic Reforms to Environmental Assessment in Parallel with EU Simplification Agenda Introduce reforms to the environmental assessments including clearer domestic. This will result in shorter, more focused and useful reports and consequently faster decision-making timelines.</p> <p>5. Increase Exemption Thresholds for Critical Infrastructure Increase the thresholds at which critical infrastructure requires planning permission. This will allow for more efficient delivery of both new facilities and expansion of existing facilities.</p> <p>6. Respond Rapidly to Precedent Create mechanisms that identify new precedents set by court judgements that are relevant to infrastructure and offer early options to Government to address, as well as enduring solutions.</p> <p>7. Enact Civil Reform Bill to Legislate for Judicial Reviews Develop legislation that will codify law on judicial review by placing it on a statutory basis. This will allow the legislature to determine the scope and application of judicial review.</p>	<p>→ Increasing Judicial Reviews</p> <p>→ Consequences of Judicial Reviews</p> <p>→ Risk Aversion</p> <p>→ Slow Processes</p>	<p>Q1 2026 – Q3 2026</p> <p>Q1 2026 – Q3 2026</p> <p>Q1 2026 – Q4 2026</p> <p>Q2 2026 – Q4 2026</p> <p>Q2 2026</p> <p>Q1 2026</p> <p>Q4 2025 – Q2 2027</p>



Pillar	Impact	Action	Links to Barriers	Indicative Timeline
Regulatory Reform and Simplification 	<p>These actions will streamline planning, consenting, and regulatory processes, reducing delays and improving consistency across agencies. By embedding principles such as proportionality and enabling parallel consenting, the reforms will remove unnecessary burdens while maintaining robust environmental and legal standards.</p> <p>These changes are expected to significantly shorten project timelines by up, accelerating the delivery of critical infrastructure.</p>	<p>8. Develop and Publish National Planning Statement(s) for Critical Infrastructure This will provide clear guidance to all planning authorities on Government expectations regarding the development of critical infrastructure.</p> <p>9. Establish a Regulatory Simplification Unit Setup a unit to coordinate the streamlining of regulatory processes and structures including governance, oversight and accountability. This will address overlapping and unduly complex regulatory frameworks that drive lengthy timelines and increase the scope for judicial reviews.</p> <p>10. Rationalise Legislation Underpinning Regulatory Processes Introduce legislative amendments to shorten development timelines, combined with a more thorough “look back” exercise to identify and apply potential flexibilities within EU legislation.</p> <p>11. Reform Processes Applied to Critical Infrastructure Within Agencies/Regulators Reforms to the processes of all bodies involved in the licensing and consenting of critical infrastructure to improve coordination, ensure that all processes are proportionate, have fixed timelines, published guidelines and are conducted in parallel where feasible.</p> <p>12. Implement Early Warning System re EU Legislative Change on Critical Infrastructure To avoid transpositions in one sector that have unintended outcomes in another sector</p> <p>13. Advocate for New Approach to EU legislation on Critical Infrastructure Seek to streamline EU legislation and work to ensure an appropriate balance and proportionality in future EU legislation.</p> <p>14. Advise on Alternative Methods of Transposing EU Legislation Determine the legislative options available to adopt a more prescriptive approach to the transposition of EU legislation, reducing ambiguities and subjectivity where feasible.</p> <p>15. Enable Developer-led Infrastructure Progress reforms to deliver certain types of electricity and water infrastructure where this may result in faster or more efficient development with no degradation of standards.</p> <p>16. Review the Role and Functions of the Office of the Planning Regulator and Drive Performance in the Planning System, including Consistency in Decision-Making Review role to enable the prioritisation of housing and critical infrastructure. Drive best practice and consistency across local planning decisions, and map, collate and publish GIS data</p>	<p>→ Increased Regulatory Burden</p> <p>→ Insufficiently Coordinated Approvals</p> <p>→ Slow Processes</p> <p>→ Prioritisation and Coordination of Infrastructure</p> <p>→ Risk Aversion</p> <p>→ Inconsistent Planning Decisions and Timelines</p>	<p>Q1 2026 – Q1 2027</p> <p>Q2 2026 – Q1 2027</p> <p>Q2 2026 – Q3 2026</p> <p>Q1 2026 – Q3 2026</p> <p>Q1 2026 – Q3 2026</p> <p>Q4 2025 – Q3 2026</p> <p>Q1 2026 – Q4 2026</p> <p>Q2 2026 – Q3 2026</p> <p>Q2 2026 – Q3 2026</p>

Pillar	Impact	Action	Links to Barriers	Indicative Timeline
Coordination and Delivery Reform	<p>These measures will accelerate infrastructure delivery by creating a coordinated, legally empowered system that reduces delays, improves planning certainty, and aligns funding with readiness.</p> <p>By embedding strategic oversight, streamlining approvals, and fostering whole-of-State cooperation, Ireland can deliver critical infrastructure for housing, energy, and climate goals more efficiently and predictably.</p>	<p>17. Target Investment at Priority Sectors through the NDP Review The revised NDP gives very clear prioritisation to housing and critical infrastructure and provides funding certainty to Departments and utilities</p> <p>18. Publish Sectoral Investment Plans to Promote Project Pipelines This will provide certainty for industry to prepare, invest and upskill adequately to meet Government's investments plans</p> <p>19. Enhance Infrastructure Coordination Function in DPER This will provide whole-of-government oversight of infrastructure delivery.</p> <p>20. Introduce Risk Appetite Statements Develop Risk Appetite Statements (RAS) at Government, sector, and project levels to enable proportionate oversight and accelerate infrastructure delivery</p> <p>21. Improve Utility Coordination at National and Local Level Establish Joint Utilities and Transport Clearing House (JUTC) and create formal engagement structures to promote more effective engagement between utilities and Local Government</p> <p>22. Increase Construction Sector Capacity and Productivity This encompasses a series of actions that will streamline visas, work permits and global recruitment, expand the capacity and output of existing vocational and educational institutions and improve the use of MMC and digitalisation.</p> <p>23. Accelerate Projects through Consenting Processes Streamlining infrastructure guidelines by removing the external assurance process, reviewing the Dual Approval Process for Water Sector Investment and offering centralised (NDFA) support for major projects.</p> <p>24. Provide Expert Assistance for Key Infrastructure Projects The NDFA will provide centralised support and expert assistance for major projects through the approvals process.</p> <p>25. Reform Procurement Processes Supporting changes to the European Procurement Regulations introduce amendments to the CWMF and improve standardisation, professionalism, centralisation and training.</p> <p>26. Apply AI and Digital Tools to Support Infrastructure Rollout To provide data insights that will improve the coordination of critical infrastructure development.</p>	<p>→ Risk Aversion</p> <p>→ Insufficiently Coordinated Approvals</p> <p>→ Prioritisation and Coordination of Infrastructure</p> <p>→ Uncertainty of Funding and Project Pipeline</p> <p>→ Inconsistent Planning Decisions and Timelines</p> <p>→ Slow Processes</p> <p>→ Procurement Challenge</p> <p>→ Construction Sector Capacity and Productivity</p>	<p>Q3 2025</p> <p>Q4 2025</p> <p>Q4 2025 – Q1 2026</p> <p>Q2 2026 – Q4 2026</p> <p>Q4 2025 – Q2 2026</p> <p>Q1 2026 – Q3 2026</p> <p>Q1 2026 – Q4 2026</p> <p>Q2 2025- Q1 2026</p> <p>Q2 2026 – Q3 2026</p> <p>Q1 2026 – Q4 2026</p>



Pillar	Impact	Action	Links to Barriers	Indicative Timeline
Public Acceptance 	<p>These measures will build public and political support for infrastructure by improving communication, fostering trust, and reducing opposition.</p> <p>Combined with streamlined land access processes, they will remove key delivery barriers, shorten timelines, and enable faster, more efficient implementation of critical projects.</p>	<p>27. Create a Duty for State Bodies to Cooperate in Making Land Available and Accessible for Critical Infrastructure This will create an effective process to accelerate identifying suitable sites for critical infrastructure.</p> <p>28. Build Leadership Support for Critical Infrastructure Projects at National and Local Levels Enhance leadership support for critical infrastructure projects at national and local levels through more effective engagement.</p> <p>29. Enhance Government Communication to Promote the Importance of Infrastructure Delivery To promote the social value of infrastructure in an evidence-based manner.</p> <p>30. Establish a Benefits Realisation Framework for Infrastructure Projects This will aid communication by allowing values to be attached to the societal value of infrastructure, improving public understanding of the benefits of infrastructure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Public Acceptance → Slow Processes → Risk Aversion → Insufficiently Coordinated Approvals → Prioritisation and Coordination of Infrastructure 	<p>Q1 2026 – Q1 2027</p> <p>Q1 2026</p> <p>Q1 2026</p> <p>Q1 2026</p> <p>Q2 2026</p>



1

Introduction

Ireland's infrastructure system is not short on ambition. What it lacks is a predictable, time-efficient pathway from policy intent to delivery. Processes struggle to keep pace with today's scale and complexity. This report sets out a coherent reform package to restore predictability and accelerate delivery.

This report sets out an ambitious vision for transformative reform of the delivery of critical infrastructure in Ireland. The actions in this report are driven by a clear sense of urgency. The challenges are significant, but so too is the commitment to act. The actions chart a bold path forward, setting out transformative reforms that will be substantively implemented over 2026. Early delivery of key measures will ensure immediate progress, laying the groundwork for long-term success and demonstrating that change is not only possible, it is already underway.

Failing to undertake this reform carries significant societal and economic costs. Without modern infrastructure, communities face reduced access to housing, education, healthcare, and employment. Economically, delays in development constrain productivity, limit trade, and deter investment, while public expenditure rises due to inefficiencies and increased demand for emergency interventions.

The cost of inaction far outweighs the investment and willingness required for reform.

By addressing systemic bottlenecks and creating a streamlined framework for planning, funding, and delivery, these reforms enable efficient progress and ensure that future investments are aligned, coordinated, and sustainable. Delaying reform imposes steep and compounding costs. Each month of delay inflates project expenses disproportionately due to planning bottlenecks, procurement inefficiencies, and supply chain volatility, according to the Irish Fiscal Advisory Council. Failure to act now risks billions in additional expenditure, missed housing targets, and long-term social inequality - costs far exceed the investment required for timely reform.

Acting now ensures progress, delaying compounds risk.

This Plan is an absolute commitment to infrastructure delivery. It sets out not only what must be achieved but establishes the expectation that every organ of the State will act decisively to make it happen. The measures outlined are designed to move beyond aspiration to implementation, ensuring that the vision translates into real outcomes for communities and the country.

While this Plan focuses on delivering critical enabling infrastructure, many of its measures have broader relevance. The principles and actions outlined can be applied across the wider infrastructure landscape, from mega projects to local enabling works, supporting transport, utilities, and community services, ensuring a more integrated and resilient approach to national development.

Ireland's Evolving Infrastructure Landscape

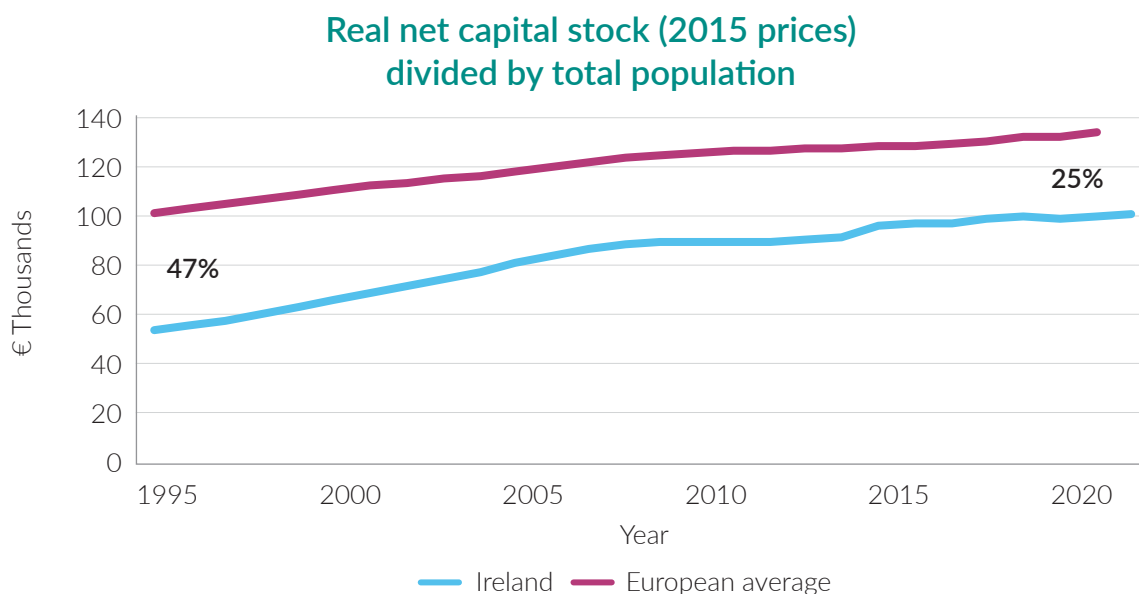
Over the past four decades, Ireland's infrastructure has undergone substantial change, shaped by economic cycles, demographic shifts, and evolving policy priorities.

Historically, Ireland has maintained a comparatively modest level of infrastructure stock relative to other high-income European countries. This is primarily due to its relatively recent transition to high-income status. Constrained by limited fiscal capacity throughout the 1970s and 1980s, Ireland's infrastructure stock was almost 50 percent below the European average by the mid-1990s.

From strategic transport corridors to digital connectivity and water services, infrastructure development was a cornerstone of Ireland’s social and economic progress in the 1990s and early 2000s. Post the 2007 economic crisis, infrastructure investment levels fell precipitously and only rose significantly towards the latter half of the 2010s. Coupled with continued economic and population growth, an infrastructure deficit of around 25 percent persists.

This infrastructure gap has tangible consequences for quality of life, economic competitiveness, and environmental sustainability.

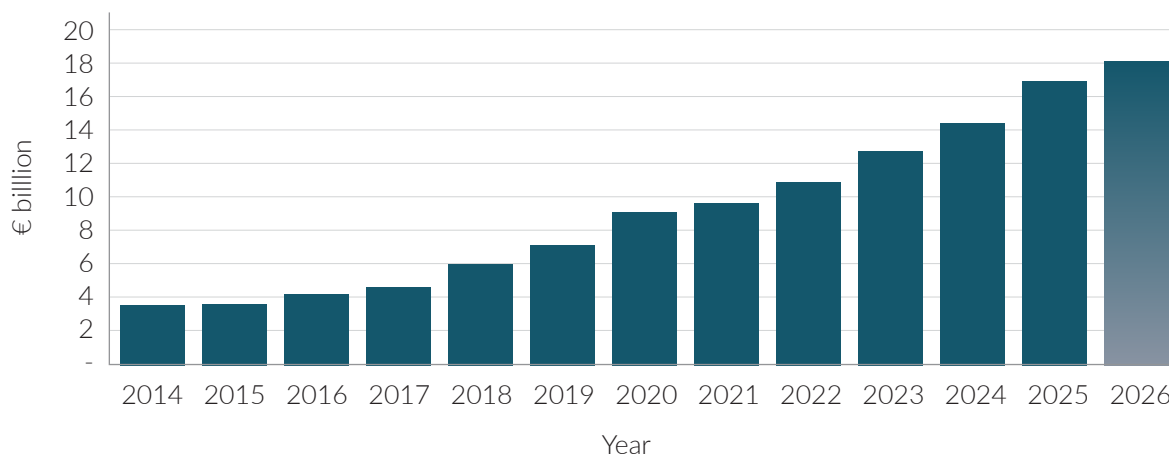
Figure 1 Ireland and High-income average European countries infrastructure per person



Source: Eurostat, CSO, and Conroy and Timoney (2024)

Closing this gap will require sustained strategic investment and reform to enhance Ireland’s capacity for inclusive and sustainable growth. In 2025, the Government invested approximately €17 billion in capital projects, with NDP expenditure projected to reach €19 billion in 2026. This represents more than 5 percent of Gross National Income (GNI*), placing Ireland among one of the highest capital investors in the EU and nearly quadrupling the level of investment recorded a decade ago. Such sustained funding reflects a clear strategic commitment to long-term infrastructure development, recognising its role as a cornerstone of national growth and resilience.

Figure 2 Exchequer Capital Investment 2014-2025



Source: DPER 2025

In addition to historic under-investment, the challenges faced include fragmented governance structures, lengthy planning processes, and limited coordination across sectors. These all contribute to lengthening project development and delivery cycles. Improving procedural efficiency is key to optimising the return on investment.

The consequences of this are most acutely felt in housing provision, where construction levels have consistently fallen short of meeting the needs of a growing population. The broader societal and economic impacts are also evident in declining quality of life indicators, such as urban congestion. Traffic delays result in significant time losses, with drivers in Dublin losing an estimated 81 hours annually, 67 hours in Galway, and 51 hours in Cork due to congestion. Public transport users are also affected by this congestion, which also has negative impacts on air quality in towns and cities. These inefficiencies highlight the urgent need for coordinated infrastructure investment and reform to support Ireland's long-term competitiveness and social well-being.

The critical infrastructure systems of water, electricity, and transport are foundational to the functioning and sustainability of modern society.

While challenges in the process remain, progress is evident, demonstrating the State's capacity to act decisively and establish a strong foundation for the next phase of reform. Ireland's water infrastructure continues to expand and improve through targeted investment and support programmes. Through capital investment of over €10 billion between 2014 and 2024, newly constructed or major upgrades have been delivered to 80 water treatment plants and 168 wastewater treatment plants, in addition to targeted upgrade programmes at more than 500 locations. Over 2 million people have been removed from boil water notices, and 57 water supplies have been removed from the EPA's Remedial Action List, including 172,000 properties at risk of Trihalomethane (THM) non-compliance.

Ireland has gone from 40 percent compliance with the Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive in 2014, to 95 percent compliance by the end of 2025.

In the electricity sector, renewable generation capacity has expanded by 50 percent since early 2022, from 4.8GW to 7.4GW, contributing to a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and supporting sustainable economic development.

Significant progress has also been made in our transport network, with the delivery of 170 kilometres of new roads, including key projects such as the New Ross bypass, Dunkettle interchange, Moycullen bypass, N22 Macroom bypass, and N5 Westport–Turlough. Active travel infrastructure has grown substantially, now encompassing 660 kilometres of pedestrian routes, 400 kilometres of cycling infrastructure, and 220 kilometres of greenways.

Progress in these critical infrastructure areas of water, electricity and transport, are supporting the delivery of infrastructure in other key sectors.

- Since 2021, around 53,000 new dwellings have been delivered through local authority housing schemes.
- In education, major capital investments include the development of Technological University Dublin's new city campus in Grangegorman and the completion of approximately 800 school building projects since 2020, with an additional 300 currently under construction. These investments have led to measurable improvements, such as a reduction in average pupil-teacher ratios in primary education to 22:1, contributing to enhanced learning outcomes and improved standardised test performance.
- In the health sector, notable projects include the first phase of the National Rehabilitation Hospital redevelopment and new ward blocks at Mallow Hospital and University College Hospital Galway.

Ireland now stands at a pivotal moment in its infrastructure journey.

Building on this momentum is essential to sustain growth and meet future needs. Much of our infrastructure was designed to serve a population size that has now been surpassed. In 2024, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) reported Ireland's largest annual population increase since 2008 – an expansion of nearly 100,000 people within a single year. While our infrastructure achievements reflect real progress, the Government acknowledges that investment and the implementation of these reform actions remains essential to fully close Ireland's infrastructure gap.

Work Programme

This report has been produced by DPER with expert input from the Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce, chaired by the Minister. The Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce was established to support the Department in this function, and to monitor the implementation of measures to accelerate infrastructure delivery. Within the Department, an Infrastructure Division was formed in April 2025 in line with commitments made in the Programme for Government, with the goal of accelerating the delivery of critical infrastructure in Ireland. To support this work, the Department engaged experts from key utility organisations, bringing valuable expertise and cross-sectoral insight. Their contributions have been instrumental in shaping the actions and ensuring alignment with operational realities on the ground.

This Report and accompanying Action Plan now propose a series of targeted actions to mitigate the barriers set out in the *Accelerating Infrastructure Report on Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement with Emerging Themes on Infrastructure*.

This Plan takes full account of the important work being undertaken by other taskforces such as the National Energy Affordability Taskforce, the Accelerating Renewable Electricity Taskforce, the Housing Supply Coordination Taskforce, as well as the Housing Activation Office, and is closely aligned with their objectives. By ensuring consistency and collaboration across these initiatives, we strengthen delivery, maximising positive impact for communities and the economy.

The actions contained in this report demonstrate a firm commitment to real reform, laying the groundwork for a more sustainable and strategically positioned Ireland into the future.

This Report and Action Plan sets out the Government's programme of reform for how infrastructure can be delivered.

This suite of actions will be monitored and reviewed for their efficient implementation and desired outcomes.

Sustained momentum and support across all of civic society will be required to reform entrenched systems.

Due to the nature of some of the critical infrastructure networks, further actions may be considered if delivery is not sufficiently accelerated or externalities arise.

Structure of Report

Chapter 2 summarises the 12 barriers to efficient infrastructure delivery identified in the *Report on Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement with Emerging Themes on Infrastructure* and outlines the proposed actions to mitigate these barriers.

Chapter 3 describes the current consenting processes for infrastructure development in Ireland.

Chapter 4 sets out the blueprint for reform under four Pillars:

- i.** Legal Reform;
- ii.** Regulatory Reform;
- iii.** Co-ordination and Delivery Reform; and
- iv.** Public Acceptance

The Action Plan section of the Report includes a summary of all 30 actions, detailed measures under each action, timelines for results, metrics for how success will be gauged, and the body responsible for implementation.

This is followed by a section on the Oversight and Accountability framework that will be created to support successful implementation of the Action Plan. A statement from the Independent Members of the Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce concludes the Action Plan.

This Report is accompanied by two evidence-based appendices. Firstly, a background chapter on each critical infrastructure sector (water, electricity and transport), including investment histories, case studies, and indicative project timelines. Secondly, a summary of similar infrastructure reforms implemented in common law jurisdictions (New Zealand, Canada and the UK) and examples of best practices recommended from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), World Bank and others, supporting the rationale for reform.



2

Barriers to Infrastructure Development

In July 2025, following extensive stakeholder engagement, the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation (DPER) published the *Accelerating Infrastructure Report on Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement with Emerging Themes on Infrastructure*. The Report identified twelve barriers to effective infrastructure delivery in Ireland. The twelve barriers were categorised into three broad areas;

- i. The Regulatory Environment
- ii. Planning and Legal Systems
- iii. Internal Systems

Many of the barriers are inter-connected and have consequences for other areas of infrastructure development processes. For example, the increased risks associated with Judicial Reviews have lengthened approval timeframes as environmental assessments expand to react to court precedents and regulatory decisions become more cautious.

The twelve barriers identified are briefly summarised below. Chapter 3 sets out the blueprint for tackling these barriers.

1.	Public Acceptance Insufficient public awareness of the consequences of poor infrastructure tends to magnify opposition
2.	Increased Regulatory Burden Multiple, distinct and often overlapping regulatory processes increase complexity without necessarily improving outcomes
3.	Risk Aversion Threat of judicial review on procedural matters drives a culture of caution, limiting the scope for coordination and engagement that could lead to improved outcomes
4.	Increasing Judicial Reviews The increasing number of judicial reviews is contributing to uncertainty, longer timelines and higher cost, driving risk aversion at all other steps
5.	Consequences of Judicial Reviews Lack of fast track for priority projects; procedural flaws can often significantly delay infrastructure without means for consideration of wider consequences
6.	Insufficiently Co-ordinated Approvals Limited coordination on licences, consents and permissions leads to duplication of effort and sequential processes that could be conducted in parallel, saving time/money
7.	Slow Processes Unclear that current procedures on project assessment add value that is commensurate with the time burden imposed
8.	Inconsistent Planning Decisions and Timelines The extent of competing issues can lead to inconsistency and hence drive uncertainty
9.	Prioritisation and Co-ordination of Infrastructure Semi-state companies and regulatory agencies are often limited in their ability to prioritise and to consider wider societal aims in decision making
10.	Procurement Challenges Current processes are leading to falling competition in public tenders, impacting value for money and incentives for investment in skills/capability
11.	Uncertainty of Funding and Project Pipeline Uncertainty around the timing and feasibility of Govt investment plans is limiting interest in the Irish infrastructure market among potential developers
12.	Construction Sector Capacity and Productivity Construction Sector capacity and productivity is a constraint

1. Public Acceptance

The benefits of infrastructure tend to be widely dispersed, while the perceived costs such as disruption, visual impact, and loss of amenity are concentrated at a local level. This imbalance can fuel opposition from affected communities. This lack of public acceptance can significantly impede progress at every stage of a project's lifecycle.

Statutory and non-statutory consultations become adversarial and resource intensive, while planning, regulatory, and licensing approval processes all become more likely to face challenges. This extends timelines and increases costs, ultimately placing a greater financial burden on taxpayers or end users.

This systemic challenge undermines timely delivery, complicates land access negotiations, and heightens uncertainty for developers, making public acceptance a critical barrier to accelerating infrastructure provision.

2. Increased Regulatory Burden

Infrastructure projects in Ireland must navigate a complex legal and regulatory landscape. This encompasses EU Directives, national legislation, and a broad array of policies and guidelines. Over time, the volume and intricacy of these frameworks has grown substantially. This complexity is further heightened by an expanding body of case law, driven by the increasing number of judicial reviews of planning and regulatory decisions and referrals to the Court of Justice of the European Union.

In many cases, Irish regulation exceeds EU minimum requirements contributing to a fragmented framework, requiring numerous sequential approvals and extensive documentation. The cumulative impact of this burden slows project timelines, inflates costs, and introduces uncertainty for developers, while offering little evidence of proportionate environmental or social benefits. Limited inter-Departmental engagement is evident during the development of secondary legislation and inconsistent coordination across agencies further exacerbates delays. Together, these factors make regulatory complexity a critical barrier to timely and efficient infrastructure delivery.

3. Risk Aversion

Threat of judicial review on procedural matters and the reputational risk of adverse findings together drive a culture of caution right throughout the development process for infrastructure. This defensive mindset limits coordination and proactive engagement that could otherwise improve outcomes, replacing collaboration with rigid, highly detailed assessments, and excessive documentation aimed at legal protection rather than project quality.

The lack of timely guidance and proportionality in requirements for smaller projects further compounds delays, inflates costs, and creates adversarial processes. Collectively, these factors slow decision-making at every stage of the infrastructure lifecycle, making risk aversion a systemic barrier that undermines efficiency, predictability, and confidence in Ireland's ability to deliver critical infrastructure.

4. Increasing numbers of Judicial Reviews

The increasing number of judicial reviews is a major driver of uncertainty in Ireland's infrastructure development system. The growing number of judicial reviews is contributing to longer timelines, higher costs, and cascading delays across all stages of project development, while also driving risk aversion. While judicial reviews examine the lawful basis for a decision, there is no weighting of the impact that flaws in the decision-making process may have had versus the impact of a ruling quashing a decision. In practical terms this means that even minor errors can result in multi-year delays to projects and the consequent direct and indirect costs.

The imbalance in cost exposure – where applicants face minimal financial risk – encourages frequent challenges, turning judicial review from a safeguard into a tactical tool to obstruct development. This dynamic not only prolongs planning and consenting cycles but also inflates documentation requirements and legal costs, creating systemic inefficiencies that undermine confidence in Ireland’s ability to deliver critical infrastructure on time and within budget.

5. Consequences of Judicial Review

The consequences of judicial review create severe delays because procedural flaws, even when substantive issues are sound, often result in full quashing of permissions rather than targeted remedies. Limited means to fast-track processes for priority projects has added years to timelines, with cascading impacts when multiple consents are involved. This rigid approach ignores wider societal consequences, driving excessive documentation and defensive practices that inflate costs and undermine confidence in Ireland’s ability to deliver critical infrastructure efficiently.

6. Insufficiently Co-ordinated Approvals

Insufficiently coordinated approvals are occurring due to multiple agencies handling licences, consents, and permissions in isolation, creating duplication and sequencing issues. Lack of coordination on licences, consents and permissions leads to duplication of effort and sequential processes that could be conducted in parallel, saving time and money. Semi-state companies and regulatory bodies often lack mechanisms to align priorities or share resources, resulting in repeated information requests, inconsistent requirements, and bottlenecks during peak workloads. This fragmented approach significantly extends timelines and increases costs for critical infrastructure projects.

7. Slow Processes

It is unclear that current internal Government procedures on project assessment add value that is commensurate with the time burden imposed. Slow processes in infrastructure delivery are driven by overly complex approval stages, lengthy internal reviews, and disproportionate documentation requirements that add time without improving outcomes. Current appraisal frameworks often duplicate sectoral processes, creating delays at key decision gates and reducing predictability for developers. This lack of streamlined governance inflates costs, extends timelines, and undermines confidence in Ireland’s ability to deliver critical projects efficiently.

The potential duplication of effort already taking place at sectoral level and the impact on project timelines, itself a driver of cost, must be carefully weighed against the benefits provided by the Infrastructure Guidelines.

8. Inconsistent Planning Decisions and Timelines

The extent of competing issues to be considered by decision makers can lead to inconsistency and hence drive uncertainty. Inconsistent planning decisions and timelines arise from unclear or outdated procedural guidelines, fragmented local development plans, and varying interpretations by consenting authorities. Semi-state companies and developers face uncertainty as conditions and timelines differ widely across consenting authorities, often conflicting with national priorities. This lack of clarity leads to inconsistent decision-making, delays in pre-commencement compliance, and increased risk of judicial review, all of which inflate costs and undermine confidence in project delivery.

9. Prioritisation and Co-ordination of Infrastructure

Prioritisation and coordination failures occur because infrastructure decisions are fragmented across agencies with narrow mandates, limiting flexibility to align projects with wider societal goals. Semi-state companies and regulatory agencies are often limited in their ability to prioritise and to consider wider societal aims in decision-making, which results in conflicting priorities, sequential approvals, and poor resource alignment. This siloed approach prevents integrated planning and synchronisation of timelines for utilities and transport projects, creating inefficiencies and delays that inflate costs and undermine strategic coherence in delivering critical infrastructure.

10. Procurement Challenges

Procurement challenges stem from rigid, compliance-driven processes that prioritise risk transfer over collaboration, making tenders unattractive and reducing competition. Current processes are leading to falling competition in public tenders, impacting value for money and discouraging investment in skills and capability. Lengthy timelines, inflexible contract models, and uncertainty around future pipelines further weaken market confidence, slowing delivery and inflating costs for critical infrastructure projects.

11. Uncertainty of Funding and Project Pipeline

Uncertainty around funding and project pipelines undermines confidence in Ireland's infrastructure delivery system, making it difficult for developers and contractors to plan effectively. This lack of clarity on priorities and timelines discourages investment in skills and capacity, reduces competition in tenders, and drives inefficiencies that inflate costs and delay critical projects.

12. Construction Sector Capacity and Productivity

Ireland's construction workforce remains significantly below pre-crisis levels, despite the increase in population since then. The sector faces a major skills and capacity gap, requiring up to 80,000 additional workers if productivity remains unchanged, though this need could drop to 20,000 with efficiency improvements. Productivity is estimated to be 30–32 percent lower than OECD averages, driven by small firm size, cyclical demand, and complex procurement and regulatory systems. If unaddressed, these constraints risk overwhelming market capacity, causing delays, cost inflation, and jeopardising delivery of the largest capital investment programme in the State's history.

Insufficient skills, capacity, and productivity in the construction sector have a range of potential impacts. If no interventions are made to bolster the supply chain, market capacity could be limited to the long-term rate of growth in the construction sector and its workforce.

The barriers identified across the system are individually serious but collectively decisive. Fragmented approvals, sequential decision-points and unclear inter-agency responsibilities reinforce each other, creating a system where predictable timelines are the exception rather than the norm.



3

Project Development and Consenting Process for Infrastructure

The current development cycle is linear and siloed. Statutory bodies and regulators often engage only after design decisions are set, causing re-work and reset delays. A reformed cycle needs structured early engagement and clear sequencing of responsibilities.

The complexity and duration of all the various processes required throughout the project lifecycle is a key driver of an infrastructure development cycle in Ireland that is too slow. As noted in the introduction, Ireland has been explicitly identified as having some of the slowest planning and approval processes for infrastructure in the European Union. Practical examples of lead in times that are at significant variance from EU and historical norms abound. This section of the report sets out the formal steps in the project development cycle across the sectors of electricity, transport and water to provide appropriate context for some of the reform actions detailed in Chapter 4.

Project Development Process

Transport and water/wastewater projects must adhere to DPER's Infrastructure Guidelines². Formerly known as the Public Spending Code, these guidelines were developed to provide a framework for project development to protect taxpayers' interests by ensuring that publicly-funded projects can be assessed on the same basis for value for money. These guidelines require approvals at three key stages in the project development cycle:

1) Strategic Assessment and Preliminary Business Case (Approval Gate 1)

This step aims to ensure that the proposed measure is an appropriate solution to the policy question under consideration and that other options have been appropriately considered.

2) Pre-tender – Project Design, Planning and Procurement Strategy (Approval Gate 2)

Once an appropriate measure has been agreed, this step ensures that a measure has been adequately prepared to allow it to proceed to the planning process and that the procurement process is likely to yield realistic costs.

3) Post Tender – Final Business Case (Approval Gate 3)

This is essentially the final go/no-go decision point, when procurement has been completed and there is a full understanding on the likely costs associated with the measure.

Pragmatic choices have been made in the development of the guidelines. For example, for proposals with an estimated capital cost of less than €20 million, Approving Authorities may commence a project without need for the strategic assessment elements of the Preliminary Business Case. Post project reviews are also built into the guidelines to ensure that any lessons learned during the development cycle can be applied to future projects.

A study of major capital projects reviewed by the Major Projects Advisory Group (MPAG)³ as of mid-2025 conducted by DPER's National Investment Office illustrates that it takes approx.63 weeks on average between a Preliminary Business Case being submitted to the funding Department and the project being submitted to Government to seek consent to approve at Approval Gate (AG) 1.

2. <https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-public-expenditure-infrastructure-public-service-reform-and-digitalisation/collections/infrastructure-guidelines/>

3. This group was formed in 2021 to assist DPER in its project assurance role by reviewing the business cases for major projects and advising on potential issues and risk related to project costs, schedules and benefits.

For major projects, this period includes both an External Assurance Process (EAP) and an assessment by the Major Projects Advisory Group (MPAG). Though these timelines can vary significantly from project to project, on average, projects took 20 weeks to move through the EAP stage and 6 weeks through the MPAG stage.

In addition to this process, all water services infrastructure projects are also subject to the 5-year revenue control process overseen by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) and may also be subject to further project specific reviews on larger projects. These parallel processes lead to increased administrative complexity and duplication.

Electricity projects are not subject to the Infrastructure Guidelines. Rather, every five years, as part of a Price Review (PR) process, ESB Networks and EirGrid are required to submit a business plan to the CRU outlining the proposed investments in the electricity network. The CRU is Ireland's independent regulator for the electricity sector and has responsibilities including economic regulation and customer protection. These business plans are subject to approval and oversight by the CRU. Within a PR period, a mechanism exists to adjust investment to meet the needs of customers and the electricity network, and this is subject to oversight and approval by CRU. The next PR is due to be announced by CRU in December 2025 and will cover electricity network investment over the 2026-2030 period.

Regulatory Process

A common theme emerging across the three sectors of water, transport and energy is the significant volume of consents, licences and permits that an infrastructure project potentially requires. Although the framework that has been developed is compliant and ensures robust environmental and public health protection, it is also fragmented and involves multiple agencies, often with overlapping responsibilities. Multiple consents may be required from a variety of agencies/bodies, many of which are seeking similar information, working off different timelines, often with no prioritisation for critical infrastructure projects.

Furthermore, many of these processes are sequential in nature, which can add to timelines. For instance, if a road, electricity network project, or wastewater plant is being built in a coastal area, a Maritime Area Consent (MAC) may be needed before a planning application can be submitted. While a MAC and a Maritime Usage Licence (MUL) can be applied for at the same time, in practice a MUL will often be required for site investigation works and so MACs are often applied for after a MUL, lengthening the process. Planning permission is also required in advance of applying for other required licences, such as an Abstraction or Wastewater Discharge Licence from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for a water services project.

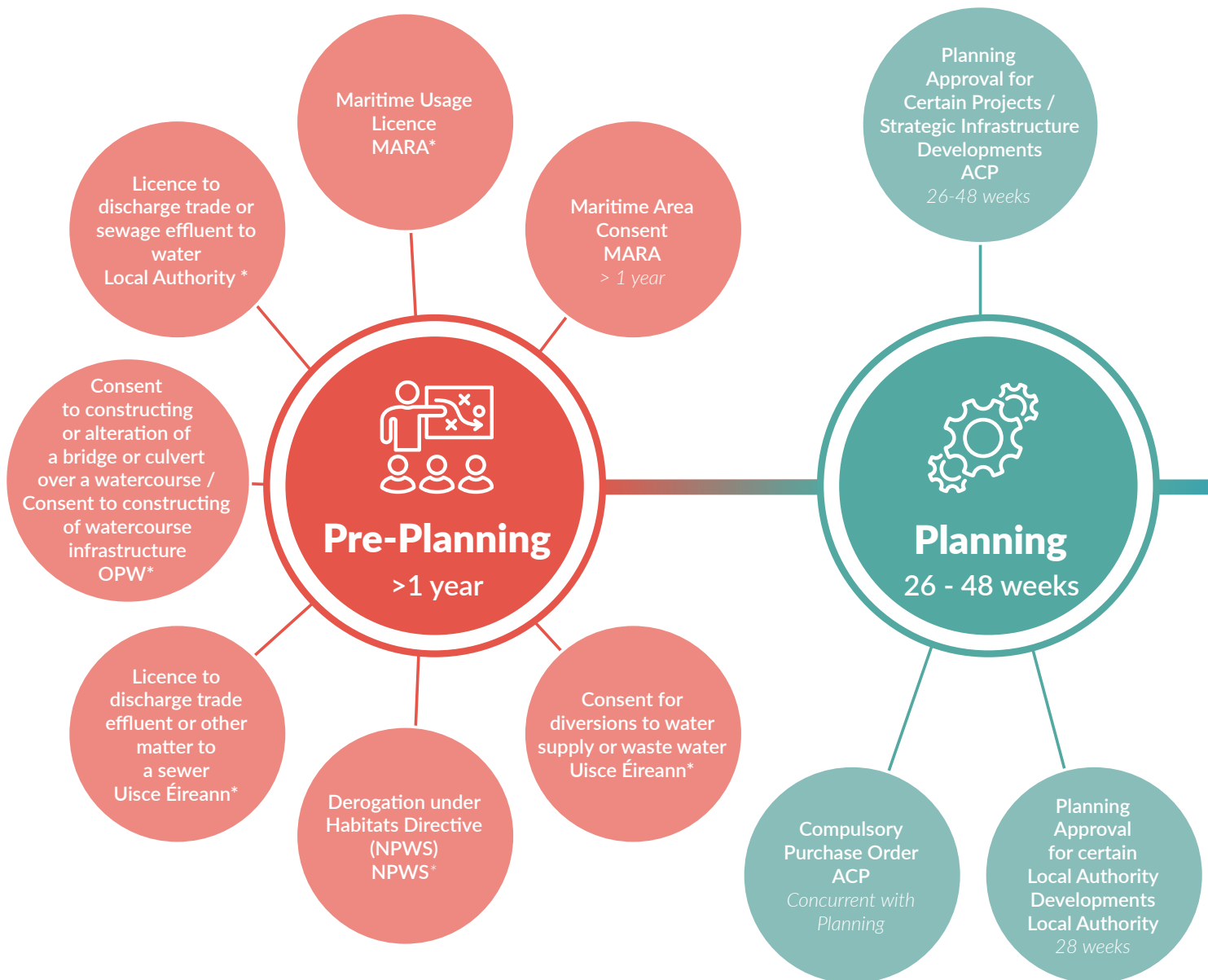
There are no statutory timelines for many of the required consents, and even in circumstances where there are statutory timelines, in practice often the timelines experienced surpass the targeted timeframe. For example, under Section 81(2) of the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021, the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA) shall, to the extent that is practicable to do so, determine a MAC application not later than 90 days after the day on which MARA is satisfied that the applicant has complied with all the requirements under this section. However, in practice sectors are reporting timelines of more than a year to receive a decision on their MAC application. These issues can add years to project delivery timelines.

The variability and uncertainty of timelines throughout the project development cycle is a fundamental issue for project developers. While new approaches – such as advanced procurement – have been introduced to accelerate delivery, there remains significant scope for variability and uncertainty throughout the planning and delivering programmes, particularly in terms of the consenting processes and the associated discharge of planning conditions, site acquisition, land and road access, public acceptance, and potential judicial reviews. The uncertainty increases project risk. The lack of clarity regarding timelines, paired with the sequential nature of many of the consents required, also hinders effective resource planning within delivery bodies, further exacerbating delays.

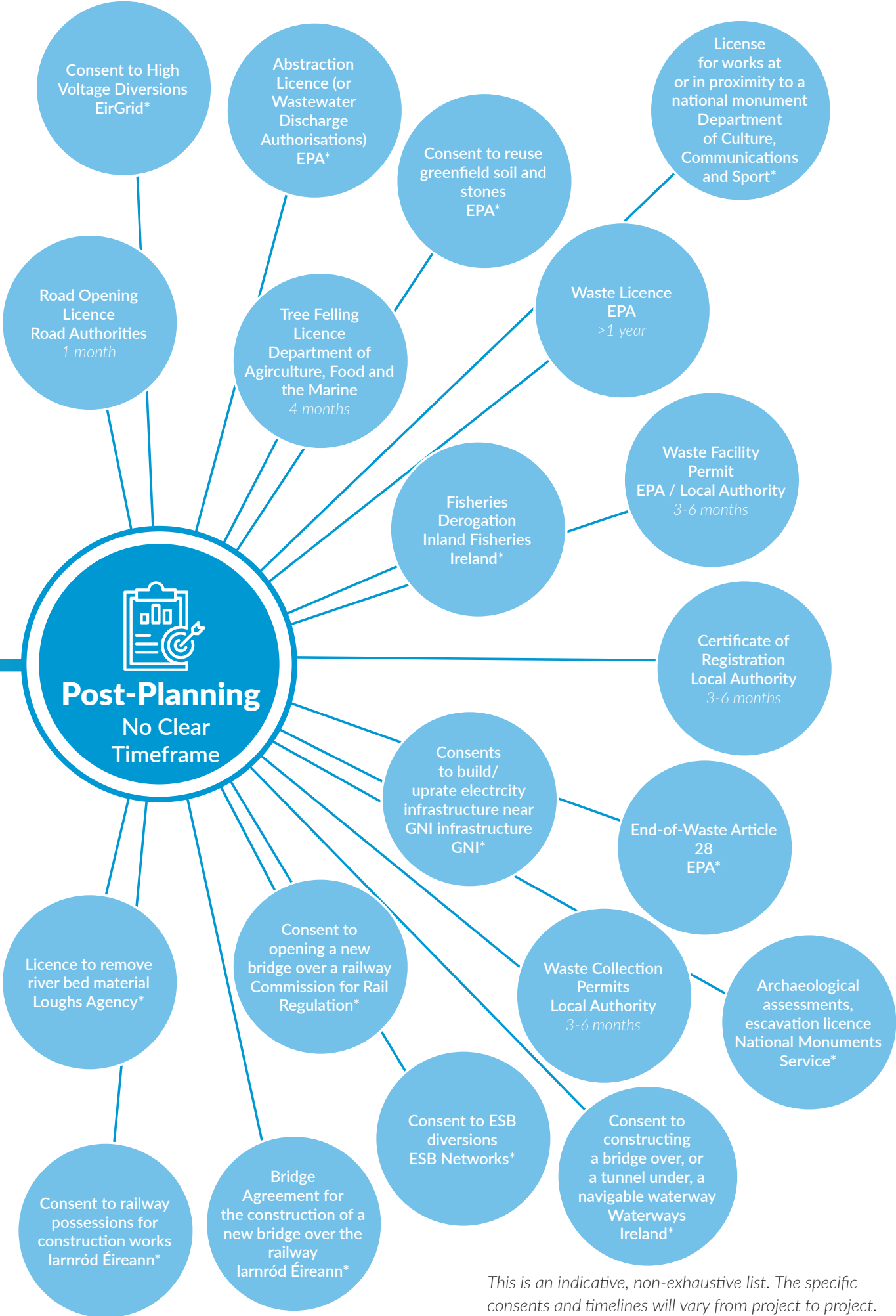
Figure 3: Approval Process for Typical Transport Infrastructure Project

Transport 

List of potential licenses, permits, and consents that may be required for a national road project.



*no average timeline available

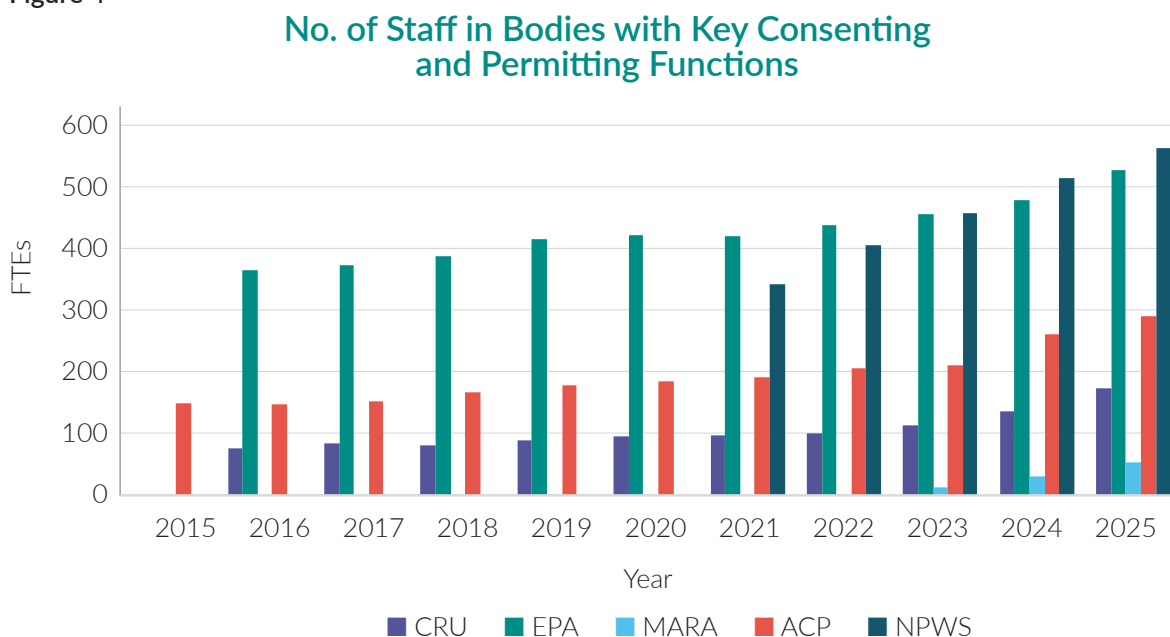


This is an indicative, non-exhaustive list. The specific consents and timelines will vary from project to project.

Similar graphics highlighting the potential range of consents required in the electricity and water sector are included in Appendix 1. It should be noted that these graphics depict an indicative range of consents, licences and permits that an average project could potentially require, and the associated general sequencing and timelines. Projects are unlikely to require all the consents outlined – for instance if a project requires one planning consent, it will not require the other listed. Individual projects may also require consents and licences additional to those listed. The sequencing and the timeline of receiving the various consents is likely to vary from project to project.

While staff resourcing in the bodies with key consenting functions has increased over the last 10 years, as highlighted by Figure 4, timelines for delivering projects are increasing.

Figure 4



Source: DPER⁴

Planning Process

The planning process is a critical stage in the overall project delivery cycle. For electricity, water and transport projects, either the relevant local authority or An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) acts as the decision-making authority for assessing planning applications and deciding whether to grant or refuse permission. The appropriate decision-maker depends largely on the scale and nature of the development.

Large scale projects across sectors go directly to ACP through a range of statutory processes. Many major developments are designated as Strategic Infrastructure Developments (SID) under the Planning and Development Acts and are submitted to ACP for determination. Others, such as rail schemes which require a railway order and significant road projects advanced under the Roads Act, also go straight to ACP. Where relevant Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) for water and transport projects are submitted concurrently with the application for approval by ACP.

The Planning and Development Act 2024 includes a range of reforms intended to enhance the efficiency and predictability of the planning system. A key reform is the introduction of statutory decision-making timelines for ACP, which is expected to provide greater certainty for project developers and support more timely project delivery.

4. Figure 4 shows No. of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) in the relevant bodies in Q1 each year, where data was available. EPA FTEs in 2016 is based on Q3 data. MARA FTE figures are based on the MARA Establishment Unit FTEs in July 2023, and MARA FTEs thereafter. NPWS FTE data unavailable prior to 2021. Not all staff in these agencies are involved in consenting/permitting processes.

Conclusion

Although each sector reports different timelines for obtaining these consents and licences, the combined impact of the above processes increases the delivery time, associated costs, and risks for projects and programmes of work that are essential for public health and protection of the environment. These timelines are relevant to upgrades to existing infrastructure too and often the same consents and timelines apply even for smaller projects. These timelines do not factor in potential third party challenges to decisions issued, which can add additional years.

Therefore, Government is determined to reduce these delivery timelines through the actions set out in this Report. These actions seek to remove steps from the many decision-making processes, better coordinate the management of projects through these processes, and reduce the risk of judicial challenge posed by the processes.



4

Blueprint for Reform

The reform blueprint centres on four mutually reinforcing pillars. Each addresses a structural constraint. Together they form a coherent system-level approach to accelerate delivery while upholding environmental and participatory standards.

Ireland’s barriers to infrastructure delivery point to a system that is overly-complex, sequential and fragmented across legal, regulatory and operational lines. Addressing these barriers requires an integrated model that aligns legal authority with streamlined regulatory processes, clearer coordination between agencies, and a stronger basis of public legitimacy for timely decisions.

The four pillars of reform that make up the blueprint for change are distinct but interdependent. Legal authority underpins proportionate and timely decisions. Streamlined regulatory processes provide the predictability needed for projects to progress. Coordination becomes effective only when the legal and regulatory environment is aligned and proportionate. Public acceptance is strengthened when the system operates consistently across these earlier stages. These elements need to function together as a delivery system rather than standalone reforms.

The international examples that follow reinforce this approach. Jurisdictions facing similar delays have adopted the same integrated model, providing useful reference points for Ireland as it reforms its own delivery system.

The blueprint for reform comprises 4 pillars which are deeply interconnected, each reinforcing the other to deliver meaningful change. Only by moving together across all fronts can the required scale of transformation be achieved.





Pillar 1: **Legal Reform**

Legal reform should seek to lessen the reliance on the courts as arbitrators of planning and regulatory decisions. The goal is not to dilute safeguards but to eliminate unnecessary duplication and provide more certainty to planning and regulatory decisions.

Ireland's legal system is widely considered to be effective and fair. Public trust in the courts and legal system is high and considerably above the OECD average⁵. However, as noted in the assessment of barriers to infrastructure, there are a number of worrying trends. In particular, the number of judicial reviews continues to rise. As noted in the foreword, 2024 saw a 43 percent increase compared to 2023 and already, 2025 has seen a further 30 percent increase in the number of cases brought to the Planning and Environment Court. As of today, An Coimisiún Pleanála is facing 131 individual judicial reviews. The number of judicial reviews has increased to such an extent that the Government's Chief Legal Advisor, the Attorney General, has branded the proliferation of legal challenges, especially in the planning and environmental areas, as being of significant political and public concern.

Judicial review is an important tool that ensures that the decisions made by bodies when they are carrying out public functions are transparent, fair, and accountable, and adhere to the principles of legality, procedural propriety, and rationality. However, as the administrative complexity of the State inexorably rises, the application of this test to a significant number of the decisions made by public bodies has the practical impact of delaying the development of critical infrastructure. This imposes very real costs on taxpayers and society in general.

It is reported that more than 20 percent of the decisions taken by the Environmental Protection Agency are subject to judicial review and this proportion is steadily rising over time. While fewer decisions by An Coimisiún Pleanála are subject to judicial review, this merely reflects the breadth of decisions taken by the Commission. Virtually every planning decision related to critical infrastructure is subject to judicial review. The Construction Industry Federation estimate that the per capita rate at which judicial reviews are taken is five times higher in Ireland than in the UK.

Continuing this status quo means a society in which the growth of infrastructure is simply too slow to keep pace with population and economic growth. Without change, critical shortages of power and water will occur within a few short years and congestion on transport networks will inexorably grow. The risk this poses to societal wellbeing and economic prosperity, particularly the imperative to provide adequate housing is unacceptable.

In many cases, these delays are to the detriment of the environment. For example, Uisce Éireann's water improvement programme is impacted by the use of judicial reviews which slow the development of infrastructure that is designed to improve environmental outcomes. In the interim, more than half of all wastewater treatment plants in the State are occasionally or frequently letting untreated or inadequately treated sewage flow into rivers and on to beaches.

DPER's assessment is that current regulatory and legal processes are acting as significant barriers to the timely delivery of infrastructure. This assessment draws on stakeholder engagement, public consultation and primary research. It includes data on the rising number of judicial reviews on planning and regulatory decisions provided by those utilities responsible for critical infrastructure.

A rebalance of rights towards the common good or public interest is necessary to preserve the effectiveness of the rule of law. Government has already made a number of reforms, including the creation of the Planning and Environment Division of the High Court and the enactment of the Planning and Development Act 2024 following a comprehensive review of planning legislation that commenced in 2021. However, further reforms are necessary.

5. [OECD – Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions – 2024 Results](#)

This section sets out a series of legal reforms that will be progressed by Government to address incentives that drive increased usage of the courts and will provide new channels through which critical infrastructure can be accelerated.

This pillar directly addresses the following barriers:

- Number of Judicial Reviews
- Consequences of Judicial Reviews
- Slow Processes
- Risk Aversion
- Construction Sector Capacity and Productivity

Actions

Table 1: Summary of Prioritised Actions and Sub-Actions

Number	Action	Timeline for Implementation
1	Reform Judicial Review	Q1 – Q3 2026
2	Enact Legislation to Accelerate Critical Infrastructure and Provide for Emergency Powers	Q1 2026 – Q3 2026
3	Implement Other Targeted Legislative Reforms	Q1 – Q4 2026
4	Progress Domestic Reforms to Environmental Assessment in Parallel with EU Simplification Agenda	Q2 – Q4 2026
5	Increase Exemption Thresholds for Critical Infrastructure	Q2 2026
6	Respond Rapidly to Precedent	Q1 2026
7	Enact Civil Reform Bill to Legislate for Judicial Reviews	Q4 2025 – Q2 2027

Action 1: Reform Judicial Review

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline
This action commits to a series of reforms to the judicial review process in planning and environmental decision making	DCEE, DHLGH, DPER	Q1 – Q3 2026

Government will progress fundamental reform of the judicial review system (see action 7). However, in the interim, certain other reforms will be prioritised for immediate implementation. Mismatched incentives in the legal system have driven an increasing number of judicial reviews at the expense of the efficiency of the courts' operation. This imbalance undermines court operations and the wider public good. By increasing the time taken for each case to be dealt with, it also impedes access to justice.

To address the mismatched incentives, the Government will immediately commence the procedures within Part 9 of the Planning Act regarding scale of fees. This will cap the cost that the State and other parties pay in environmental judicial reviews. However, the scope for further reform will also be prioritised to address incentives.

The potential for adopting a model based on UK provisions on the costs applicants face in environmental judicial reviews will be examined. Such a model would provide certainty to applicants by limiting the liability they may face in any environmental judicial review and would ensure that applicants face an element of jeopardy in taking cases. This meets the requirements of the Aarhus Convention that access to environmental justice be “not prohibitively expensive” but balances this with a more efficient court system. There will also be an examination of the appropriateness of “no foal, no fee” structures, and their impact on the courts system.

Government will consider further amendments to legislation, including the potential means to limit judicial reviews to applicants likely to be directly impacted by a development. In tandem, Government will consider an explicit step that will require the courts to consider the likelihood of success that a judicial review might have. These provisions are reasonably standard across other common law jurisdictions and will better balance access to justice while protecting the interests of taxpayers costs and the wider public good on infrastructure development. Finally, Government will consider the fee structures applied in the legal sector to ensure that they do not unreasonably encourage low-probability cases.

Action 2: Enact Legislation to Accelerate Critical Infrastructure and Provide for Emergency Powers

Action	Body Responsible	Timeline
Enact legislation to accelerate critical infrastructure and legislation for robust emergency powers that can meaningfully accelerate the delivery of critical infrastructure	DPER	Q1 – Q3 2026

A Critical Infrastructure Bill will create a legal obligation for State bodies to recognise and accelerate key projects through planning, licensing, and other consenting stages. In addition, the Bill will explore options during drafting for incorporating statutory timelines, positive presumptions, and other measures to reduce procedural delays. This legislation will be accompanied by governance arrangements to maintain and communicate a critical infrastructure projects list and track delivery outcomes.

The Bill will address systemic delays by mandating whole-of-State cooperation and creating a fast-track pathway for nationally significant projects and programmes. By establishing a clear legal basis for prioritisation, it reduces ambiguity and ensures that critical projects and programmes receive coordinated attention across departments, regulators, agencies and the courts. The Bill’s provisions for statutory timelines and streamlined processes will shorten consenting periods and reduce the risk of judicial reviews. It will give a clear articulation of the projects that are in the country’s long-term interests. This clarity will also encourage early engagement and problem-solving, shifting the focus from compliance to delivery.

In addition, legislation will be developed incorporating emergency provisions that will allow the Government to speed up specific critical infrastructure in emergencies. There is precedent at both national and EU levels. For example, the Development (Emergency Electricity Generation) Act 2022 allowed certain projects to bypass Environmental Impact Assessment in line with EU exemption procedures. There are also procedures

in EU legislation such as the imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) that can be used to allow projects that have a significant negative impact on the environment to proceed under specific, strict conditions.

Action 3: Implement Other Targeted Legislative Reforms

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline
Introduce a series of targeted legislative reforms to streamline the development of infrastructure.	DHLGH, DPER, DCEE, D/Transport, D/Justice	Q1 – Q4 2026

There are a number of legislative gaps that have been identified as part of the accelerating infrastructure process which, when remedied, will accelerate the provision of critical infrastructure. This includes examining burdensome or overlapping requirements that infrastructure developers or planning authorities must have regard to, simplifying processes around compulsory purchase orders and extending the provisions of the new Planning and Development Act to Transport Projects through amendments to the necessary legislation.

These include but are not limited to:

- Examining the body of legislation that regulatory and planning authorities must have regard to in making their decisions and reducing this where feasible;
- Revisions to the relevant Transport Acts to apply the new planning processes contained in the Planning and Development Act 2024 to roads and transport projects;
- Transfer of approval for all CPO applications to An Coimisiún Pleanála and advancing impactful CPO reform; and
- Further strengthening limitations on the use of quashing orders for minor/procedural issues identified in judicial reviews of planning/regulatory decision.

Action 4: Progress Domestic Reforms to Environmental Assessment in Parallel with EU Simplification Agenda

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline
Progress Domestic Reforms to Environmental Assessment in Parallel with EU Simplification Agenda	DHLGH, DCEE	Q2 – Q4 2026

Appropriate Assessments (AA) and Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) conducted in Ireland are disproportionate to the standards applied in other EU Member States, despite being conducted under the same underpinning EU Directives. This is a primary driver of the findings that Ireland’s planning processes are the slowest in the EU.

The purpose of this action is to advance reforms that promote a more targeted and proportionate approach to assessment, ensuring that for each project the focus is directed to the key matters of relevance and the issues that must be considered as part of the EIA and AA processes. By streamlining the scope of information required, it will reduce the volume of material submitted and, in turn, shorten the time needed to carry out the assessments. This will be done while maintaining compliance with the obligations under the Directive. It will be supported by updated guidance both for developers in the preparation of Environmental Impact Assessment Reports and Natura Impact Statements, and for competent authorities in carrying out EIA and AA.

Increases in the thresholds at which EIA is required for projects will be pursued. In addition, raising the EIA thresholds for expansions/extensions to existing facilities would be a practical and readily implementable measure to help speed up the delivery of critical infrastructure. Most developments are currently limited to a 10 percent expansion of existing facilities under an existing planning permission.

Action 5: Increase Exemption Thresholds for Critical Infrastructure

Action	Body Responsible	Timeline
Amend planning legislation to increase the thresholds at which critical infrastructure requires planning/regulatory permissions.	DHLGH	Q2 2026

This will allow for more efficient expansion of existing facilities, reducing the need for more disruptive new developments. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH) is currently considering the views received in a public consultation on increasing the exemption thresholds. Infrastructure is a key part of this review with the importance of ensuring continued strength in utility connections for electricity, energy more broadly and water specifically referenced⁶. This will unlock the delivery of urgently required capacity of electricity, water, and wastewater supplies in critical geographic areas.

By expanding the exempted development provisions in the Planning and Development Regulations, infrastructure providers will be able to deploy extensions, upgrades, repairs, and modernisations quickly and cost effectively. Providers will also gain the flexibility to respond more quickly to operational needs and to ensure the resilience and efficiency of critical infrastructure networks while the safeguards of the planning framework would remain intact for developments with broader spatial or community impacts.

Action 6: Respond Rapidly to Precedent

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline
Create mechanisms that identify new precedents set by court judgments that are relevant to infrastructure and offer early options to Government to address, as well as enduring solutions.	DPER, Relevant Departments	Q1 2026

Given the impact that judicial decisions can have on infrastructure delivery, under this action a mechanism will be created that will identify and track any precedent created in the courts that may impact on the timely delivery of infrastructure. Departments and all bodies under their aegis will be obliged to track and report the outcome of any relevant court cases to the Infrastructure Division of DPER to support a timely response.

Following the identification of any relevant precedents, the impacted Department will work with DPER and the Office of the Attorney General to report on these to the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure. This will be combined with an assessment of potential options on how Government may wish to react to any precedents, including interim measures that may protect the State's position before more substantive changes might be considered.

Action 7: Enact Civil Reform Bill to Legislate for Judicial Reviews

Action	Body Responsible	Timeline
Develop legislation that will codify law on judicial review by placing it on a statutory basis	D/Justice	Q4 2025 – Q2 2027

Judicial review has evolved over the lifetime of the Irish State, growing in importance particularly from the 1950s onwards. Over that time, the legislative framework underpinning the State's function has grown in parallel, accelerating in particular post membership of the European Union.

6. https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/Appendix_1-Proposed_changes_to_exempt_development_regulations.pdf

The Minister for Justice will bring forward proposals to place the entire judicial review process on a statutory footing. This potentially affords Government much greater flexibility to determine the circumstances in which judicial review procedures can be utilised. This could include measures that would significantly accelerate infrastructure provision such as limiting judicial reviews to the ultimate planning decision underpinning a decision, rather than currently where every licence, consent and planning condition is separately subject to judicial review. It could also introduce tests that are common in other jurisdictions such as an assessment of the prospect of the success for any litigation before it is allowed to proceed or perhaps replacing the concept of project delays with damages, where rather than delaying a project, flaws are addressed retrospectively via damages.



Impact on Delivery

The objective of these actions is to balance individual rights with the common good. In terms of project approvals and delivery, the indicators of success will be:

- Reduction in timelines for projects to go through the approvals process.
- Identification of potential duplications in approval steps, that will free up resources.
- Increased number of projects completed due to the raised thresholds for environmental scrutiny.
- Reduction in number of decisions taken and reviewed by the Courts.

An appropriate balance between individual rights and the common good is necessary to ensure that the State can deliver the critical infrastructure it needs for wider society and the economy at the pace required. By streamlining approval processes, removing duplication, and raising thresholds for environmental scrutiny, these reforms will shorten timelines for project approvals and free up resources across the system. Legislative and procedural changes will reduce the number of decisions subject to judicial review, improving certainty for developers and communities. Success will be measured by faster decisions, more efficient use of public resources, and a demonstrable increase in the number of infrastructure projects delivered.



Pillar 2: Regulatory Reform and Simplification

The report on barriers to infrastructure development clearly highlighted the growth in the regulatory system in Ireland that has taken place over time and the challenges this poses to the efficient development of critical infrastructure. This has been built upon by further published Government research undertaken by the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment (DETE) that noted there are now 95 bodies with some degree of remit for regulation.

Regulatory reform must deliver structured, early engagement between regulators and project sponsors. Predictable regulatory timelines, coordinated submissions and shared evidence bases are essential to ending the stop-start patterns that currently delay programmes.

It is important to note that regulation brings important benefits. It protects consumers, ensures a level playing field across producers and protects society as a whole through the application of important safeguards, such as environmental protection. However, regulation also imposes a cost. Compliance with regulation adds administrative and developmental burdens which lengthen implementation timelines and increase costs. The public interest is best served when the protections afforded by regulation are applied proportionately where necessary and in an efficient, transparent and consistent manner that minimises, in so far as is possible, the burden they create. Overly complex regulatory requirements and a lack of policy clarity are also significant causes of judicial review.

Effective regulation is particularly important for critical infrastructure. Road, rail, watermains, sewer and electricity networks are linear in nature and cover long distances below ground, at surface level and overhead. In Ireland there are over 374,000 kilometres of linear infrastructure for electricity, transport and water services alone. In addition to the linear network, there is also significant above ground infrastructure, including over 8,000 water services assets from treatment plants to pumping stations and 800 electricity sub-stations connecting generation to demand from domestic houses, farms, businesses and communities across the country.

The extent of this infrastructure and the complex manner in which it interfaces with the built and natural environment, means that infrastructure projects and programmes are subject to multiple licencing and consenting processes. Although these processes are needed, given the growth in the scope and application of regulation, a careful examination of regulatory structures and processes is now timely. This examination must reflect the fact that the social, economic and environmental functioning of the State is dependent on the timely and cost-effective delivery of critical water, electricity and transport infrastructure.

Regulatory agencies and consenting processes must therefore achieve a balance between enabling essential activities and controlling the potentially adverse impacts of such activities and infrastructure. As the report on barriers highlighted, Ireland's regulatory processes are currently failing to achieve this balance.

Too often, effective regulation is impeded by a conservative interpretation of EU and Irish law within regulatory processes, and a defensive nature applied in the consenting processes. These have not arisen in a vacuum but rather have evolved in response to multiple judicial challenges to the decisions of the agencies involved. Therefore, while the structures, mandates, regulations and processes of consenting agencies must be reviewed to reflect their dual function, within this, consideration needs to be given to how the key agencies involved in the development of critical infrastructure can be more effectively supported in the application of their decisions.

This is in line with reforms planned at EU level. In September 2024, the Draghi Report on EU Competitiveness was published. The report identified that one of the critical actions to improve

competitiveness in the eurozone would involve “simplifying the regulatory environment, reducing burden and favouring speed and flexibility”.⁷

This Pillar details a set of actions aimed at reforming and streamlining planning, licensing, consenting, and regulatory processes as applied to critical infrastructure to ensure they are proportional to the risks they are seeking to control. The principles of the actions are that consenting processes should be necessary, effective and balanced. The overarching objective is to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden, thereby minimising time and cost impacts on infrastructure delivery and supporting innovation throughout the process.

This activity will be led by DPER, feeding into a broader regulatory reform agenda overseen by the Department of the Taoiseach. It will be integrated into the wider reform programmes also underway to address red tape in the economy more broadly and to support the rationalisation of the regulatory burden applied to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), led by the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment.

This Pillar addresses the following barriers:

Increased Regulatory Burden

Insufficiently Coordinated Approvals

Slow Processes

Prioritisation and Coordination of Infrastructure

Risk Aversion

Table 2: Summary of Prioritised Actions and Sub-Actions

Number	Action	Timeline for Implementation
8	Develop and Publish National Planning Statement(s) for Critical Infrastructure	Q1 2026 – Q1 2027
9	Establish a Regulatory Simplification Unit	Q2 2026 – Q1 2027
10	Rationalise Legislation Underpinning Regulatory Processes	Q2 – Q3 2026
11	Reform Processes Applied to Critical Infrastructure within Agencies/Regulators	Q1 – Q3 2026
12	Implement Early Warning System regarding EU Legislative Change on Critical Infrastructure	Q1 – Q3 2026
13	Advocate for new approach to legislation at EU level on critical infrastructure	Q4 2025 – Q3 2026
14	Advise on Alternative Methods of Transposing EU Legislation	Q1 – Q4 2026
15	Enable Developer-led Infrastructure	Q2 – Q3 2026
16	Review the Role and Functions of the Office of the Planning Regulator and drive performance in the planning system, including consistency in decision making	Q2 – Q3 2026

7. Communication from the commission to the European parliament, the European council, the council, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions a Competitiveness Compass for the EU, 2025 [10017eb1-4722-4333-add2-e0ed18105a34_en](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52025EB147224333add2e0ed18105a34_en)

Action 8: Develop and Publish National Planning Statements for Critical Infrastructure

Action	Body Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Develop and publish National Planning Statements for Critical Infrastructure	DHLGH	Q1 2026 – Q1 2027

A key theme articulated in the public consultation and stakeholder engagement process is the number of legislative requirements and Government policies that public bodies must take account of when making decisions. Interpreting the prioritisation of these through regulatory decisions can be challenging in practice and the subjectivity involved often offers a path for judicial review of any decisions made.

Part 3, Chapter 3 (sections 25-27) of the new Planning and Development Act 2024 provides for the creation of National Planning Statements (NPSs). These Statements allow the Government to clearly articulate its priorities on matters of national spatial and sectoral significance to planning authorities. These statements will replace the Ministerial guidelines and directives that were issued under previous legislation.

The purpose of these statements is to provide a clear and consistent framework within which regional assemblies, local authorities, An Coimisiún Pleanála and other prescribed bodies must operate. This, in turn, will ensure that the decisions of these authorities and bodies are aligned with the overarching national policy objectives as set out in the National Planning Framework. By setting out clear, unambiguous national policy objectives for the development of critical infrastructure, an NPS will build on the clear policy support provided by the Revised National Planning Framework (April 2025) and help to promote consistency, transparency and accountability in decision-making across all tiers of the planning system. This will in turn provide utilities and other investors with the clarity and certainty needed to guide investment and decision-making.

As part of this plan, a National Planning Statement will be developed for critical infrastructure by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. The Department will develop the statement in concert with the relevant policy Departments and with wider Government through the existing governance structures on infrastructure.

When implemented, it is anticipated that the NPS will bring significant benefits in terms of policy clarity, further promoting consistency in decision-making and facilitating the delivery of legally robust planning decisions by planning authorities and by An Coimisiún Pleanála. The development and appropriate use of the NPS will improve the predictability of the planning process for stakeholders, reduce the scope for inconsistency and delay, and strengthen public confidence in the planning and regulatory system.

Action 9: Establish a Regulatory Simplification Unit

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Establish a Regulatory Simplification Unit to lead:	DPER, Regulatory Bodies and relevant Departments	Q2 2026 – Q1 2027
1. Review regulatory structures, governance, oversight and accountability; and		
2. Identify and revise legislation to simplify legislation		

As noted earlier, the volume and complexity of regulation has grown considerably over time. There are a broad range of permissions, consents and licences required over the course of the development and delivery cycle for a critical infrastructure project. These individual licencing and consenting processes are conducted

by a range of bodies from planning authorities to economic regulators, to quasi-independent agencies and direct divisions of Government Departments. The multiple, often overlapping processes involved leads to significant complexity in critical infrastructure delivery, as a project sponsor has sole responsibility for coordinating the required consents across multiple agencies of the State. Each of the regulatory bodies involved in these processes has also typically been established under bespoke legislation. In practice, this means that each regulatory body is often subject to different legal requirements in the performance of its duties, is structured differently and has different governance, oversight and accountability provisions applied.

As a first task, there is a requirement to consider whether the current regulatory system as it applies to the development of critical infrastructure is fit for purpose. This includes an evidence-based assessment of the key agencies involved, the scope for rationalisation of functions and introducing uniformity with regard to the accountability of the bodies in question. This task will also explore the merits of wider restructuring of the key bodies, including radical reform options such as the creation of single environmental consenting processes for environmental and ecological licensing, building on the examples of the requirements under the third Renewable Energy Directive (REDIII), the Critical Raw Materials Act and the Net Zero Industry Act, or formalising improved interface structures between existing environmental consenting bodies. This work will be guided by the legislative reforms being prioritised at EU level in response to the Draghi report and recent reforms introducing simplified procedures for the development of renewable electricity.

The principle of proportionality is enshrined in European Law and is applied through a three-part test involving suitability, necessity, and balance. It is intended that these principles cascade through the European Directives into the national legislation and associated regulatory frameworks. In parallel with examining the structures of the regulatory sector, a major legislative reform exercise will be commenced. This will review the existing legislative base that applies to the development of critical infrastructure in Ireland. It will do so with a view to considering how it meets the principles outlined in EU law and rationalising and simplifying existing legislative structures where necessary.

Already, through the development of this report, a suite of regulatory reforms and available legislative flexibilities have been identified and when implemented these will lead to a significant reduction in development timelines for critical infrastructure. For example, at the moment certain types of electricity distribution infrastructure, which historically fell within the remit of Local Authorities, are now being assessed by An Coimisiún Pleanála. An alteration to ensure that planning applications for electricity distribution projects is assessed by Local Authorities could reduce the planning assessment timelines significantly.

Another example is that the threshold for undertaking a mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) in the EU EIA Directive for wastewater treatment plants is those plants with a capacity exceeding 150,000 population equivalent. In the national legislation transposing this Directive in respect of wastewater discharges, this limit was drastically lowered to plants with a capacity of 10,000 population equivalent. This means that Uisce Éireann have to undertake many more EIAs than is required under EU law or is typical in any other jurisdiction. This is one of the reasons the development of wastewater infrastructure is considerably slower in Ireland than the rest of the EU, and the nation's ability to improve environmental outcomes in the water sector is hindered.

The purpose of the action is to ensure that all agencies involved in the consenting stages for infrastructure are aligned with government and societal needs for infrastructure delivery. It is envisaged that the reforms will be driven by the new reform coordination structures that will be established in DPER, including a new Regulatory Simplification Unit.

Determining the extent of reform necessary in the regulatory sector and implementing any associated legislative changes will be a complex and time-consuming task. It is envisaged that the streamlining actions will be delivered between Q2 2026 and Q1 2027, reflective of the requirements for additional legislation and organisational restructure.

Action 10: Rationalise Legislation Underpinning Regulatory Processes

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Introduce a series of legislative amendments to address already identified barriers	DHLGH, DCEE, Regulatory Bodies	Q2 – Q3 2026

Legislation underpinning the regulatory processes applied to critical infrastructure has significantly grown in complexity. Numerous examples of relatively minor legislative amendments to regulatory functions have been identified that, if progressed, will considerably shorten development timelines. This will be combined with a more thorough “look back” exercise to identify and apply potential flexibilities within EU legislation.

Although there are multiple agencies involved in consenting at various stages of infrastructure delivery, improved outcomes can be achieved by focusing reforms on a small number of key regulators and agencies that have a role on the critical path for the development of infrastructure. This includes but is not exclusive to, the Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU).

This includes “quick win” measures through the application of appropriate legislative flexibilities that are available such as amending rules to require that planning applications for electricity distribution projects be assessed by Local Authorities, will commence immediately.

Action 11: Reform Processes Applied to Critical Infrastructure within Agencies/Regulators

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Mandate the introduction of a series of reforms to the processes of all bodies involved in the licensing and consenting of critical infrastructure.	DPER, Regulatory Bodies and relevant Departments	Q1 – Q3 2026

Central to this action is the recognition that consenting agencies play a critical role in the delivery of critical infrastructure and that the mandates applied to the agencies involved must be updated to clearly set out their role and responsibilities in relation to this. This means developing a series of pragmatic reforms, in addition to those already underway through implementation of the European Union's third Renewable Energy Directive (REDIII) etc., that can standardise the practices applied by regulatory bodies in the performance of their duties without interfering with the independence or integrity of these duties. Examples of the kind of reforms that will be considered include:

- Duty to Cooperate – Require all agencies to work together, particularly to support the delivery of critical infrastructure;
- Duty to Engage with Applicants – Require that agencies engage and communicate with applicants on the status of any processes;
- Published Guidelines for every Process – Every regulatory process should be accompanied by a clear statement on what the agency expects an application to contain;
- Statutory Timeline for every Process – In line with the timelines now applied to planning decisions, every regulatory process should have statutory deadlines applied;
- Consents/Licences/Permits to be parallel with Planning Process - Removal of unnecessary dependencies to ensure that approvals can run in parallel with the planning process to the maximum extent possible;

- Simplified Processes for Amendments/Extensions – The burden of evidence for an amendment or extension of a licence or consent should be lower than that for a new application;
- Centralised Online Document Portals Online – Applicants should only be required to submit applications and accompanying documentation once for the suite of consents, permissions etc. that are required;
- Accountability – Where a regulatory body is a statutory consultee in a planning process, any views expressed should come from the CEO/Commissioners and reflect a whole of organisation view; and
- Key Performance Indicators – Systems for tracking the performance of regulatory bodies in their roles should be developed and incorporated within the annual reports of these bodies.

The objective of this action is to ensure that regulatory frameworks are adaptive and proportionate to their underlying policy objectives, minimising regulatory burden to the maximum extent possible. DPER will set out clear guidance for the relevant Departments and is envisaged that all actions will be delivered in 2026 and 2027, reflective of the requirement for economic and legal analysis, additional legislation and organisational restructure.

Action 12: Implement Early Warning System with regards to EU Legislative Change on Critical Infrastructure

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Introduce systems that can identify and flag for review forthcoming EU legislation that may impact the delivery of critical infrastructure.	DFAT, DTaoiseach, AGO, DHLGH, DCEE	Q1 – Q3 2026

New legislation will continue to emerge at EU level that will directly or indirectly influence the development of infrastructure in Ireland. At the moment, the secondary legislation implementing a Directive is typically developed by a single Department with responsibility for the broad policy area in question. This approach is generally effective but given the increasingly interdependent nature of infrastructure development, it can sometimes leave gaps where the potential impact of a legislative transposition on the development of infrastructure in an adjacent sector is less well understood, particularly the impact of new legislation when combined with existing legislative requirements. A failure to identify and address such impacts risks widening the scope for judicial reviews during the infrastructure development cycle and hence, introducing additional delays and consequent cost increases.

A mechanism will be put in place to ensure that an appropriately broad, inter-Departmental view is taken into account regarding the implementation of EU legislation that is likely to impact infrastructure development. To minimise any additional administrative burden, these new requirements will be built into the existing structures for inter-Departmental engagement on infrastructure, such as the Senior Officials Group and Cabinet Committee for Infrastructure, in so far as is possible.

Specifically, a new Circular will be introduced shortly following the publication of this report. This Circular will require Departments to formally and periodically notify the Department of the Taoiseach and DPER of forthcoming EU legislative changes. It will also require Departments to identify those legislative items that may have an effect on the development of critical infrastructure.

For legislative changes that may have such an impact, Departments will be required to engage in the development of this legislation directly with the new regulatory reform unit in DPER and through inter-Departmental coordination structures. These groups will work with the relevant Department to ensure that the implementation of the EU requirements is proportionate to the overarching aim of the legislation and is

balanced with wider Government objectives on infrastructure development, with the scope for exercising any flexibilities within the EU legislative instrument duly considered.

This action will ensure that Government is aware of the potential impact on infrastructure development of all new EU legislation and, if necessary, can take balanced decisions on the implementation of the EU requirements, informed by an appropriate assessment of evidence.

Action 13: Advocate for New Approach to Legislation at EU Level on Critical Infrastructure

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Develop a strategy for engagement with the EU Commission to ensure new EU legislation is drafted with clauses/flexibility that reflects the differences between common and civil law jurisdictions.	DFAT, AGO, DCEE	Q4 2025 – Q3 2026

New legislation that will affect the development of infrastructure in Ireland is likely to emerge from legislative reforms adopted at European Union level. Ireland is one of 27 Member States and one of just 3 small Member States, (Cyprus and Malta being the others) that operate a common law legal regime. Given this imbalance, EU legislators and their officials can be forgiven for having little experience with the practical operation of common law jurisdictions and the subtleties in drafting that may be required to adequately accommodate both legal systems. As a result, there is a growing risk that new EU legislation may prove extremely challenging to adapt in a means that balances access to justice on any decisions made under the new legislation with the efficient development of critical infrastructure.

In response, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, with assistance from the Office of the Attorney General (AGO), will be tasked with a new function to build alliances with the other common law jurisdictions and engage with the EU Commission on a strategy to consider changes to the EU legislation development process that can enable them to explicitly consider the differential impact such legislation may have in common law jurisdictions. Where areas of significant risk to the development of critical infrastructure are identified, the ambition is for an acknowledgement that alternative language or perhaps an altered application of legislation to common law jurisdictions should be explored. Agreeing this as a principle with the primary authors of EU legislation will give the departments leading the negotiation of specific instruments the ability to effectively intervene in the development process.

Beyond the headline task that will be taken forward by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, there will also be a requirement for all Departments to proactively engage in the EU legislation development process to ensure that appropriate safeguards are negotiated in the development of any legislation that may affect critical infrastructure.

Action 14: Advise on Alternative Methods of Transposing EU Legislation

Action	Body Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Determine legislative options to adopt a more detailed approach to the transposition of EU legislation, reducing ambiguities and subjectivity where feasible.	AGO	Q1 – Q4 2026

As noted in the preceding action, the application of legislation primarily designed for use in civil law jurisdictions creates friction when applied in common law jurisdictions. A full articulation of the challenges that this divergence may give rise to is beyond the scope of this report. It suffices to note that common law, in general, tends to place a much greater reliance on the use of the courts to litigate disputes, in preference

to administrative structures. As such, when EU Directives are faithfully transposed into Irish legislation, in practical terms the Irish courts are often asked to rule on whether a regulatory agency’s interpretation of any ambiguity in the legislation has been appropriate, far more than is typical in other EU jurisdictions.

Legislative ambiguity is common in EU Directives. This gives flexibility to Member States but in a common law jurisdiction correspondingly often increases potential for judicial review. For example, the EU Directive covering Environmental Impact Assessments requires that these include “in an appropriate manner, in the light of each individual case and in accordance with Articles 4 to 12, the direct and indirect effects of a project on” a range of factors. Given that “appropriate” is a subjective term, Irish courts have often been asked to consider whether specific environmental impact assessments were conducted appropriately⁸.

This reliance on the courts to interpret the “appropriateness” of Environmental Impact Assessments has advantages and disadvantages. It ensures that assessments reflect the best emerging standards for conduct. However, in doing so it also introduces uncertainty, risk and delays to the development of infrastructure projects. This is likely one of the primary drivers behind the ever-lengthening Environmental Impact Assessments conducted in Ireland compared to EU norms. They are being conducted to minimise the risk of litigation and hence, often seek to include consideration of every possible environmental impact. Environmental Impact Assessment Reports are a critical tool for ensuring that environmental protection is embedded within infrastructure development. However, the value of assessments that run to thousands of pages for relatively minor interventions must be balanced against the extent to which these assessments actually deliver added protections, as well as the cost undertaking such assessments imposes on society, particularly on the delays the compilation of such assessments imposes. In the case of renewable energy and improvements to water infrastructure these delays often have significant negative environmental impacts.

In response, under this action the Office of Attorney General (AGO) will evaluate the scope for whether reforms are warranted to the domestic transposition of EU Directives. Specifically, this work will consider whether Ireland should choose to be more prescriptive than the underpinning Directive on the standards that might be applied to regulatory processes driven by EU legislation. To consider the previous example of Environmental Impact Assessments, it may be open to Ireland to specify directly in domestic legislation what the Government considers to be “appropriate” for inclusion within the contents and conduct of an Environmental Impact Assessment. This could provide certainty to the development of these assessments and allow more scope for the legislature rather than the courts to determine the appropriate balance between the stated purpose of the Directive and the common good.

Action 15: Enable Developer-led Infrastructure

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Progress regulatory reforms that allow developers to deliver certain types of electricity and water infrastructure where this may result in faster or more efficient development with no degradation of standards.	DCEE, DHLGH	Q2 – Q3 2026

Critical infrastructure in Ireland is owned and developed by State bodies. However, given the scale of infrastructure development required over the coming years, there may be an opportunity to offer private developers the opportunity to directly develop certain types of infrastructure in a very limited set of circumstances.

8. Notwithstanding the fact that the Environmental Protection Agency have published guidelines on the conduct of such assessments - https://www.epa.ie/publications/monitoring--assessment/assessment/EIAR_Guidelines_2022_Web.pdf

At present only ESB Networks can own a line that brings electricity from a generator to an electricity customer. Following an extensive consultation exercise with industry, the Government has decided that in future private developers will be able to build and own electricity lines in certain circumstances. This includes lines between renewable generators and storage solutions, direct connections between a generator and a customer, between neighbouring customers where no third-party land is required and to facilitate on street charging solutions for electric vehicles. Any private wire will be built to the same technical and safety standards as the National Electricity Grid and will be capable of being taken in charge by the System Operators.

Government will also bring forward measures for developers to deliver new standalone wastewater treatment plants. Under the new arrangements, Uisce Éireann will be involved from the outset, from design through to commissioning, ensuring that all infrastructure is built to agreed national standards. Uisce Éireann will take responsibility for regulatory compliance and, once constructed, will own and operate the infrastructure. This will bolster the service provided by Uisce Éireann to support increased levels of housing.

Action 16: Review the Role and Functions of the Office of the Planning Regulator and drive performance in the planning system, including the consistency of planning decision-making

Action	Body Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Review Office of the Planning Regulator. Improve planning consistency.	DHLGH	Q2 – Q3 2026

The Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) ensures that local authorities and An Coimisiún Pleanála are consistent in their implementation of Government policy through the planning system. The Government has committed to review the role and functions to the Office. This is with a view to ensuring that the Regulator’s statutory role and functions are aligned with and resolutely focused on supporting the Government’s housing and critical infrastructure investment plans in terms of increasing supply and speed of delivery.

To further improve the consistency of planning decisions, a variety of actions will be implemented to support planning authorities. This includes the development of new training programmes for staff, along with the implementation of other measures to drive best practice and performance. This will be tracked through monitoring and reporting mechanisms to pro-actively identify where issues may arise.

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage is developing a National Planning Excellence Framework to examine the potential for improvement and innovation within the planning system. The Framework aims to highlight and encourage the very best aspects of Irish planning whilst also identifying, monitoring, and continuously reflecting on areas in need of improvement. It will highlight best practice within the system, and identify areas in need of support and improvement.

In addition, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and other digital systems will be developed that can integrate the various data sets that already exist on planning, infrastructure and environmental matters to build a National Infrastructure Database that will be updated quarterly. Through the provision of timely, accurate and unified data, investment in infrastructure and housing can be more effectively guided to those locations most suitable for its development.



Impact on Delivery

All proposed actions aim to ensure that the regulatory functions across agencies adhere to the principles of Necessity, Effectiveness, Proportionality, Transparency, Accountability, and Consistency. These reforms are designed to support the timely delivery of critical infrastructure by streamlining processes and improving coordination.

The proposed actions under Pillar 2 will significantly improve the efficiency and predictability of infrastructure delivery in Ireland. By introducing National Planning Statements, simplifying regulatory structures, standardising processes, and embedding statutory timelines, these measures will reduce consenting timelines by up to 12 months, provide greater certainty for investors, and lower administrative burdens.

Enhanced coordination across agencies and proactive engagement on EU legislation will minimise delays caused by legislative ambiguity and judicial reviews, while maintaining robust environmental and societal safeguards.

Collectively, these actions will accelerate the delivery of critical energy, water, and transport infrastructure, reduce costs, and strengthen public confidence in the planning and regulatory system.



Pillar 3: **Co-ordination and Delivery Reform**

Ireland's infrastructure challenge is evolving. With funding committed under an ambitious revised National Development Plan, the priority is now converting commitments and ambition into timely delivery. However, major infrastructure projects are inherently complex as they involve multiple actors across government, local authorities, utilities and the private sector. To meet these challenges the Government is strengthening strategic coordination, a key enabler of accelerated infrastructure delivery. Such coordination must be complemented by a broader societal change in attitude to infrastructure, to one which recognises the absolute necessity of infrastructure to meet basic human needs, such as housing and employment, and to meet national and international objectives, such as climate sustainability and adaptation needs.

Historically, fragmented processes and siloed responsibilities have led to duplication, sequential approvals and delays, creating development cycles for major projects that can stretch to a decade, with potential judicial reviews adding further time. These delays impact housing supply, renewable energy integration and compliance with environmental standards.

Delivery reform requires stronger programme capability, consistent portfolio governance and clearer decision rights. Timely delivery depends on coordinated planning across utilities, departments and regulators.

Effective leadership and a whole-of-government focus on delivery is the cornerstone of the transformation required to build critical infrastructure in a timely way. It will shorten consenting timelines, reduce legal vulnerability, and create predictable pipelines that attract competition and innovation. To achieve this, the Government is deploying a suite of actions designed to drive the system to improve governance, planning, funding, and programme integration, a proactive response to a complex challenge. The objective is to create a single, coordinated framework by combining statutory authority, predictable pipelines, and integrated planning to move from a fragmented, compliance-driven system to one focused on timely, cost-effective delivery of critical infrastructure. The Government will drive delivery by placing the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure at the centre, and by ensuring it has the information it needs to lead and to ensure that ambition translates into timely and tangible outcomes.

In tandem, with increased funding and strategic coordination, actions will address the key external factors for infrastructure delivery, the construction sector, and key internal factors such as project approval and procurement processes. These actions will develop and increase construction sector capacity, drive greater competition, and strengthen value for money, thus creating greater efficiencies from the increases in capital investment.

This pillar directly addresses the following barriers:

Risk aversion

Insufficiently coordinated approvals

Prioritisation and coordination of infrastructure

Uncertainty of funding and project pipeline

Inconsistent planning decisions and timelines

Slow processes

Procurement challenges

Construction sector capacity and productivity

Table 3: Summary of Prioritised Actions and Sub-Actions

Number	Action	Timeline for Implementation
17	Target Investment at Priority Sectors through NDP Review	Q3 2025
18	Publish Sectoral Investment Plans to Promote Project Pipelines	Q4 2025
19	Enhance Infrastructure Coordination Function in DPER	Q4 2025 – Q1 2026
20	Introduce Risk Appetite Statements	Q2 – Q4 2026
21	Improve Utility Coordination at National and Local Level	Q4 2025 – Q2 2026
22	Increase Construction Sector Capacity and Productivity	Q1 2026 – Q3 2026
23	Accelerate Projects through Consenting Processes	Q1 - Q4 2026
24	Provide Expert Assistance for Key Infrastructure Projects	Q2 2025 – Q1 2026
25	Reform Procurement Processes	Q2 2026 – Q3 2026
26	Apply AI and Digital Tools to Support Infrastructure Rollout	Q1 2026 – Q4 2026

To embed strategic coordination across the infrastructure system, a suite of legislative, institutional, and financial reforms will be implemented. These actions are designed to reduce fragmentation, align planning and funding, and create a more predictable, efficient pathway for delivering critical infrastructure.

Action 17: Target Investment at Priority Sectors through the NDP Review

Action	Body Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Fund additional state investment in priority sectors of electricity, water, and transport.	DPER	Q3 2025

The National Development Plan Review 2025 has provided a record level of voted capital investment, €102.4 billion over the years 2026-2030, which is prioritised to the key infrastructure sectors of electricity, water, and transport. This investment is vital to develop fully serviced sites at scale to reach the Government’s housing targets and to strengthen our economy’s competitiveness and will build on the €65 billion of investment over the previous 5 years.

This significantly increased level of investment reflects the infrastructure challenges that have been accentuated by the stronger than forecasted growth in population and economic activity. These are positive developments that reflect Ireland’s attractiveness as a place to live and work, but they place an additional burden on our infrastructure, and particularly critical infrastructure.

In tandem with these increased levels of investment, there is a need for clearer prioritisation of this investment. The Programme for Government identified the prioritisation of electricity, water, and transport given this infrastructure is on the critical path for the development of housing and all other social infrastructure. The clear Government prioritisation of investment in these sectors allows the construction sector to enhance its capacity over the medium term, which is vital given current capacity challenges.

Action 18: Publish Sectoral Investment Plans to Promote Project Pipelines

Action	Body Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Publish Sectoral Plans to provide funding certainty and to develop project pipelines, particularly for the critical sectors of electricity water and transport infrastructure.	DPER	Q4 2025

Government agreement on the National Development Plan Review 2025 required Ministers to prepare sectoral investment plans. These plans set out the funding allocations for Departments' and Agencies' major projects and programmes over the coming five years. This allows the development of detailed project pipelines and phasing to ensure efficient delivery. The approach is in response to the challenge of insufficient prioritisation, which was identified with examples of too many projects being advanced at one time which drew delivery body and construction sector resources away from priority projects.

The sectoral plans will also facilitate more effective cross-government coordination by ensuring that tenders are better phased to allow firms to plan out the projects that they will tender for, thus increasing the competitive tension within tenders and driving better value for money. In addition, clearer project pipelines will allow for more synchronised delivery of essential infrastructure within geographic areas.

Action 19: Enhance Infrastructure Coordination Function in DPER

Action	Body Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Establish an infrastructure coordination function within DPER to provide a whole-of-government oversight of infrastructure delivery.	DPER	Q4 2025 – Q1 2026

The Programme for Government assigned an enhanced infrastructure delivery role to DPER, which involved the Department playing a greater role in driving delivery and cutting through the barriers that are giving rise to delay. As part of this new role, the Department delivered the NDP Review and the Barriers to Delivery report earlier in the year. DPER will also be responsible, through its Infrastructure Division, with driving implementation of the actions set out in this Report.

The Department will monitor and coordinate the progress of critical infrastructure projects across sectors, ensuring alignment between planning, funding, and delivery. It will maintain portfolio dashboards to track performance, risks, and interdependencies, enabling timely interventions. Acting as an escalation point, it will resolve cross-departmental conflicts and bottlenecks that delay critical infrastructure projects and highlight where internal and external factors have delayed key projects. The Department will identify cross-cutting barriers and propose solutions for Government consideration to address them. The Department's role in resource allocation decision making can also assist in incentivising the adoption of solutions across departments.

Additionally, through its monitoring of the delivery of the sectoral plans, the Department will align capital allocations with delivery readiness and planning status, ensuring resources are deployed effectively. The preparation of this information, in the form of project tracker reports and infrastructure dashboard metrics will support Cabinet Committees with data-driven insights and recommendations, strengthening decision-making and accountability across the infrastructure delivery system.

Action 20: Introduce Risk Appetite Statements

Action	Body Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Develop and implement Government approved risk appetite statements at portfolio, sector or project level for critical infrastructure to enable proportionate oversight and accelerate infrastructure delivery.	DPER	Q2 – Q4 2026

To support delivery of critical infrastructure, Departments and Agencies will define and publish clear, proportionate risk appetite statements for critical infrastructure decisions (following Government approval), which can support a higher risk appetite for critical infrastructure at the portfolio, sectoral or specific project level. These risk appetite statements would clearly set out how the expected benefits of the delivery department or agency assuming greater risk would outweigh the potential costs. To initiate this approach, a Government statement will set out a willingness for delivery Departments and Agencies to consider taking on more proportionate risk, through providing guidance on the acceptable level of risk that could be countenanced in seeking to realise potential benefits.

This action addresses the barrier and increasing culture of excessive caution in decision-making, which results in delayed approvals, repeated rechecks and increased cost inflation on critical projects. This risk is particularly evident in the following of overly sequential processes on key projects as opposed to undertaking more concurrent processes, which may come with higher initial costs and risks, but have the benefit of reducing overall project costs by speeding up delivery. Examples of taking on a higher level of risk could include early site clearance works or forward ordering of key components for critical infrastructure.

Action 21: Improve Utility Coordination at National and Local Level

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Establish a New Joint Utilities (electricity and water) and Transport Clearing House (JUTCH) to ensure a shared understanding and collaboration between the utilities and transport sectors. Supplement this with formal engagement structures at local level to promote more effective engagement between utilities and Local Government in the delivery of critical infrastructure.	DPER, JUTCH	Q4 2025 – Q2 2026

To accelerate the delivery of critical infrastructure, a Joint Utilities and Transport Clearing House will be established to ensure a structured forum for the sectors to more closely engage, which will support improved coordination between the providers of critical infrastructure. This group will bring together lead Departments of DCEE, D/Transport, and DHLGH along with DPER, utilities, transport authorities, and local authority representatives to improve coordination with a key example being the optimal use of road and transport infrastructure to deliver electricity and water infrastructure.

Greater coordination across Government is a key objective of this Report and this extends down to the arrangements at a project level. The creation of this Clearing House creates a structured approach to move away from bespoke arrangements that vary between projects and toward more consistent models that support clearer roles, shared processes, and stronger collaboration across agencies.

The group's mandate will include updating technical standards for managing road openings, facilitating early engagement on major projects, and providing practical support to local authorities. The group will also act as an escalation point to resolve conflicts quickly. By embedding structured collaboration and clear protocols, the action addresses systemic issues of fragmented approvals and also assists in the prioritisation of State assets and their delivery, ensuring they are used effectively.

Greater cooperation and coordination is essential between national utilities and local authorities to speed up the delivery of infrastructure at local level, particularly in terms of serviced sites for housing and economic activity. For example, utilities require local authority consents to undertake works to deliver their core infrastructure, and local authorities require clear information from national utilities on their long-term project pipelines in order to prepare county and other development plans.

Mechanisms to drive structured engagement will be put in place to drive better coordination of critical infrastructure to growth areas identified in county development plans. It should also allow more project

level coordination, such as the laying of key infrastructure through single road closures. The structured engagement will be overseen by the National Joint Utilities and Transport Clearing House, which will ensure a programme of regular meetings between designated officials in the local authorities and the national utilities, including a nominated point of contact from each side for each local authority.

Action 22: Increase Construction Sector Capacity and Productivity

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Increase construction sector capacity and productivity by advancing the actions of the construction industry capability group, streamlining the processes around visas and work permits to support global recruitment, expanding the capacity and output of existing vocational and educational institutions and improving the use of modern methods of construction (MMC) and digitalisation.	DPER, DFHERIS, DJustice,	Q1 – Q3 2026

In the first instance, the actions of the construction industry capability group will be accelerated, with a particular focus on driving capacity and productivity in the sector.

To enhance capacity within the construction sector, the processes surrounding work permits and visas will be streamlined, particularly given the need for globally sourced leadership teams for complex mega-projects. Currently, employment permit applications are processed within five to six weeks⁹. However, prospective workers must also obtain a long-stay employment visa, which can only be applied for after the permit is granted. Despite improvements in permit processing times, visa delays remain a significant bottleneck, with approvals taking up to four months. Proposals will be advanced to run these processes concurrently for worker on critical infrastructure.

Expanding the capacity and output of existing vocational and educational institutions is vital to accelerate skills development and respond effectively to the evolving needs of the construction sector. The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) will propose measures to increase Construction Technology and Practice (CTP) apprentices and graduates.

To drive the greater adoption and use of Lean principles, MMC and digitalisation, a series of actions will be overseen by DPER's Construction Sector Group. These initiatives will include driving the adoption of Lean principles across all NDP projects; the use of minimum Modern Methods of Construction (MMC) content requirements as per *Delivering Homes, Building Communities*, revisions to payment structures, inspection protocols, and quality assurance processes; and further Build Digital initiatives.

Action 23: Accelerate Projects through Consenting Processes

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Streamline and speed up the project approvals process by amending the Infrastructure Guidelines, streamlining project approvals in the Transport sector, reviewing the dual approval process for water sector investment.	DPER, D/Transport, DHLGH, CRU	Q1 - Q4 2026

To drive the timely delivery of infrastructure projects, a number of actions are proposed in relation to project approval processes for critical infrastructure.

9. <https://enterprise.gov.ie/en/what-we-do/workplace-and-skills/employment-permits/current-application-processing-dates/>

Targeted amendments are proposed to the Infrastructure Guidelines to speed up the progression of projects through approval processes, while ensuring sufficient protections to ensure value for public money are maintained. These amendments are particularly targeted at the critical infrastructure sectors that have a proven ability to deliver infrastructure efficiently and effectively. These amendments include:

- Increased project thresholds from €200 million to €500 million (for MPAG decision points) for sectors with a well-established and proven track record of delivery.
- The removal of the External Assurance Process (EAP), which provided external review of business cases but added considerably to project timelines.
- Administrative guidance on: (i) the timelines for each stage of a project's preliminary business case (PBC) to ensure preparation of the PBC within 3-6 months (depending on projects' size and complexity), (ii) the maximum size of business cases to ensure a focus on key matters pertinent to the approval of the project; and (iii) the timeline for all approval gates and Ministerial consents of projects listed in the Critical Infrastructure Bill.
- Changes to major projects' approvals at Approval Gate 2, which would allow the relevant Accounting Officer to approve.

These changes will ensure the Guidelines continue to clearly set out value for money guidance for the evaluation, planning and management of public investment projects but combined with streamlined decision-making to speed up project development and delivery.

In addition, the approval processes for transport projects (i.e., within Sponsoring Agencies, Approving Authorities, and D/Transport) will be reviewed to identify opportunities to streamline and eliminate duplication in the processes. The approval of projects in the transport sector is a multistage process, which has proven its robustness to date, however, it is important to realise the scope for improvement.

Uisce Éireann is currently required to comply with investment and business case approvals under two separate regimes, the Infrastructure Guidelines and the regulated asset base process overseen by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU). Duplication of these approval processes is an administrative burden which does not yield additional benefits. The duplication of these approval processes will be removed while appropriately balancing the requirement across DPER/ DHLGH and the CRU to protect taxpayer's funds.

To assist bodies with one off major capital projects, a centralised support is being put in place to guide projects through the Infrastructure Guidelines and Government approvals process. Government has already agreed that the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) will provide expert assistance at key stages of these projects. The scope of the NDFA's role in the specific major projects will be clearly defined on a project-by-project basis with the delivery bodies remaining fully responsible and accountable for all aspects of the project.

Action 24: Provide Expert Assistance for Key Infrastructure Projects

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
The NDFA will provide centralised support and expert assistance for major projects through the approvals process.	DPER, D/Finance, NDFA	Q2 2025 – Q1 2026

To assist bodies with one off major capital projects, a centralised support is being put in place to guide projects through the Infrastructure Guidelines and the Government approvals process. Government has already agreed that the National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) will provide expert assistance at key stages of these projects.

The scope of the NDFA's role in the specific major projects will be clearly defined on a project-by-project basis with the delivery bodies remaining fully responsible and accountable for all aspects of the project. In tandem with this, the NDFA's role will be to proactively drive projects forward through setting challenging timetables and submitting clear decisions for the responsible Departments to make in a timely manner.

Action 25: Reform Procurement Processes

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Support changes to the European Procurement Regulations, and the Capital Works Management Framework (CWMF); Support the greater use of international recognised forms of contract; and Improve procurement standardisation, professionalism, centralisation and training.	DPER, DHLGH	Q2 2026 – Q3 2026

Public sector bodies charged with the delivery of infrastructure operate in a complex legislative environment¹⁰, particularly in relation to public procurement. This environment is very different to the private sector, including the absolute requirement to adhere to EU Treaty principles of equal treatment, non-discrimination, transparency, proportionality, and mutual recognition. These requirements are reflected in a comprehensive legal regime which covers every aspect of the process. However, there is an acknowledgement at European Union level that European Procurement Regulations have not improved competition or the capacity to deliver both services and infrastructure efficiently to populations. Therefore, the Department is actively supporting the reform of the European Procurement Regulations to introduce greater flexibilities that will achieve greater value for money and speed up the delivery of infrastructure.

Considerable amendments to the CWMF have been introduced to increase flexibility including price variation, limitation of liability, and indexation for inflation. Further amendments will be introduced in 2026 to support increases in construction sector capacity and innovation through MMC adoption, design contests and early collaboration. The overly adversarial nature of procurement, driven by risk transfer objectives, also poses challenges to delivery. Therefore, further changes will be made to support a more collaborative approach, involving alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and changes to the inflation framework, with the longer-term objective of a greater sharing of risk.

The Government Contracts Committee has given derogations for the use of internationally recognised forms of contract for specific projects, primarily for the Transport sector. These derogations recognise the experience and resources of the relevant project sponsors to manage such forms of contract. DPER will be supportive of the wider use of these forms of contract in the Transport sector, which should lead to greater market participation from overseas contractors with increased competition in procurement tendering and increased construction capacity and value for money.

A core theme across the Government's infrastructure agenda is increased standardisation and professionalisation, and it is proposed to extend this to procurement by supporting increased training through a relaunched Procurement Skills Academy within DPER's infrastructure division. The Academy will manage the provision of a broader range of courses and the greater use of digitalisation to improve procurement skills and knowledge.

There is significant administration in submitting tenders, so DPER will reduce the administrative burden on construction companies through the launch of a Digital Suitability Assessment Questionnaire, which will attach to the company. This will reduce the requirement for the completion of the same information multiple times.

To further standardise procurement, a more centralised approach to procurement in critical infrastructure / works projects will be adopted within specific sectors; and in the local authority sector through the work of the Local Government Operational Procurement Centre (LGOPC). This will involve sectors identifying a section with critical mass that will provide appropriate procurement guidance, training and support, particularly in assisting public bodies that do not routinely procure and which may not have the appropriate resources to develop a professionalised and expert approach to procurement. DHLGH will work with the LGOPC to develop procurement best practice.

10. EU Directive 2014/24, transposed into Irish Law SI 284/216 European Union (Award of Public Authority Contracts) Regulations 2016 and EU Directive 2014/23, transposed into Irish Law SI 286/2016 European Union (Award of Contracts by Utility Undertakings) Regulations 2016.

Action 26: Apply AI and Digital Tools to Support Infrastructure Rollout

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Utilise AI and digital tools to assist in all stages of infrastructure delivery in terms of identification of infrastructure needs, navigating approval and consenting stages	DPER	Q1 2026 – Q4 2026

Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies and other digital advances offer the potential for high returns in infrastructure delivery, particularly given the extensive data generated and required in all major infrastructure projects. Digital modelling has an important role to play through all decision-making stages, and particularly given the necessary changes required to move from an overly paper-based process to a more digital process. AI can also play a strong role in analysis of the enhanced data that will be collected on the development of State projects by DPER's new infrastructure division.

The greater use of digital and AI can begin at the design stages in terms of the identification of future infrastructure needs on the basis of population and economic activity forecasts. It can also move into the approvals and consenting stages where AI could play a role in the time consuming process of drafting documents and applications, through to review stages where AI and digital tools can identify risk and additional cost points for future project planning. AI and digital tools could also play a role in examining whole programmes or extensive projects to identify the common barriers and bottlenecks, which would assist Government in key areas of reform to assist with infrastructure delivery.

DPER will work with the Construction Sector Group to identify and map out the potential AI and digital tools that could be integrated into key infrastructure project stages.



Impact on Delivery

The reforms in this chapter will drive greater prioritisation, strategic coordination, and faster approval processes in the delivery of infrastructure. The actions utilise multiple Government policy levels: legislative, administrative, and funding.

Legislative reforms through the Critical Infrastructure Bill will provide statutory authority to prioritise strategic projects and mandate whole-of-State cooperation. Administrative reforms will strengthen the role of the Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation (DPER), enabling it to provide greater visibility to Government on the status of projects, planning timelines, and judicial review activity. This enhanced oversight will support the early identification of barriers and facilitate targeted interventions.

Enhanced capital expenditure oversight and portfolio management will align resources with delivery readiness, while multi-annual funding envelopes and published sectoral portfolios will provide certainty for delivery bodies and the market. The significant additional NDP funding will increase the provision of priority infrastructure to service sites for housing and economic activity. Programme integration and parallel approvals will streamline consenting, and support practical coordination, such as optimising road networks for utility works. Additional measures focussed on the construction sector will increase the workforce, investment in take-up of MMC, the number of tenders received, and the number of projects delivered within schedule and within cost expectations.

Collectively, these actions within Government's control will prioritise key infrastructure with additional funding and address systemic bottlenecks across planning, funding, and project governance. They will be complemented by other actions in areas over which Government has less direct control, in the following chapters.



Pillar 4: **Public Acceptance**

Public acceptance of the need for electrical, water and transport infrastructure development is essential for the building of a sustainable, decarbonised and successful economy. Organised public objections to planning applications for both large and small-scale strategic infrastructure are increasingly common in recent years, resulting in costly delays to the delivery of infrastructure projects.

Public acceptance is a foundation of timely delivery. Clear communication of need, transparent evidence and engagement reduce resistance and create the trust required for complex critical infrastructure programmes.

Whilst people broadly appreciate the need for new strategic infrastructure, and welcome the benefits this infrastructure provides, that position can rapidly change when their lands or community are affected by the routing or location of such infrastructure. This opposition often rallies around the more immediate or perceived negative impacts, which can occur at a more concentrated local level. The benefits, meanwhile, are more diffuse, long-term, and serve the broader public interest, so there is less likely to be a coalescence of supportive voices. These objections often translate into legal challenges, public protests, and challenges in securing land access.

Public consultation is firmly embedded within the development cycle for infrastructure projects. This comes in two forms; i) the statutory consultation processes that are mandatory, and ii) non-statutory consultation processes and early engagements, which tend to take place early in the project lifecycle to take account of the views of those most impacted by developments in order to mitigate any objections that could lead to delays and objections.

Greater public awareness and understanding of the need for critical infrastructure will support its timely delivery. However, awareness alone is insufficient. Opposition often crystallises when landowners or local communities are concerned regarding impacts on their property or local area. Practical measures that improve transparency and build trust with key stakeholders, such as landowners and local communities, are required to address relevant concerns, facilitate essential land access, and mitigate against legal challenges or opposition to projects.

This pillar and associated actions will put in place mechanisms through which the State can build greater public acceptance for critical infrastructure. Stakeholder acceptance and collaborative support to facilitate critical infrastructure is a key enabler to the acceleration of critical infrastructure and associated actions have been identified to support same. The other actions to speed up regulatory decision-making will also play an important role, as efficient decision-making in relation to approvals and consents, in which all views are appropriately considered ensures that opposition does not grow and become more entrenched over time. Combining these reforms with improved procedures on sharing land resources in the public sector will ensure that a holistic approach is taken, which tackles both perception and practical barriers simultaneously.

The actions set out include areas such as the promotion of the positive impacts of infrastructure, as well as more practical matters on how utility development can be better facilitated through potential reforms on land access/acquisition. The actions focus on the promotion of the outcomes, benefits and social value of infrastructure to build public acceptance and support. The actions seek to harness the collaborative support of multiple key stakeholders to ensure the accelerated delivery of infrastructure.

This pillar directly addresses the following barriers:

Public Acceptance

Slow Processes

Risk aversion

Insufficiently Coordinated Approvals

Prioritisation and Coordination of Infrastructure

Actions

To address the dual challenges of public resistance and land access delays, a series of targeted actions have been identified to build trust, improve transparency, and accelerate infrastructure delivery. These actions combine strategic communication, political sponsorship, and practical reforms to ensure that critical infrastructure projects can proceed with broad societal support and fewer procedural obstacles.

Table 4: Summary of Prioritised Actions and Sub-Actions

Number	Action	Timeline for Implementation
27	Create a Duty for State Bodies to Cooperate in Making Land Available and Accessible for Critical Infrastructure	Q1 2026 – Q1 2027
28	Build Leadership Support for Critical Infrastructure Projects at National and Local Levels	Q1 2026
29	Enhance Government Communication to Promote the Importance of Infrastructure Delivery	Q1 2026
30	Establish a Benefits Realisation Framework for Infrastructure Projects	Q2 2026

Action 27: Create a Duty for State Bodies to Cooperate in Making Land Available and Accessible for Critical Infrastructure

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Accelerate the identification and transfer of suitable State sites for critical infrastructure	DPER, State Agencies, DHLGH	Q1 2026 – Q1 2027

Making state-owned land available for the development of critical infrastructure will require a centralised land bank register, mandatory land data sharing, and integration of utility provision into agency and local authority plans. The transfer and development of these sites for development will be advanced by utilities identifying suitable sites through their examination of the existing work of the Land Development Agency on State sites for development. On identifying suitable sites, the utilities will engage with the State bodies responsible for the sites to agree the terms of the transfer.

Regular reporting will ensure accountability, with Agencies and Local Authorities providing six-weekly updates to parent Departments and quarterly updates to DPER on the progression of proposed land transfers. Additional measures will be considered including the identification of bottlenecks and enforcement actions for non-compliance with agreements. There will be an expectation of full cooperation by all Departments, Agencies and Local Authorities, with failures to cooperate impacting on DPER's willingness to consider the relevant Departments' and Agencies' sanction and consent requests.

This action will accelerate delivery by making sites available immediately, removing land-access barriers, reducing reliance on private negotiations and compulsory acquisition, and saving time and resources. A coordinated approach will enable utilities to plan and deliver projects efficiently, especially in high-demand areas. Streamlined processes and clear governance will reduce uncertainty, ensuring critical infrastructure proceeds without avoidable delays, supporting housing, energy, and climate objectives.

Action 28: Build Leadership Support for Critical Infrastructure Projects at National and Local Levels

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Enhance leadership support for critical infrastructure projects at national and local levels through more effective engagement	DPER, DTaoiseach, State Agencies	Q1 2026

This will involve establishing formal structures and using the infrastructure promotion action below to deliver targeted briefings to Ministers, TDs, local elected officials, civil society leaders, and senior officials to ensure they are fully informed of the scale, urgency, and necessity of infrastructure investment. The approach includes developing: a framework to champion specific critical projects, a structured engagement with the Oireachtas Committee on Infrastructure to clearly articulate the need for infrastructure, and a national consensus on the importance of infrastructure. Targeted briefing materials will highlight the socioeconomic and climate benefits of the timely delivery of infrastructure, which will equip leaders to advocate effectively for infrastructure priorities.

This action will accelerate infrastructure delivery by creating strong political and civil society support for critical projects at both local and national levels. This is essential for addressing and overcoming barriers such as fragmented decision-making and local opposition. Informed and engaged leadership can champion projects through planning and approval processes, reduce delays caused by competing priorities, and foster alignment across Departments and Agencies.

Action 29: Enhance Government Communication to Promote the Importance of Infrastructure Delivery

Action	Bodies Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Promote the social value of infrastructure in an evidence-based manner.	DPER, DTaoiseach, State Agencies	Q1 2026

Measures will be implemented to support the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure to develop initiatives to raise public awareness of the tangible benefits of infrastructure in everyday life, coordinate cross-government engagement, and support stakeholder advocacy and political sponsorship. This work will bring together government departments, State Agencies and utilities to build consensus on critical infrastructure needs and solutions, empowering key economic development agencies, such as IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Teagasc, and others to advocate for critical infrastructure.

This action will accelerate infrastructure delivery by coordinating messaging and engagement across stakeholders. It will create a unified narrative that counters misinformation and highlights the economic, social, and environmental value of timely infrastructure provision. Ultimately, this approach will create a more supportive environment for critical projects, enabling faster decision-making and smoother implementation, while reinforcing international confidence in the State’s ability to deliver essential infrastructure.

Action 30: Establish a Benefits Realisation Framework for Infrastructure Projects

Action	Body Responsible	Timeline for Implementation
Aid communication by allowing values to be attached to the societal value of infrastructure, improving public understanding of the benefits of infrastructure.	DPER	Q2 2026

A Benefits Realisation Framework will be developed to identify and measure the societal benefits of infrastructure projects. This framework will capture key outcomes of individual projects such as enhanced competitiveness, reduced emissions, improved housing delivery, regional development, and transport efficiency. By embedding this analysis into project development and public communications as appropriate, the framework will provide a consistent, evidence-based narrative on the social and economic value of infrastructure investment. It will also highlight the costs of inaction, ensuring that decision-makers, stakeholders, and the public understand the broader implications of delays or opposition. Drawing on international best practice, such as the UK’s National Benefits Management Framework, this approach will create a structured and transparent method for demonstrating the social and economic value of infrastructure.

Implementing this framework will improve the level of understanding of the wider benefits of key projects. The quantified benefits will allow clear, consistent messaging to build strong political and civil society sponsorship and stakeholder support. This framework will help create a culture that prioritises timely infrastructure delivery. Furthermore, by providing a robust evidence base for the benefits of infrastructure, it will help address the issue of objections and judicial reviews driven by misinformation or narrow sectional interests.

Impact on Delivery

The actions under this pillar address significant barriers to timely infrastructure delivery, including public acceptance, prioritisation and coordination of infrastructure, slow processes and delays in securing land access. By improving communication and engagement at national, local, and community levels, these measures will build trust, reduce opposition, and create a shared understanding of the societal benefits of infrastructure. This will help to minimise objections, reduce the likelihood of judicial reviews, and foster political sponsorship for critical projects.

In parallel, practical measures such as the provision of state-owned land and streamlined land transfer processes will remove key logistical obstacles that often delay project commencement. These actions will shorten the time required to secure sites, reduce reliance on compulsory acquisition, and lower associated costs. Collectively, these initiatives will create a more predictable and collaborative environment for infrastructure delivery, ensuring that projects move from planning to construction more quickly and efficiently.



5

Action Plan

Introduction to Actions

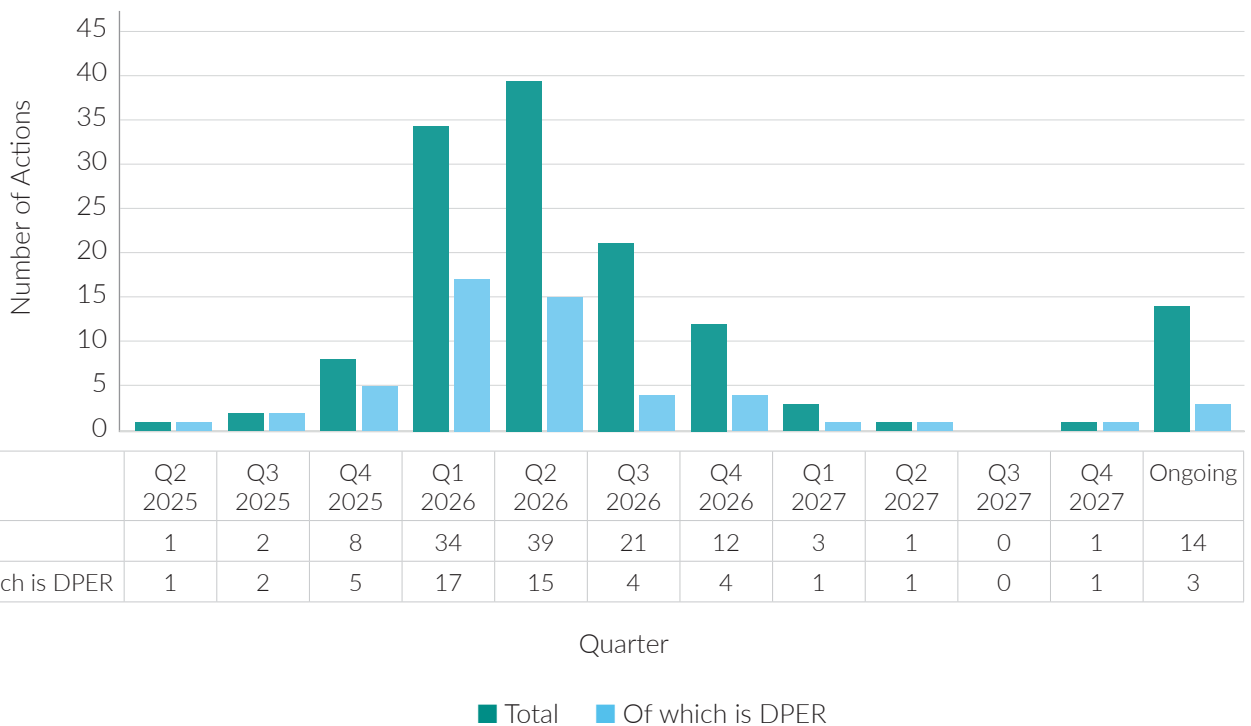
This section details the specific actions that will be undertaken to accelerate the delivery of infrastructure. The 30 headline actions set out in the main report are fully detailed here, with a common template provided for every action. This template details the action and its intended purpose. It lists each sub-measure that will contribute to the achievement of the action, with a lead body assigned to every sub-action and a specific timeline for the implementation of the sub-action. The expected outcomes and key performance indicators for each action are also provided.

The actions are split into 138 sub-actions. The sub-actions are substantively for delivery in 2026 and are particularly weighted towards completion in the first two quarters of 2026 as demonstrated by the table below. This prioritisation reflects the urgency with which Government regards the implementation of these reforms.

DPER is responsible for the implementation of the largest number of actions. This demonstrates the centrality of the role played by the Department and the degree of new functions that the Department is taking on to reflect the enhanced infrastructure mandate assigned in the Programme for Government.

Figure 5

Accelerating Infrastructure Actions by Quarter





Action 1: Reform Judicial Review

This action commits to a series of reforms to the judicial review process. These measures will reduce the number of judicial reviews, improve the efficiency and timeliness of proceedings, and reduce costs for all parties. Further work will be undertaken to strengthen areas such as standing, quashing orders and the matter of own costs.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Introduce secondary legislation to implement scale of fees, capping the costs of environmental planning judicial reviews as per Part 9 of the Planning and Development Act (PDA), 2024	Q1 2026	DCEE
ii. Implement the process and procedural enhancements contained in Chapter 1 of Part 9 of the PDA 2024	Q2 2026	Courts Service
iii. Investigate and implement a series of further reforms to judicial review, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Commencing new standing requirements of the Planning and Development Act 2024. Examining further reforms to standing, prioritising parties directly affected by projects; → Whether requiring the assessment of the likelihood of success before granting leave will accelerate cases; → Examining the appropriateness of fee structures, including “no foal, no fee” and an examination of own costs rules, including the use of the UK model capping costs for unsuccessful applicants → Implementing enhancements to ensure all avenues must be exhausted prior to the issuance of quashing orders → Reforms to court procedures to provide for expedited hearings 	Q2 2026	DCEE DHLGH D/Justice DPER Courts Service
iv. Introduce legislation progressing agreed package of further reforms from step iii	Q3 2026	Relevant Department
v. Monitor impact of reforms with recommendations on further reform where necessary	Ongoing	DPER

Expected Outcome

- Faster delivery of critical infrastructure
- Fewer delays caused by judicial reviews
- Reduced litigation costs for the State and applicants
- Greater certainty and predictability in outcomes

KPI

- Number of judicial reviews initiated
- Level of legal costs incurred in environmental planning judicial reviews
- Shorter case timelines
- Reduction in quashing orders



Action 2: Enact Legislation to Accelerate Critical Infrastructure and Provide for Emergency Powers

Establish a statutory framework that allows Government to designate certain works as of strategic importance that it deems are in the national interest. This will require the prioritisation of all planning, regulation, funding decisions, and any licences, permits, consents or agreements from state entities. This will accelerate the approval of strategic projects/programmes while maintaining full transparency, proportionality, and environmental safeguards. Legislation will also be drafted to provide an emergency powers framework for critical infrastructure projects.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Develop an administrative system to allow Government to designate specific works as critical infrastructure by order subject to Dail resolution	Q1 2026	DPER
ii. Draft and publish legislation granting Government statutory power to designate projects as constituting critical infrastructure	Q1 2026	DPER
iii. Draft and publish further legislation to create a robust emergency powers framework that can meaningfully accelerate the delivery of critical infrastructure projects	Q3 2026	DPER
iv. Create a new system to monitor the timelines associated with designated critical projects and intervene further where prioritisation is insufficient	Q4 2026	DPER
v. After one year, publish a report on the effectiveness of new legislation, incorporating lessons learned and any relevant international examples	Q4 2027	DPER

Expected Outcome

- Create a statutory fast-track route for nationally significant projects
- Strengthen cross government accountability and oversight
- Reduce delays caused by regulatory and consenting bottlenecks
- Strengthened decision-making framework for regulators, leading to better decisions that are less susceptible to legal challenge

KPI

- Critical projects designated and accelerated through planning/licensing processes
- Reduced overall delivery time for priority infrastructure
- Timelines for delivery met or exceeded

Supporting Stakeholders

Office of the Attorney General

Department of the Taoiseach

Other Government Departments as necessary e.g. DCEE, DHLGH, D/Transport



Action 3: Targeted Legislative Reforms

Introduce a series of targeted legislative reforms to streamline the development of infrastructure. This includes examining overly burdensome or overlapping matters that infrastructure developers or planning authorities must have regard to, simplifying processes around compulsory purchase orders and applying the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2024 to Transport Projects.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Convene a legislative working group with key Departments and utilities to identify problematic redundant, burdensome or overlapping legislative provisions	Q1 2026	DPER
ii. Update consent procedures for road and rail projects to align with the Planning and Development Act 2024	Q2 2026	D/Transport
iii. Simplify Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) procedures for critical infrastructure, prioritising eliminating dual approval processes	Q3 2026	D/Justice
iv. Examine and report on scope for further targeted reform to standardise and simplify CPO regime, including scope for use of vesting arrangements	Q4 2026	D/Justice
v. Introduce targeted reforms to remove legislative barriers that impede infrastructure development arising from sub action (i)	Q3 2026	Departments responsible for the identified legislation

Expected Outcome

- Simplified legal processes applied to critical infrastructure
- Reduced delays caused by procedural challenges
- Modernised CPO process for fair and efficient land acquisition
- Improved alignment between planning and transport legislation

KPI

- Number of reforms implemented
- Reduction in delays in the development of critical infrastructure
- Streamlined CPO timelines and compensation assessment process

Supporting Stakeholders

Office of the Attorney General

DCEE

DHLGH

Other Departments as necessary



Action 4: Progress Domestic Reforms to Environmental Assessment in Parallel with EU Simplification Agenda

Introduce a series of reforms to the environmental assessments applied to critical infrastructure. While reforms will be necessarily limited to what is possible under EU law, there is scope for clearer domestic rules on how assessments should be conducted. This will result in shorter, more focused and useful reports and consequently faster decision-making timelines.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Introduce targeted exemptions, where feasible and appropriate, for critical infrastructure works	Q2 2026	DHLGH
ii. Prescribe clearer guidance requirements for EIA and AA, including legislative amendments where necessary to shorten documents and reduce complexity	Q4 2026	DHLGH, DCEE
iii. Raise thresholds for triggering EIA, including for expansions of existing facilities through EIA traffic light review	Q2 2026	DHLGH
iv. Ensure AA remains compliant with EU law while removing unnecessary screening for minor works	Q3 2026	DHLGH
v. Consider further reforms to align with EU best practice and proposals under the Net Zero Industry Act and Renewable Energy Directive	Q4 2026	DCEE AGO Relevant Departments

Expected Outcome

- Shorter, more focused environmental assessment documentation
- Reduced delays caused by disproportionate assessment requirements
- Faster expansion of existing facilities to meet housing, energy, and economic needs
- Greater certainty and efficiency in planning processes while maintaining environmental safeguards

KPI

- Reduction in size, complexity and timelines for environmental assessments
- Increased number of capacity expansions without EIA
- Clear legislative guidance adopted for EIA and AA

Supporting Stakeholders

DPER	Office of the Attorney General	Utilities	Other Departments as necessary
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Action 5: Increase Exemption Thresholds for Critical Infrastructure

Amend planning legislation to expand the scope of exemptions at which critical infrastructure will not require planning permission. This will allow for more efficient delivery of both new facilities and the expansion of existing facilities.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Expand exempted development provisions in the Planning and Development Regulations 2026	Q2 2026	DHLGH
ii. Amend the Planning and Development Act 2024 to include provisions for minor amendments to approved developments	Q2 2026	DHLGH
iii. Assess and report on the number of infrastructure projects that are proceeding under new exemption regulations	Ongoing	Utilities

Expected Outcome

- Faster delivery of critical infrastructure
- Reduced need for new facilities through expanded exemptions
- Streamlined planning and approval processes

KPI

- Exempted development provisions expanded and operational
- Exempted developments tracked and monitored by Utilities

Supporting Stakeholders

DPER

DCEE

AGO

Utilities



Action 6: Respond Rapidly to Precedent

Create mechanisms that identify new precedents set by court judgements that are relevant to infrastructure and offer early options to Government to address, as well as enduring solutions.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Issue a Circular that requires all Departments, Agencies and State companies to monitor and report substantive court decisions relevant to infrastructure delivery to the Senior Officials Group on Infrastructure which assess the potential impact of cases identified on future infrastructure delivery	Q1 2026	DPER
ii. Where such cases are identified, develop options for Government response, including interim measures and long-term legislative changes	Ongoing	Relevant Department, AGO
iii. Report findings and recommendations on cases to DPER for discussions at Senior Officials Group on Infrastructure / Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure where relevant	Ongoing	Relevant Department, DPER

Expected Outcome

- Precedents addressed through legislative or interim measures within 12 months
- Number of reports submitted to Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure
- Reduction in delays caused by legal uncertainty

KPI

- Develop templates for Cabinet reports and legislative options
- Monitor effectiveness and refine approach based on feedback
- Monitor implementation and adjust based on legal and operational feedback

Supporting Stakeholders

Relevant Departments

Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure



Action 7: Enact Civil Reform Bill to Legislate for Judicial Reviews

Develop legislation that will codify law on judicial review by placing it on a statutory basis. This will allow the legislature to determine the scope and application of judicial review, ensuring costs are reduced where possible and litigants have sufficient standing to properly challenge decisions.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Develop, approve and publish draft heads that detail the proposed reforms	Q4 2025	D/Justice
ii. General scheme of legislation approved by Government and introduced in the Oireachtas	Q3 2026	D/Justice
iii. Legislation enacted and implemented	Q2 2027	D/Justice
iv. Monitor impact of new legislation on judicial reviews and timelines	Ongoing	D/Justice

Expected Outcome

- Greater balance achieved in access to justice and efficient operation of the courts
- Reduction in costs of legal system funded by taxpayers
- Reduction in delays caused by legal uncertainty

KPI

- Publication and introduction of legislation
- Commencement shortly after enactment
- Fewer judicial reviews taken on critical infrastructure
- Less court time taken per judicial review

Supporting Stakeholders

Office of the Attorney General	DCEE	DHLGH	DPER	D/Transport
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Action 8: Develop and Publish National Planning Statement(s) for Critical Infrastructure

A new National Planning Statement for critical infrastructure will provide clear policy direction and guidance to all planning authorities on Government expectations regarding the development of critical infrastructure.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Engage with parent Departments, Utilities, and relevant Agencies	Q1 2026	DHLGH
ii. Draft NPS and undertake required public consultation	Q3 2026	DHLGH
iii. Finalise, obtain Government approval and publish NPS for critical infrastructure	Q1 2027	DHLGH

Expected Outcome

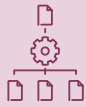
- Provide further authoritative policy direction ensuring that decisions at all levels are aligned with national priorities
- Strengthened decision-making framework for regulatory bodies
- Improve framework within which regional assemblies, Local Authorities, An Coimisiún Pleanála and other prescribed bodies must operate
- Provide end-to-end guidance to the public, developers, consenting authorities and the Courts identifying the main decision-making principles and considerations from a proper planning, and sustainable development and environmental, perspective

KPI

- Publication of NPS for critical infrastructure
- Consistency in decision-making across planning authorities and An Coimisiún Pleanála
- Reduction in time required to deliver consistent and legally robust planning decisions
- Improved predictability for infrastructure investment

Supporting Stakeholders

DCEE	D/Transport	Utility Providers	State Agencies for infrastructure delivery
Office of the Planning Regulator	Regional Assemblies	Local Authorities	An Coimisiún Pleanála



Action 9: Establish a Regulatory Simplification Unit

Set up a new unit within DPER to coordinate the streamlining of regulatory processes and structures, including governance, oversight and accountability. This will address overlapping and unduly complex regulatory frameworks that drive lengthy timelines and increase the scope for judicial reviews.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Develop and issue Government guidance to regulatory bodies on improving the coordination and standardisation of regulatory approvals for critical infrastructure, incorporating key performance metrics	Q2 2026	DPER
ii. Complete a risk-based review on the structure and governance, oversight and accountability of the key regulatory bodies involved in critical infrastructure consenting/licensing functions	Q3 2026	DPER
iii. Assess the scope for rationalisation of key regulatory bodies and/or merging functions, including adoption of single agency model, where it will accelerate critical infrastructure	Q4 2026	DPER
iv. Mandate the development and use of a single portal for submission of data for all licensing/consenting processes for critical infrastructure	Q1 2027	DPER
v. Review and optimise resourcing and operating models and needs for key regulatory bodies based on simplified processes	Q4 2026	Regulatory Bodies

Expected Outcome

- Streamlined and coordinated regulatory processes resulting in reduced delays and complexity
- Better alignment of regulatory functions with infrastructure delivery needs

KPI

- Number of regulatory bodies restructured or streamlined
- Reduction in average time for multi-agency consenting
- Publication of resourcing and operating models aligned with simplified processes

Supporting Stakeholders

Other Departments – DHLGH, DCEE, AGO	Key Agencies – EPA, MARA, NPWS, Heritage	ACP	Local Authorities	Utility regulators and providers
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Action 10: Rationalise Legislation Underpinning Regulatory Processes

Legislation underpinning the regulatory processes applied to critical infrastructure has significantly grown in complexity. Numerous examples of relatively minor legislative amendments to regulatory functions have been identified that, if progressed, will shorten development timelines. This will be combined with a more thorough “look back” exercise to identify and apply potential flexibilities within EU legislation.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Implement series of administrative reforms to simplify regulatory processes and approvals applied to critical infrastructure, e.g. → Consenting electricity distribution infrastructure at Local Authority level	Q2 2026	DHLGH DCEE
ii. Undertake a review of key legislation applied to critical infrastructure to simplify and align existing regulatory frameworks with EU proportionality principles	Q3 2026	DHLGH DCEE
iii. Implement series of already identified legislative reforms to simplify regulatory processes and approvals applied to critical infrastructure, e.g. → Amend European Union Wastewater Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations 2020 to allow for identified process simplification	Q2 2026	DHLGH DCEE

Expected Outcome

- Streamlined and coordinated regulatory processes resulting in reduced delays and complexity
- Better alignment of regulatory functions with infrastructure delivery needs

KPI

- Reduction in project development timelines
- Reduction in processing times within regulatory bodies

Supporting Stakeholders

AGO

Relevant Departments

ACP

Local Authorities



Action 11: Reform Processes Applied to Critical Infrastructure Within Agencies/Regulators

Mandate the introduction of a series of reforms to the processes of all bodies involved in the licensing and consenting of critical infrastructure. These reforms will improve coordination between bodies, ensure that all processes are proportionate, have fixed timelines, published guidelines, and are conducted in parallel where feasible.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Issue via Circular a series of regulatory process reforms, to be implemented by Departments/Regulatory bodies, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Imposition of a duty to cooperate → Duty to engage with applicants → Fixed timeline for every process → Published guidelines for every process → Consents/Licences/Permits to be parallel with the Planning Process → Simplified processes, particularly for Amendments/Extensions → Key Performance Indicators to track and measure timelines for processes/consents 	Q1 2026	DPER
ii. Key regulatory bodies to complete an evidence-based assessment of proportionality of regulatory and consenting processes and identification of reforms	Q2 2026	Regulatory Bodies
iii. In line with the EU simplification agenda, regulatory bodies to identify key EU legislative amendments that could simplify processes applied to critical infrastructure	Q1 2026	Regulatory Bodies
iv. Coordinate regulatory reforms applied to critical infrastructure with other regulatory reform programmes	Ongoing	D/Taoiseach
v. Commence legislation to implement process reforms that must be given legal effect.	Q3 2026	Relevant Depts
vi. Key Agencies to provide update on regulatory simplification to Government every quarter, with full report included in every annual report.	Every quarter	Agencies

Expected Outcome

- Proportionality of regulatory processes will reduce costs and increase certainty for critical projects
- Removal of delay and the associated risks regarding compliance with EU law and, in the case of water services, to public health



Action 11: Reform Processes Applied to Critical Infrastructure Within Agencies/Regulators

KPI

- Completion of specified actions within agreed timeframes
- Removal of consecutive aspects of the regulatory regime
- Effective and proportional regulatory and consenting processes
- Evidence of reduced complexity and timeframe for applications

Supporting Stakeholders

AGO

Key Departments – DHLGH, DCEE, DPER, DTaoiseach, DETE

Key Regulatory Bodies – EPA, NPWS, MARA, CRU



Action 12: Implement Early Warning System re EU Legislative Change on Critical Infrastructure

Introduce systems that can identify and flag for review forthcoming EU legislation when its implementation may impact the delivery of critical infrastructure. This is necessary to avoid legislative transpositions in one sector that have unintended consequences in another sector.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Establish and chair a new inter-departmental group (IDG) to identify, assess, and coordinate the implementation of new EU legislation that may impact infrastructure delivery	Q1 2026	DFAT
ii. Ensure cross Government consultation in the negotiation of EU proposals with a potential impact on infrastructure delivery through High Level Group on EU Policy and the European Coordinators Network	Q1 2026	DFAT
iii. Issue a new Circular requiring Departments to notify DFAT of forthcoming EU legislative changes that may affect infrastructure	Q1 2026	DFAT
iv. Develop a review process, and integrate reporting into existing governance structures for infrastructure; e.g. Senior Officials Group	Q2 2026	D/Taoiseach
v. Develop guidance for Departments on identifying infrastructure-relevant impacts and exercising flexibilities in transposition.	Q3 2026	AGO

Expected Outcome

- Early identification of legislative risks to infrastructure delivery
- Proportionate and coordinated implementation of EU law
- Reduced unintended consequences and litigation risk from fragmented transposition
- Enhanced whole-of-Government alignment on infrastructure priorities

KPI

- Number of legislative items reviewed through the new process
- Timeliness of Departmental notifications
- Number of legislative transpositions adjusted to reflect infrastructure priorities
- Reduction in delays or litigation linked to legislative misalignment

Supporting Stakeholders

DFAT

All Departments

AGO



Action 13: Advocate for New Approach to EU Legislation on Critical Infrastructure

Within the EU's simplification agenda, seek to streamline existing EU Directives which may delay the delivery of critical infrastructure and work to ensure an appropriate balance in future EU legislation which does not lead to excessive legal challenges, including in common law systems.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Identify priority areas within the EU's simplification agenda that could enable the swifter delivery of critical infrastructure and housing, and to support proposals in these areas	Q1 2026	DFAT
ii. In the context of the European Commission's proposal for an Omnibus package on Environmental Simplification, seek to amend relevant EU Directives	Q4 2025	DFAT Relevant Departments
iii. Investigate whether the differences between common and civil law jurisdictions have led to a growing divergence in the number of judicial challenges taken in Ireland compared with other EU Member States	Q2 2026	AGO
iv. Consult with Cyprus and Malta on the experiences of partial common law systems with the implementation of relevant EU law	Q2 2026	DFAT
v. Engage with the EU Commission to consider responses to the challenges identified for common law jurisdictions that arise from EU legislation	Q3 2026	DFAT

Expected Outcome

- Promote greater awareness of the challenges that arise for common law jurisdictions from specific approaches to the transposition of EU directives
- Longer term consideration of alternative approaches that could mitigate these challenges

KPI

- Report identifying the challenges that arise for infrastructure delivery from the transposition of EU directives in common law jurisdictions
- Development of longer term mitigation approaches

Supporting Stakeholders

DFAT	AGO	DPER
DHLGH	DCEE	D/Transport



Action 14: Advise on Alternative Methods of Transposing EU Legislation

Determine the legislative options available to adopt a more prescriptive approach to the transposition of EU legislation, reducing ambiguities and subjectivity where feasible. This will limit the expansion of the scope of EU requirements driven by court precedent.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Office of Attorney General to join the new IDG on Infrastructure, the High Level Group on EU Policy and European Coordinators' Network to monitor and track forthcoming Directives	Q1 2026	AGO
ii. Review current transposition practices for EU Directives in infrastructure-related areas (e.g., EIA, AA)	Q1 2026	AGO
iii. Identify provisions where more specific provisions may reduce ambiguity that leads to litigation and delays	Q2 2026	AGO
iv. Prepare recommendations for Government on where reforms are warranted and outline legislative options	Q4 2026	AGO
v. On the basis of lessons learned, issue new guidance to Departments on best practice in transposition	Q4 2026	AGO

Expected Outcome

- Reduces uncertainty and delays caused by judicial interpretation of ambiguous provisions
- Provides clarity for regulators, developers, and courts on compliance requirements
- Improves efficiency of planning and consenting processes while maintaining environmental safeguards

KPI

- Delivery of a comprehensive evaluation report to Government
- Identification of priority areas for prescriptive transposition
- Reduction in litigation risk and delays linked to EU-derived provisions

Supporting Stakeholders

DPER

DHLGH

DCEE

D/Transport

EPA



Action 15: Enable Developer-led Infrastructure

Progress regulatory reforms that allow developers to deliver certain types of electricity and water infrastructure where this may result in faster or more efficient development with no degradation of standards. Progress regulatory reforms to facilitate resolution and taking in-charge of legacy developer-built infrastructure by Uisce Éireann, resulting in the ability to provide additional housing in vicinity of existing communities. These reforms will ensure a faster resolution to certain bottlenecks on local infrastructure.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Advance regulations to enable private wire electricity connections, in line with the Government private wires policy statement	Q2 2026	DCEE
ii. Bring forward measures for developers to deliver new standalone wastewater treatment plants to bolster the service provided by Uisce Éireann to support increased levels of housing	Q2 2026	DHLGH
iii. Create new procedures for active engagement by Uisce Éireann with potential developers of wastewater infrastructure to facilitate construction	Q2 2026	DHLGH
iv. Ensure developer-led infrastructure complies with environmental and technical standards and integrates with public systems where appropriate	Q2 2026	DCEE DHLGH
v. Coordinate with regulators and planning authorities to streamline approvals and oversight	Q3 2026	DCEE DHLGH

Expected Outcome

- Accelerated delivery of renewable electricity generation
- Accelerated delivery of housing and commercial development
- Reduced reliance on public infrastructure timelines
- Enables flexible, site-specific solutions for energy and wastewater needs

KPI

- Number of housing projects delivered with developer-led wastewater infrastructure
- Reduction in delays due to infrastructure availability
- Compliance rates with environmental and technical standards

Supporting Stakeholders

Utility Providers

Regulatory Authorities

Local Authorities

Planning Authorities



Action 16: Review the Role and Functions of the Office of the Planning Regulator and Drive Performance in the Planning System, including Consistency in Decision-Making

Review the role and functions of the Office of the Planning Regulator (OPR) to ensure that the role of the Office is aligned with, and supports, the delivery of housing and critical infrastructure. Provide training and guidance to drive best practice and consistency across local planning decisions, develop a framework to monitor and improve efficiency and innovation in the planning system, and collate data from utilities to map infrastructure availability.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Review the role and function of the OPR to ensure the role of the Office is aligned with and supports the prioritisation of housing and critical infrastructure delivery	Q2 2026	DHLGH
ii. Oversee the development and delivery of training programmes for Local Authorities and other key stakeholders in the planning process to ensure consistent application of planning legislation and policy	Q3 2026	DHLGH
iii. Undertake consultation on a National Planning Excellence Framework to drive best-practice and performance across planning authorities, including monitoring and reporting mechanisms to track consistency and quality	Q3 2026	DHLGH
iv. Develop, publish, and manage a National Infrastructure GIS Database integrating planning, infrastructure, and environmental datasets	Q3 2026	DHLGH
v. Require standardised quarterly data submission from Planning Authorities and key Utilities	Ongoing	DHLGH

Expected Outcome

- Greater consistency and predictability in planning decisions
- National visibility of infrastructure capacity and readiness through GIS database
- Improved coordination between planning and investment decisions across sectors
- Improved alignment between national policy and local implementation
- Reduced delays caused by inconsistent interpretations of planning law
- Increased housing supply

KPI

- Number of Local Authority staff trained
- Publication of best-practice guidance
- Reduction in planning decision inconsistencies

Supporting Stakeholders

OPR	Local Authorities	ACP	Utilities
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Action 17: Target Investment at Priority Sectors through the NDP Review

Target additional State investment at Government priority sectors of electricity, water, and transport.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Allocate increased capital investment under the National Development Plan (NDP) to electricity, water, and transport infrastructure	Q3 2025	DPER
ii. Prioritise funding for enabling infrastructure, such as grid upgrades, wastewater expansion, and strategic transport corridors	Q3 2025	DPER
iii. Work with critical infrastructure providers to coordinate and accelerate investment to service zoned lands to enable delivery of 300,000 homes by 2030	Ongoing	DHLGH
iv. Introduce mechanisms to coordinate delivery timelines and manage interdependencies	Ongoing	DPER

Expected Outcome

- Accelerated delivery of infrastructure critical to housing and economic development
- Increased serviced land availability to support housing targets
- Strengthened competitiveness through improved infrastructure capacity
- Enhanced construction sector capacity through a predictable and scaled investment pipeline
- Reduced bottlenecks in planning and development by ensuring infrastructure is available ahead of demand

KPI

- Increased investment in the priority sectors of water, electricity and transport
- Expansion of and greater certainty in the investment pipelines for these sectors
- Increased areas serviced for housing supply, with associated increases in housing planning permission approvals and completions

Supporting Stakeholders

Other Government Departments

Utilities



Action 18: Publish Sectoral Investment Plans to promote Project Pipelines

Publication of robust Sectoral Plans will give credible visibility to industry of Government investment plans to allow them to prepare, invest and upskill adequately to meet these plans.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Require each Minister to publish a Sectoral Plan setting out five-year funding allocations for major projects and programmes	Q4 2025	All Departments
ii. Ensure Sectoral Plans include detail on major projects and their phasing to support efficient delivery	Q4 2025	DPER
iii. Prioritise electricity, water and transport infrastructure in line with NDP review outcomes, to enable broader NDP priorities	Q4 2025	DPER
iv. Review of Plans by DPER to ensure alignment and monitors their implementation	Q4 2025	DPER

Expected Outcome

- Funding certainty enables detailed planning and sequencing of infrastructure delivery
- Supports development of serviced land for housing and economic growth
- Improves cross-Government coordination and alignment of infrastructure delivery
- Enables construction sector to scale capacity in line with predictable investment

KPI

- Publication of Sectoral Plans by all relevant Departments
- Increased investment certainty in electricity, water, and transport sectors
- Expansion of project pipelines and serviced land areas
- Improved coordination of infrastructure delivery across sectors and regions

Supporting Stakeholders

Other Government Departments

Utilities



Action 19: Enhance Infrastructure Coordination function in DPER

A new Infrastructure Division within DPER will provide whole-of-Government oversight of critical infrastructure delivery. This will improve strategic alignment, reduce delays caused by inter-agency conflicts, and ensure timely decision-making by monitoring risks, resolving bottlenecks, and coordinating across taskforces and government bodies.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Create a dedicated Infrastructure Coordination function within DPER to oversee critical infrastructure delivery across Government	Q4 2025	DPER
ii. Proactively monitor and coordinate progress of critical infrastructure projects across sectors	Ongoing	DPER
iii. Maintain portfolio dashboard of key metrics to track performance, risks and interdependencies for submission to Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure	Q1 2026	DPER
iv. Act as an escalation point to resolve cross-departmental conflicts and bottlenecks, with formalised procedures	Q1 2026	DPER
v. Co-ordinate activities with key taskforces and government working groups as relevant e.g. Accelerating Renewable Electricity Taskforce (DCEE) and Housing Activation Office (DHLGH)	Q1 2026	DPER
vi. Highlight delays to infrastructure delivery and identify causes	Q1 2026	DPER

Expected Outcome

- Improved strategic coordination and reduced delays across
- Enhanced visibility of risks and interdependencies for proactive intervention
- Strengthened alignment between planning, funding and delivery
- Improved decision-making and accountability across the infrastructure system

KPI

- Reduction in delays caused by inter-agency conflicts
- Timely delivery of critical infrastructure projects
- Prompt resolution of escalated issues
- Improved transparency and coordination across sectoral portfolios

Supporting Stakeholders

Other Government Departments

Utilities



Action 20: Introduce Risk Appetite Statements

Develop Government-approved Risk Appetite Statements (RAS) at Government, sector, and project levels. This will balance the cost associated with for critical infrastructure to enable proportionate oversight and accelerate infrastructure delivery.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Prepare risk appetite statement for Government approval re critical infrastructure	Q2 2026	DPER
ii. Issue guidance to allow the development of RAS in the water and transport sectors including clear thresholds for acceptable risk	Q2 2026	DPER
iii. Enable project specific RAS for designated critical or emergency infrastructure projects	Q3 2026	Relevant Department
iv. Use RAS to support early-stage actions such as site clearance or forward ordering of components	Q4 2026	Relevant Department

Expected Outcome

- Signals Government's tolerance for managed risk, reducing systemic risk aversion
- Enables faster decision-making and proportionate oversight for priority projects
- Builds confidence among delivery agencies and market participants
- Supports time infrastructure delivery and capacity building

KPI

- Percentage of sectors/ Agencies with approved RAS (target: 100% by Q2 2026)
- Percentage of designated priority projects with Project RAS embedded
- Reduction in consenting timelines vs baseline
- Increase in projects reaching construction within 12 months of application
- Audit reports confirming RAS adherence and proportionate oversight

Supporting Stakeholders

Other Government Departments (particularly DHLGH, D/Transport)

State Agencies (Uisce Éireann, Transport Infrastructure Ireland)

Regulatory and Consenting Bodies



Action 21: Improve Utility Coordination at National and Local Level

Establish a new Joint Utilities and Transport Clearing House (JUTCH) to enhance collaboration between utilities. Supplement this with formal engagement structures at local level to promote more effective engagement between utilities and Local Government in the delivery of critical infrastructure.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Establish a Joint Utilities and Transport Clearing House with representatives from DCEE, D/Transport, DHLGH, DPER, utilities, transport authorities, and Local Authorities, and agree terms of reference	Q4 2025	DPER
ii. Establish sub-group of JUTCH between national utilities and Local Authorities to enhance coordination and accelerate infrastructure delivery	Q1 2026	DHLGH
iii. Mandate formal engagement structures, with regular coordination, at local and regional levels between nominated points of contact from each utility and local authority	Q1 2026	DPER
iv. Ensure regular consultation and engagement with local councillors on strategic plans of utilities delivering infrastructure services.	Q2 2026	DHLGH
v. Develop work programme for JUTCH including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➔ Facilitate early and ongoing engagement on major electricity, water, and transport projects ➔ Update codes of practice and technical standards (e.g. road openings, abnormal loads, no-dig technologies, emergency access) ➔ Coordinate linear infrastructure works to reduce duplication, disruption, and cost ➔ Act as an escalation point to resolve conflicts and remove barriers promptly 	Q1 2026	JUTCH

Expected Outcome

- Reduced duplication and disruption in road openings and utility diversions
- Accelerated delivery of critical electricity, water, and transport infrastructure
- Improved coordination and predictability in project planning and execution
- More effective and proportionate licensing processes
- Timely resolution of issues as they arise

KPI

- Number of utility projects accelerated through coordinated road access
- Reduction in average time for road opening approvals
- Reduction in time for agreeing diversions of utilities needed for transport projects
- Decrease in repeated road openings for separate utility works

Supporting Stakeholders

DCEE, D/Transport, DHLGH, DPER, County and City Management Association (CCMA), CRU, ESB Networks, EirGrid, Uisce Éireann (UÉ), Transport Infrastructure IrelandII



Action 22: Increase Construction Sector Capacity and Productivity

Introduce a series of reforms that identify and prioritise the development of critical skills. In parallel, streamline the process around visas, work permits and global recruitment, expand the capacity and output of existing vocational and educational institutions, and improve the use of MMC and digitalisation.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Complete industry capability group's critical skills needs assessment for construction sector, including an assessment of reforms to apprenticeship programmes	Q1 2026	DFHERIS
ii. Streamline visa processes, addressing sequential permit-visa delays and enabling concurrent applications for key skills	Q3 2026	DJUSTICE
iii. Expand capacity and output of vocational and higher education institutions to increase apprentices and graduates	Q2 2026	DFHERIS
iv. Greater adoption of Lean principles across the NDP and greater rollout of Build Digital Initiatives to support sustainability and to accelerate digitalisation in construction	Q2 2026	Construction Sector Group

Expected Outcome

- Increase in construction sector capacity, thereby expediting the delivery of critical infrastructure projects and mitigating inflationary pressures
- Increased innovation moves the construction sector up the value-added chain, thus increasing the returns on investment and enhancing its ability to compete internationally
- Greater use of MMC and Digitalisation will reduce the labour intensity of the sector and will attract a more diverse workforce, thus increasing capacity when labour is constrained

KPI

- Net increase in construction sector workforce
- Improved construction sector productivity
- Increased number of work permits granted and reduction in visa processing times
- Increases in investment in technology that enables productivity improvements and greater take-up of MMC
- Delivery of projects within schedule and within cost expectations

Supporting Stakeholders

Construction Sector Group (CSG) – convened by DPER



Action 23: Accelerate Projects through Consenting Processes

Streamline the Infrastructure Guidelines and project approval processes in the transport and water sectors, and provide administrative timelines for critical infrastructure projects

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Amend the Infrastructure Guidelines to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Increase thresholds from €200m to €500m for sectors with a well-established and proven track record of delivery → Replace External Assurance Process (EAP) with a streamlined and time bound internal review by DPER → Introduce administrative guidance on timelines for Preliminary Business Case (PBC) preparation (3–6 months) and mandate a maximum length → Allow Accounting Officers to approve projects at Approval Gate 2 	Q1 2026	DPER
ii. Assign target timeframes to all approval gates and consents for projects listed in the Critical Infrastructure Bill	Q2 2026	DPER
iii. Review and streamline the multi-stage approval process for transport projects	Q2 2026	D/Transport
iv. Eliminate the dual approval process for water sector investments	Q4 2026	DPER CRU UÉ

Expected Outcome

- Faster delivery through reduced approval timelines and simplified documentation
- Greater autonomy for Approving Authorities and improved responsiveness
- Reduced duplication and administrative burden
- Improved coordination and support for major capital projects
- Shift from risk aversion to delivery-focused culture in public bodies

KPI

- Reduction in approval timelines across all gates
- Targeted savings of ~12 months in project delivery lifecycle
- Increased proportion of projects approved at Approving Authority level
- Elimination of duplicated approval steps in water and transport sectors
- Number of major projects supported by NDFA

Supporting Stakeholders

D/Transport, TII, National Transport Authority, IÉ

DHLGH, CRU, NDFA, Uisce Éireann



Action 24: Provide Expert Assistance for Key Infrastructure Projects

The National Development Finance Agency (NDFA) will provide centralised support and expert assistance for major projects through the Infrastructure Guidelines and Government approvals process.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Government decision on making NDFA support available	Q2 2025	DPER, D/Finance
ii. Issuance of Ministerial guidelines on the NDFA support that will be made available to delivery Departments / Agencies	Q1 2026	DPER, D/Finance
iii. Delivery of centralised support for major capital projects by NDFA to set challenging timelines for projects	Q1 2026	NDFA

Expected Outcome

- Faster delivery through reduced approval timelines and simplified documentation
- Improved coordination and support for major capital projects
- Shift from risk aversion to delivery-focused culture in public bodies

KPI

- Reduction in approval timelines across all gates
- Targeted savings of ~12 months in project delivery lifecycle
- Increased proportion of projects approved at Approving Authority level
- Number of major projects supported by NDFA

Supporting Stakeholders

D/Transport, TII, NTA, IÉ

DHLGH, CRU, NDFA, Uisce Éireann



Action 25: Reform Procurement Processes

Support changes to the European Procurement Regulations, and the Capital Works Management Framework (CWMF); support the greater use of international recognised forms of contract; and improve procurement standardisation, professionalism, centralisation and training.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Support reform of European Procurement Regulations to introduce greater flexibilities, improve value for money and delivery speed	Q2 2026	DPER
ii. Support reform of European State Aid rules to support initiatives by Member States aimed at increasing housing supply and providing housing enabling infrastructure	Q2 2026	DHLGH
iii. Change the Capital Works Management Framework with provisions for Design Contests, and Modern Methods of Construction adoption. Reduce the adversarial nature of procurement through collaboration, dispute avoidance mechanisms, and new inflation framework	Q3 2026	DPER
iv. Enable the use of internationally recognised forms of contract where the project circumstances require a different approach to the standard public works contract	Q2 2026	DPER
v. Improve standardisation and professionalisation through a relaunched Procurement Skills Academy programme	Q2 2026	DPER
vi. Reduce the administrative burden in competitions through the implementation of digital solutions commencing with the pre-qualification stage	Q2 2026	DPER
vii. Provide centralised procurement support through Centres of Excellence, including in the Local Government Operational Procurement Centre, with a focus on driving delivery as efficiently and swiftly as possible	Q3 2026	GCCC DHLGH

Expected Outcome

- Faster infrastructure delivery through reduced complexity and improved contracting options
- Increased market participation and competition, especially from international contractors
- More consistent and professional procurement practices across public bodies
- Reduced project timelines and improved value-for-money

KPI

- Faster approval timelines at Approval Gate 2
- Reduction in the number of single bidder tender competitions
- Increase in international contractors participating in projects

Supporting Stakeholders

Local Authorities	DCEE	DHLGH	D/Transport
Uisce Éireann	NTA	TII	GCCC



Action 26: Apply AI and Digital Tools to Support Infrastructure Rollout

Use AI and advanced digital tools to provide data insights that improve coordination and accelerate infrastructure development through analysis of extensive data generated in project proposals and approval processes.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Apply AI-driven analytics to new DPER infrastructural tools to identify bottlenecks and predict infrastructure needs	Q2 2026	DPER
ii. Use digital platforms to integrate planning and permitting data across agencies for real-time coordination	Q4 2026	DHLGH / Local Government Management Agency (LGMA)
iii. Implement geospatial and predictive modelling tools to optimise site selection and resource allocation and further support forward planning processes	Q3 2026	DHLGH
iv. Develop dashboards for monitoring progress and identifying risks early	Q1 2026	DPER
v. Ensure compliance with data protection and cybersecurity standards	Q4 2026	DPER

Expected Outcome

- Improved decision-making through data-driven insights
- Faster identification of delays and resource constraints
- Enhanced collaboration between agencies and stakeholders
- Reduced duplication and improved efficiency in infrastructure rollout

KPI

- Number of projects using AI-driven planning tools
- Reduction in project delays due to improved coordination
- Increased accuracy of infrastructure demand forecasts
- Positive feedback from agencies on digital integration

Supporting Stakeholders

Other Government Departments - DCEE, DHLGH, D/Transport

Local Authorities

Utility Providers

Technology Partners



Action 27: Create a Duty for State Bodies to Cooperate in Making Land Available and Accessible for Critical Infrastructure

Accelerate the identification and transfer of suitable State sites for critical infrastructure.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Direct cooperation to ensure that state-owned land is made available to utilities for critical infrastructure projects within specified periods of time	Q1 2026	DPER
ii. Create a regularly updated, public audit of zoned, serviced, and unzoned land, informed by a national land audit, that can also incorporate key infrastructure and utility datasets	Q2 2026	DHLGH
iii. State Agencies to streamline sale approval processes and ensure simplified clear governance	Q2 2026	State Agencies
iv. Integrate infrastructure land requirements into National Planning Statement for critical infrastructure	Q1 2027	DHLGH
v. Standing item on agenda for the Joint Utilities and Transport Clearing House to progress solutions	Q1 2026	DPER

Expected Outcome

- Timely access to sites for critical infrastructure, reducing delays and dependency on private negotiations or compulsory acquisition
- Streamlined processes and robust governance to remove land-access barriers
- Integrated planning that allows utility providers to deliver projects efficiently, supporting national objectives in housing, energy, and climate resilience

KPI

- Number of site requests successfully resolved and transferred to utility providers within agreed timeframes
- Reduction in time from site identification to approval
- Inclusion of utility land provision in masterplans and development plans
- Improved participation in land-sharing processes

Supporting Stakeholders

Relevant Line Departments

State Agencies

Local Authorities



Action 28: Build Leadership Support for Critical Infrastructure Projects at National and Local Levels

Enhance leadership support for critical infrastructure projects at national and local levels.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Utilities to put in place regular, structured briefings with the Oireachtas on national, regional and local infrastructure plans	Q1 2026	State Agencies
ii. Targeted briefings to political leaders, civil society leaders, and senior officials to highlight the scale, urgency, and necessity of infrastructure investment, including cost of delay	Q1 2026	State Agencies
iii. Engage with the Oireachtas Committee on Infrastructure to emphasise the national importance of infrastructure	Q1 2026	DPER
iv. Coordinate with the infrastructure communications function to ensure consistent, evidence-based messaging	Q1 2026	Relevant Departments
v. Empower key economic development agencies (e.g. IDA Ireland, Enterprise Ireland, Teagasc) to advocate for critical infrastructure	Q1 2026	Relevant Departments
vi. Track engagement and refine approach based on feedback	Q1 2026	D/Taoiseach

Expected Outcome

- Stronger political and civil society advocacy and visibility for infrastructure
- Improved alignment across departments, agencies, and leadership levels
- Accelerated project delivery through informed and engaged leadership
- Reduced delays caused by local opposition
- Greater public trust and momentum through consistent leadership messaging

KPI

- Number of projects with formal political or civil society sponsorship
- Frequency and reach of leadership briefings
- Inclusion of infrastructure in political and civil society communications
- Stakeholder feedback on leadership engagement and alignment



Action 29: Enhance Government Communication to Promote the Importance of Infrastructure Delivery

To promote the social value of infrastructure in an evidence-based manner.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Establish a shared communications function to lead strategic messaging on infrastructure	Q1 2026	DPER D/Taoiseach
ii. Deliver targeted public campaigns and outreach to raise awareness of the societal benefits of infrastructure	Ongoing	Relevant Departments
iii. Facilitate structured stakeholder engagement, including collaboration with the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure and key agencies to build consensus and alignment	Ongoing	Relevant Departments
iv. Monitor the impact of communications activities and continuously refine messaging based on feedback and engagement data	Ongoing	Relevant Departments

Expected Outcome

- Fosters a shared societal understanding of the urgency and benefits of infrastructure projects
- Reduces opposition and builds trust by countering misinformation with a unified, evidence-based narrative
- Strengthens political and stakeholder alignment, helping to secure planning approvals and reduce delays
- Institutionalises long-term communications capacity within DPER to support sustained infrastructure delivery

KPI

- Public awareness and sentiment metrics
- Engagement levels across media and stakeholder platforms
- Reduction in objections or delays linked to public misunderstanding

Supporting Stakeholders

Line Departments	State Agencies	Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and business stakeholders that benefit from infrastructure
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Action 30: Establish a Benefits Realisation Framework for Infrastructure Projects

This will aid communication by allowing values to be attached to the societal value of infrastructure, improving public understanding of the benefits of infrastructure, hence reducing opposition.

Sub action	Timeline	Responsible Body
i. Develop a high-level national Benefits Realisation Framework based on international best practice	Q2 2026	DPER
ii. Define core principles and integrate benefits assessment at initial decision point in the project lifecycle. Focus on key societal outcomes: competitiveness, emissions, housing, regional development, and transport	Q2 2026	DPER
iii. Communicate the costs of inaction to support informed decisions and public understanding	Q2 2026	DPER
iv. Draft and publish high-level guidance for embedding benefits into the infrastructure lifecycle	Q2 2026	DPER

Expected Outcome

- Embeds a culture of benefits realisation in infrastructure delivery
- Provides a consistent, evidence-based narrative on the social and economic value of infrastructure investment
- Improves public and stakeholder understanding of the broader benefits of infrastructure, helping to reduce resistance and delays
- Supports communications and engagement strategies by clearly articulating the consequences of inaction

KPI

- Public awareness and understanding of infrastructure benefits (e.g. via surveys or media analysis)
- Stakeholder satisfaction with benefit communications
- Reduction in objections or delays due to improved understanding of project value
- Increased political and civil society support for infrastructure delivery

Supporting Stakeholders

GIS

Line Departments

State Agencies

Oversight and Implementation

Implementation of this Action Plan is essential for the State's long term economic and social development. Therefore, Government has agreed to the speedy implementation of the actions outlined in this report, with delivery to be overseen by already established structures.

Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure

The Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure will drive the Action Plan through regular assessments of actions implementation, based on updates and reports from Departments. 'It will review the reports from the Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce, address systemic issues requiring political intervention and consider any significant policy or legislative changes proposed to accelerate infrastructure delivery.'

Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform, and Digitalisation

The Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform, and Digitalisation (DPER) will be responsible for driving the implementation of the Action Plan.

The Infrastructure Division in the department will manage the ongoing delivery of the Action Plan. Its role includes driving Departments and Agencies in their implementation of actions, maintaining an Action Tracker, resolving operational issues, and preparing progress reports. The Division will:

- Act as the first point of escalation for implementation challenges;
- Ensure timelines are met; and
- Provide technical and resourcing support where needed.

The Division will continue to operate as Secretariat to the Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce (the Taskforce).

Departmental and Agency Ownership

Each action within the plan has been assigned to a lead Department or Agency, which will hold primary responsibility for its implementation. The Minister and Secretary General (or equivalent) will be fully responsible for the implementation of their actions. This clear assignment of ownership ensures accountability and enables targeted support where required. Departments and Agencies will:

- Develop implementation plans with agreed timelines for their respective actions by end December, for which DPER will issue guidance (in terms of short documents with clear timelines and outputs identified).
- Allocate appropriate resources and personnel to deliver on commitments.
- Engage with stakeholders as required to support delivery and resolve operational challenges.
- Provide updates to the Taskforce on progress, implementation challenges, and outcomes through structured reporting and challenge sessions.

Departments and Agencies will be expected to demonstrate proactive leadership in advancing reforms, ensuring alignment with strategic issues and promptly escalating systemic issues for resolution.

The Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce

The Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce, chaired by the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation, will monitor progress on implementation and will drive accountability across departments, agencies, and stakeholders. The Taskforce, with the support of Infrastructure Division, will act as a monitoring body, responsible for:

- Tracking progress against each priority action and associated sub-actions.
- Identifying implementation risks and recommending corrective measures.
- Publishing regular reports to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Infrastructure.
- Publishing an annual progress report on implementation to provide its guidance and expertise.

The Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce will meet monthly to fulfil these roles.

Oversight should focus on early risk identification, timely decisions and consistent assurance standards. Accountability will align with the authority to act; without this, avoidable delay becomes inevitable.

Monitoring and Reporting

A robust and structured reporting mechanism is being established to ensure transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement throughout the implementation of the Action Plan. This framework will enable timely interventions and maintain momentum across all actions. Key elements will include:

- Quarterly progress reports prepared by the Infrastructure Division for the Taskforce and Cabinet Committee detailing status, risks and corrective actions.
- Each action will have a measurable KPI with indicators, such as legislative milestones, reduced approval timelines and improved coordination.
- Feedback loops and regular challenge sessions to address underperformance and to share best practice.

Changes to Actions

The ongoing monitoring of implementation will, where necessary, support decisions to adapt actions or the creation of new actions to improve infrastructure delivery. The adaptation and creation of new actions will be decisions for Government, based on analyses prepared by departments, and input from the Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce.

Driving Delivery

To ensure that the Action Plan remains effective and responsive, a structured Delivery Framework will be embedded within the oversight system. This framework combines review and corrective measures into a single process, ensuring that underperformance is addressed promptly without unnecessary delay. Performance will be measured against the KPIs set out in the Action Plan, ensuring that corrective measures are triggered based on objective indicators rather than solely on timelines. These provisions ensure that accountability is meaningful and that failure to deliver agreed actions has tangible consequences for future approvals and funding.

Linkage of Delivery with resources

Regular reporting will underpin accountability, with Departments and Agencies providing updates to DPER on the progression of actions. Where delays or non-compliance are identified, the Infrastructure Division will escalate issues to the Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce and, if unresolved, to the Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure.

There will be an expectation of full cooperation by all Departments and Agencies. Delivery of agreed actions and the granting of sanctions or approvals will be explicitly linked. Requests for additional Departmental resources, sanctions, or consents will only be progressed where satisfactory delivery of assigned actions is demonstrated.



Statement from Independent Members of Taskforce on Accelerating Infrastructure

Ireland's systems for the delivery of infrastructure are broken.

This is best evidenced by the fact that, on average, infrastructure project timelines from inception to completion are taking twice as long as they did twenty years ago. Ireland has a track record of building the right kinds of relevant infrastructure, and building it well, but over the last couple of decades our speed of execution of such projects has slowed dramatically. This is just as our population has undergone its greatest expansion since Independence.

While the problems associated with the delivery of infrastructure are not unique to Ireland, there are several factors of our own making that mean the resulting delays are more severe in this country than elsewhere.

The 'Report on Stakeholder Consultation and Engagement with Emerging Themes on Infrastructure', published in July as part of this process, was evidence driven and identified the key barriers to delivery. These include an increasingly complex and extremely slow planning and regulatory system, the growing impact of judicial reviews and an increased involvement of the High Court, conservative interpretation of European Directives without consideration of their practical application in Ireland or the wider economic and societal impact, and a governmental system that is, in some circumstances, insufficiently joined up and unduly burdensome. In this environment, the principle of the common good has been diluted, despite being essential to accelerating major infrastructure.

In addition, risk aversion has risen at every stage of the process. This is understandable in a system where the consequences of procedural error now outweigh the consequences of delay. But it results in slower decisions, slower engagement and slower infrastructure.

But we believe these issues can be fixed. It will require cultural change as much as procedural change.

Infrastructure development is the backbone of national growth and prosperity for all citizens. It is essential to ensure a better quality of life. It will give people better lives and the opportunity to live, socialise and work where they want. It is also essential for our economy to remain competitive and to thrive.

At various points in the history of the State, our investment in infrastructure has been transformative. Ardnacrusha, rural electrification, the roads system and many other similar investments are examples of projects that have changed Ireland for the better. Should we not want to do the same now?

There is sometimes a view within the public sector system that a decision not taken, or a project not actioned, is not a cost. The reality is that inaction carries serious repercussions, leading to measurable economic, social and environmental consequences that are escalating. There are also intangible impacts such as reputational harm, reduced investor confidence and a resulting brake on economic growth. This mindset needs to change.

It is easy to point the finger of blame at regulators, the legal system, the State system and others. But the reality is that infrastructure development needs all parts of society to play their part. Collectively we need to stand up for the needs of the common good, to focus on solutions that will unblock the logjams and to accelerate all aspects of Infrastructure development and delivery.

There is no one single solution that will solve the current situation. Instead it needs a whole package of actions to reduce the delays and prioritise delivery. This action plan serves as a practical roadmap, complete with measurable milestones, clear accountability, and timelines that range from quick wins to long-term structural reforms. These measures must be viewed as an integrated package - individually they may seem modest but together they create a transformative impact if implemented. Implementation will require a whole of government approach, adequate resourcing, ongoing monitoring with accountability and visible political commitment. It will also require societal backing and a shared belief that better infrastructure benefits everyone.

DPER will be a key driver of many of the Actions and will have a central role in enabling delivery at the pace required. During the work of this Taskforce it has demonstrated a commitment to transformation and change to enable it to successfully take on this role. We are encouraged to see intent, accountability, and a desire to do what is right to ensure the best outcomes for Ireland.

In this new and more dynamic environment for infrastructure, things will not always go according to plan, as happens in business and in life. But the cost of occasional error is outweighed by the cost of continued inertia. We need strong leadership across public and private sectors to maintain the focus on delivery when tough decisions are needed. By creating a streamlined, more enabling environment, we hope to foster the full potential of the public and private sector - driving innovation, investment and sustainable growth.

We believe this report represents a watershed moment for infrastructure delivery in Ireland. By tackling the barriers head-on and delivering these reforms, we can build a future for Ireland where infrastructure serves as a catalyst for social and economic development that will underpin both the economy and Irish society more broadly in the years ahead.

The independent members have played a full and engaged role as part of the Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce. We insisted that everything be on the table for discussion and that was the mindset of the full Taskforce. We would like to express our thanks to the officials and other members of the Taskforce. There was a clear unity of purpose in addressing one of the most critical challenges facing the country.

We fully support and endorse the recommendations contained therein. The challenge now is implementation - turning actions into delivery and building a better Ireland for all. We urge all stakeholders - political, industry, regulatory, the legal system, public service, and the public at large - to rally behind this plan to ensure its success for all our benefits.

Eamon Booth

Michele Connolly

Mary Hughes

Imelda Mannion

Sean O'Driscoll

Feargal O'Rourke



Appendices

Ireland has the ambition and capability to deliver world-class infrastructure. With predictable approvals, integrated regulation, stronger delivery capability and clearer accountability, the system can finally match ambition with delivery.



Appendix 1: Sectoral Overview

Introduction

Ireland has experienced rapid population growth over the last few decades. The Economic and Social Research Institute's (ESRI) projections¹¹ for the population of Ireland show an increase of approximately 20 percent on 2022 levels, to approximately 6.1 million people by 2040. Accommodating this demographic growth (and resultant increases in the general demand for travel, demand for freight/ goods, water supply, wastewater treatment, electricity supply, and other services), in tandem with the need to decarbonise and improve competitiveness, are key challenges for Ireland's electricity, transport and water networks.

It is imperative that infrastructure networks can accommodate the projected population and economic growth, alongside protecting the current critical role of the State's infrastructure networks within the wider Irish economy and society.

The following chapters provide an overview of these three critical infrastructure sectors and the challenges to infrastructure delivery faced by each.

11. ESRI (2024), [Population Projections, The Flow of New Households and Structural Housing Demand](#)

1. Electricity Sector

1.1. Background

A resilient, decarbonised and internationally competitive electricity system is essential for the delivery of the Government's key strategic priorities, including housing development, economic competitiveness, investment, growth and climate action.

Ireland's demand for electricity has grown every year for the last 10 years, a trend that has been predominantly driven by increased data centre demand, though electricity demand in the transport and industry sectors is also increasing.

Current installed electricity generation capacity in Ireland is approximately 15.7 GW – 6.2 GW of conventional generation, 7.4 GW of renewable generation, as well as 1 GW of interconnector capacity and 1.1 GW of storage. For context, it is estimated that 1GW of renewable electricity capacity can provide enough power equivalent to that required to power circa. 465,000 homes.

There has been a lot of success to date in integrating renewable electricity on the system – we have achieved over 40 percent renewable electricity share in a year and can accommodate 75 percent renewable energy on the grid at any one time, a world-leading success.

Ireland's electricity network consists primarily of:

- **Electricity Transmission Network:** transmits electricity from large generators across the country to very large customers or the local distribution network. It is planned, operated, and developed by EirGrid (Transmission System Operator / TSO) and owned by ESB Networks (Transmission Asset Owner/TAO).
- **Electricity Distribution Network:** distributes electricity from the transmission network to homes, farms and businesses across Ireland. ESB Networks owns and operates this network (Distribution Asset Owner/DAO, and Distribution System Operator/DSO).

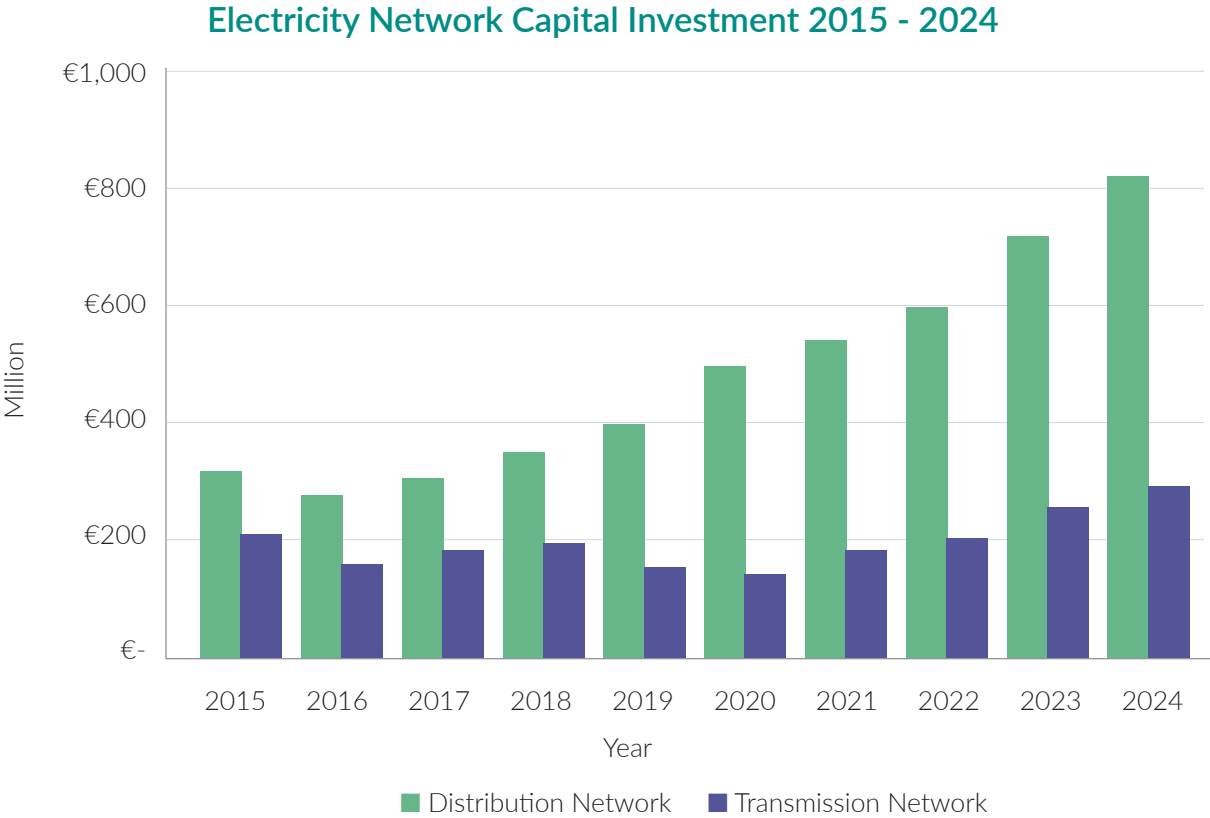
Ireland's electricity Transmission and Distribution network comprises approx. 160,000 km of overhead network, 29,000 km of underground cables, and over 800 high voltage substations.

ESB Networks and EirGrid are licenced by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU), Ireland's independent energy and water regulator. The CRU operates within a policy and statutory framework set by Government and has responsibility for economic regulation and customer protection in the energy and water sectors and regulation of energy safety.

1.2. Historic Investment in the Sector

Between 2015 and 2024, almost €7 billion of capital investment has been made in the electricity network. Key projects include integrating new renewable generation, constructing high-voltage substations and grid circuits, and maintaining and strengthening existing infrastructure.

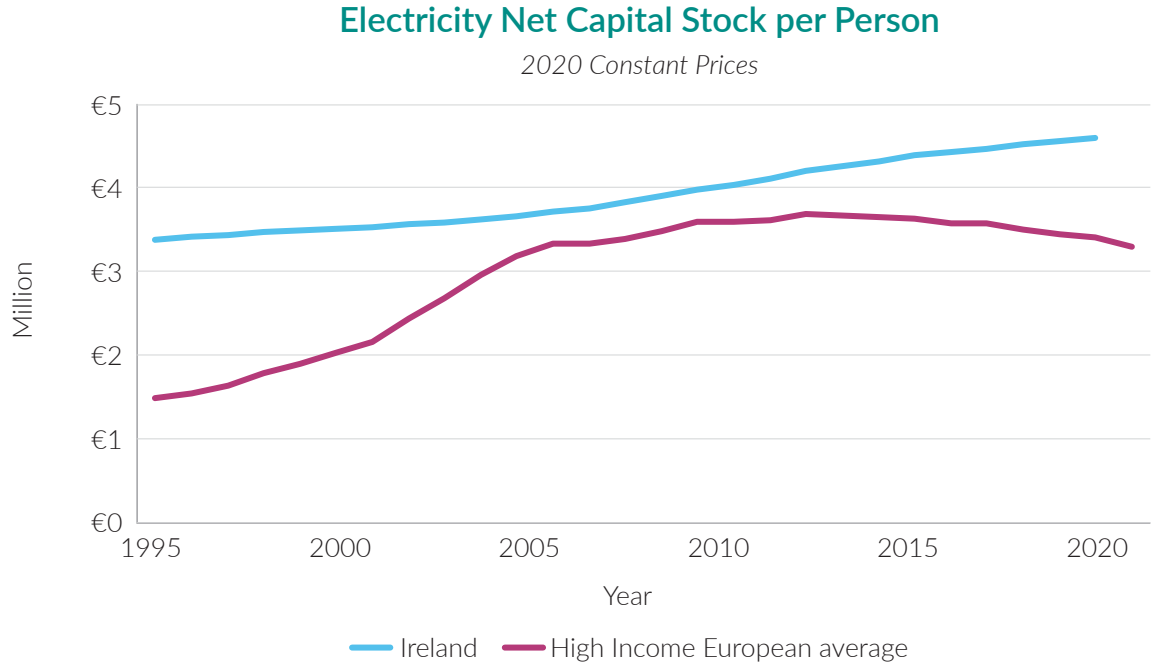
Figure 6



Data Source: EirGrid and ESB Networks

However, while infrastructure in this area has increased since the mid-1990s, it remains 26 percent below the average of high-income European countries, as highlighted by graph below (Figure 7).

Figure 7



Data Source: [IFAC](#)

The level of investment in the electricity network has been outpaced by the growth in electricity demand over the last decade. CSO data highlights that electricity consumption in Ireland has increased by c.30 percent since 2015 (compared to 2024)¹².

2.3. Electricity as a Critical Infrastructure

The electricity network is essential for supporting economic growth and achieving the Government’s policies, including the Housing for All targets, Climate Action Plan (CAP) (including the decarbonisation of electricity and electrification of heat, transport and society), National Planning Framework (NPF), and National Development Plan (NDP).

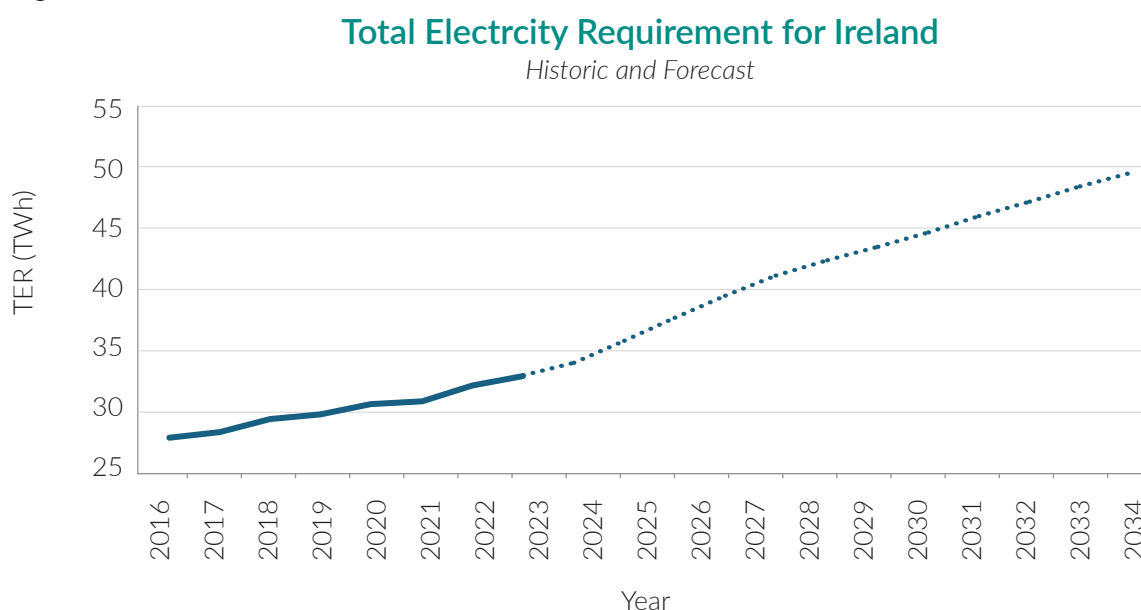
The impacts of insufficient electricity network capacity have already started to materialise. The accelerated pace and scale of demand for new connections and increasing size of connections means that capacity on the network is being allocated to customers at a faster rate than it can be replaced.

While electricity network capacity is available in many areas of the country, some parts of the transmission and distribution networks have limited capacity to support additional electrical load without significant network reinforcements. This has implications for the capacity to connect new housing in certain areas.

In addition, households and businesses are facing higher costs of electricity, much of which is due to shortfalls in infrastructure, as evidenced by the case study below.

In the coming years, the electricity network must adapt and grow to meet significantly increased demands arising from economic development, population growth, and the electrification of heat, transport, and industry. EirGrid expect a 3 percent year-on-year increase in electricity demand throughout the next 10 years¹³. In terms of the whole of Ireland system, we are planning a grid which is capable of supporting a 45 Terawatt hour (TWh) economy, where our current utilisation is ~33TWh.

Figure 8



Source: Eirgrid

12. CSO (2025), [Metered Electricity Consumption](#)

13. EirGrid and SONI (2025), [All-Island Resource Adequacy Assessment 2025-2034](#)

This is in addition to the need to support a substantial increase in renewable generation. Reaching our 80 percent renewable electricity target will require the grid to carry at least 17 GW more renewable electricity; more than triple what it supported in 2020. It will also require the development of the offshore grid. Timelines for the development of wind and solar projects (c. 5 years) are much shorter than for the development of new transmission grid (c. 10-15 years). This means that further development of renewables is dependent upon the longer timeline for delivery of transmission grid, emphasising the need to accelerate the delivery of grid infrastructure. By enhancing network capacity, resilience, and flexibility, the electricity system will be a key enabler of Ireland's secure, sustainable, and low carbon energy future.

As such, the electricity network must be capable of meeting both increased peak demand and larger flows of electricity. This will require significant investment in additional network capacity, both at transmission and distribution level, as well as measures to increase the reliability and resilience of the existing network.

In this context, ESB Networks and EirGrid have proposed an extensive programme of investment for Price Review (PR) 6 (2026 - 2030), which involves €14.1 billion of investment over the next five years, with the potential to rise to €18.1 billion¹⁴. The CRU is currently considering the investment package proposals. To enable the System Operators to make this investment, Government announced €3.5 billion in equity for ESB Networks and EirGrid as part of the National Development Plan Review 2025.

To deliver this investment, the electricity sector must accelerate the delivery of priority critical infrastructure projects over the next five years. These multi-year, high-value projects represent the most significant programme of electricity network development ever undertaken in Ireland.

Timely delivery of these projects is critical, as they are essential for providing the capacity needed for new housing, economic development, and decarbonisation, while maintaining system security, reliability, and affordability for all customers.

Case Study North South Interconnector

The North-South Interconnector (NSIC) is a planned new 140km 400kV overhead line with a capacity of 1500MW, between Meath and Tyrone via Cavan, Monaghan and Armagh, and the construction of a new 400/275kV substation in Tyrone. It consists of 401 new steel lattice towers and directly involves over 400 privately owned landholdings in Ireland and 160 in Northern Ireland.

The delivery of NSIC, would remove market constraints between the North and the South transmission systems effectively meshing the two transmission systems on the island into one larger and more efficient system, enhance security of supply on the island and facilitate the connection of 900MW of renewables. The project has been identified by EirGrid (the TSO) as the top priority electricity project.



14. CapEx and OpEx. CRU (2025), [Price Review Six](#)

The NSIC project was originally launched in 2007. It commenced the planning permission process in 2008 in Ireland, with the application withdrawn in 2009. The project recommenced in 2012, and the planning application was re-lodged for permission in 2015. Planning Approval was granted by An Bord Pleanála in December 2016. This decision was subject to various challenges in the High Court and Supreme Court, all of which were dismissed by early 2019. In Northern Ireland, planning consent was granted by the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) in January 2018. After a legal challenge through to the High Court, in 2022 the Northern Ireland Court of Appeal in Belfast upheld the planning consent. Since then, there has been engagement with landowners. There is also ongoing engagement with the Local Authorities on the discharge of planning conditions. In addition, procurement has been undertaken to ensure that materials and contractors are in position to commence construction, now expected in mid-2026.

There has been opposition to the NSIC in both jurisdictions. A lack of public acceptance by some at various phases of the project has been a key factor in the delay to delivery. Opposition at the initial phase was compounded by the duration and resources that it took to get from the optioneering stage to the final line route and to consult directly with the landowners and residents directly affected by the proposal. The project was opposed during the oral hearings and approval stage of the planning process, as well as in raising judicial review challenges following planning permission being granted.

There have been four Government reviews at various stages of the project (over a 15-year period), initially to assess whether overhead lines were the most suitable option for the project, and subsequently to validate the findings of the initial report as the project timelines lengthened. These reviews were outside of the statutory consenting process and each review has taken 12-24 months to complete, hindering progress during the review periods and resulting in delays to project delivery. Furthermore, while they all endorsed the technology option selected by EirGrid, the outcomes only achieved minimal change on the level of public and political acceptance at a local level.

The lack of public acceptance has also been reflected by difficulties accessing landholdings both for planning application purposes and in readiness for construction. The scale of the difficulties has meant that the construction is not expected to begin until 2026 and the total NSIC project energisation from Meath to Tyrone is now expected in 2031. The lack of public acceptance has significantly impacted delivery timelines for the project.

Impacts

The expected delivery of the NSIC is now more than 10 years behind the expected delivery timeline when planning was submitted. The later energisation date has led to additional costs due to the passage of time costs on material, contractors and other inflationary increases, as well as additional costs incurred during the development of the project as it went through various reviews and planning delays.

As advised by the TSOs, independent estimates by ENTSOE put project cost savings for electricity consumers on the island of Ireland to be in the region of €100 million per year once energised. The delays to the project have not allowed these benefits to be realised as intended. The compelling case remains that NSIC must be delivered for the benefit of customers overall, removing market constraints, enhancing security of supply, affordability, and facilitating the connection of renewable generation. It is one of the highest priority transmission project to be delivered across the PR6 period (2026 – 2030) and early PR7.

This case study highlights how the opposition to key national infrastructure can have a direct negative impact on citizens, with consequent increased electricity bills borne by all customers.

Case Study Batter Lane Distribution Project

The Batter Lane Project involved the delivery of two distribution substations in Fingal, Dublin - one 110 kV/ Medium Voltage substation and one 38 kV substation. The 110 kV/MV substation enhances network capacity in North Dublin, supporting growth in Swords, Donabate, and Portrane. These areas will see significant load growth over the coming years due to new customer connections and the Government's housing strategy. Initially, it will support ~7,400 existing customers and enable connections for ~1,400 planned housing units and six Metrolink compounds.



The 38 kV substation, commissioned to increase security and reliability of electrical supply in the North Dublin area during the 110 kV substation development, is smaller in size but includes similar components and serves ~2,800 customers in Lusk, Donabate, and Portrane.

Under ACP's interpretation of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), the 110 kV substation was designated as a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID). The planning application for SIDs is different to non-SIDs and adds significantly to timelines.

Slow Processes

As the 38 kV substation was not designated as a SID, the relevant Local Authority was responsible for granting the planning consent. As such, ESB Networks submitted the planning application for the 38 kV substation to Fingal County Council in October 2023, and was granted planning permission within 7 weeks. Construction of the project took place over the following year, with the substation energised.

In comparison, as the 110 kV was designated a SID, An Bord Pleanála (ABP), now known as An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP), was the consenting authority for planning permission. This process required a pre-planning consultation phase, which in this case, lasted 30 weeks (September 2022 – May 2023). ESB Networks then submitted the SID planning application to ABP in January 2024, with approval granted in November 2024, 44 weeks from the date of application. Construction began on the 110 kV substation in February 2025, with energisation expected in late 2026.

Impacts

The result of having a different process for SID projects is a significantly longer planning process. In this case, and for similar projects, it means that locally serving, beneficial projects, which are treated as SID, have to go through a longer process as if they are large strategic projects in the wider regional or national context, which they are not. In this example, the planning process for the non-SID 38 kV substation lasted 7 weeks. In comparison, the SID-designated 110 kV substation, which offers long-term capacity in the area, lasted 74 weeks in this case.

This is despite the fact that both substations draw power from nearby high voltage overhead lines, both have similar environmental impacts, and both application processes would have required nearly identical planning documents.

Additionally, while the 110 kV substation will draw power from the passing 110 kV overhead lines, it's purpose is to enhance network capacity in the local area i.e. serve a local need and is not considered to be of strategic importance in the wider regional or national context.

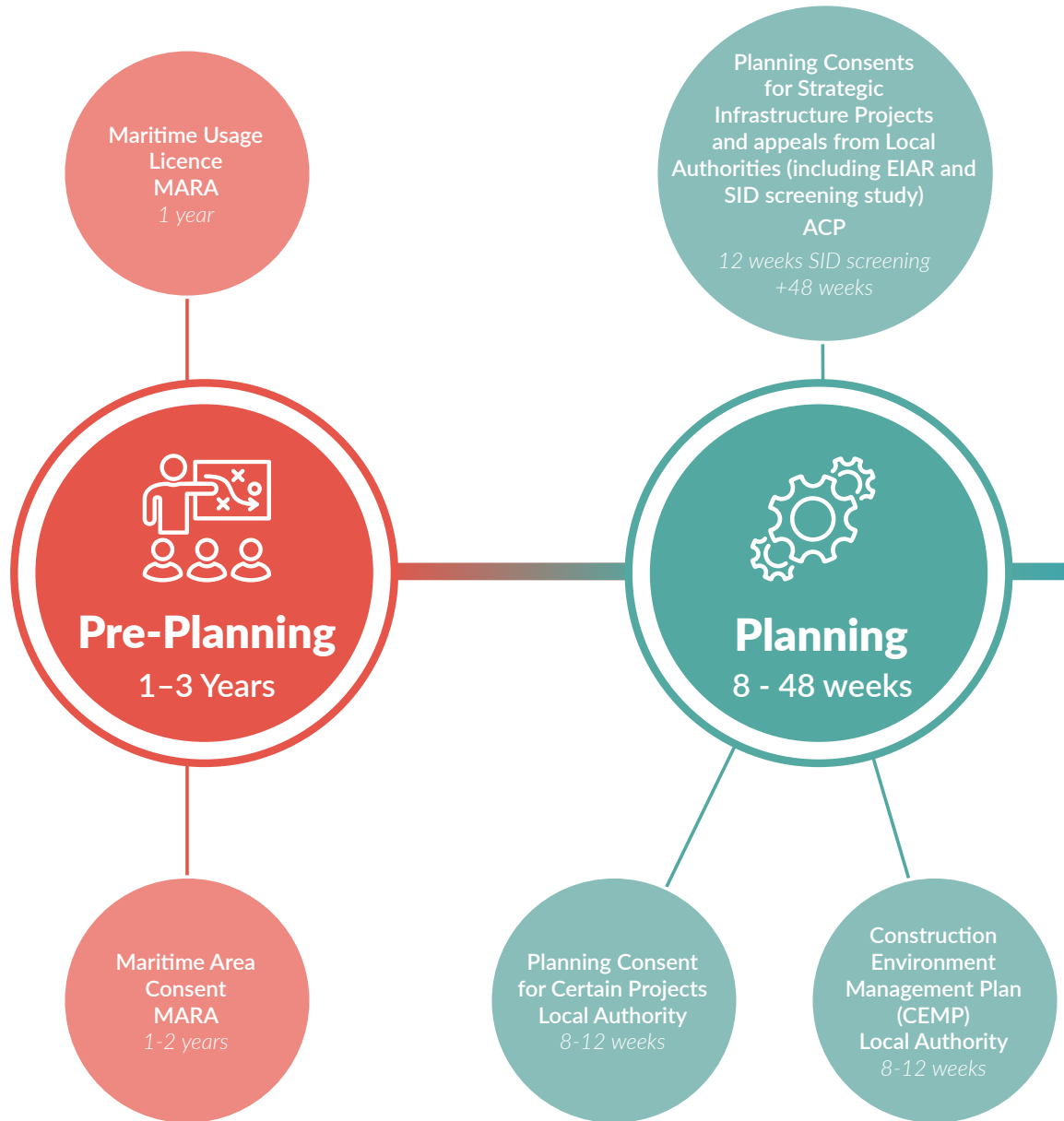
The impact of this designation was an additional 67 weeks in the planning process for the 110 kV project, slowing delivery of the project and its associated benefits.

Figure 9

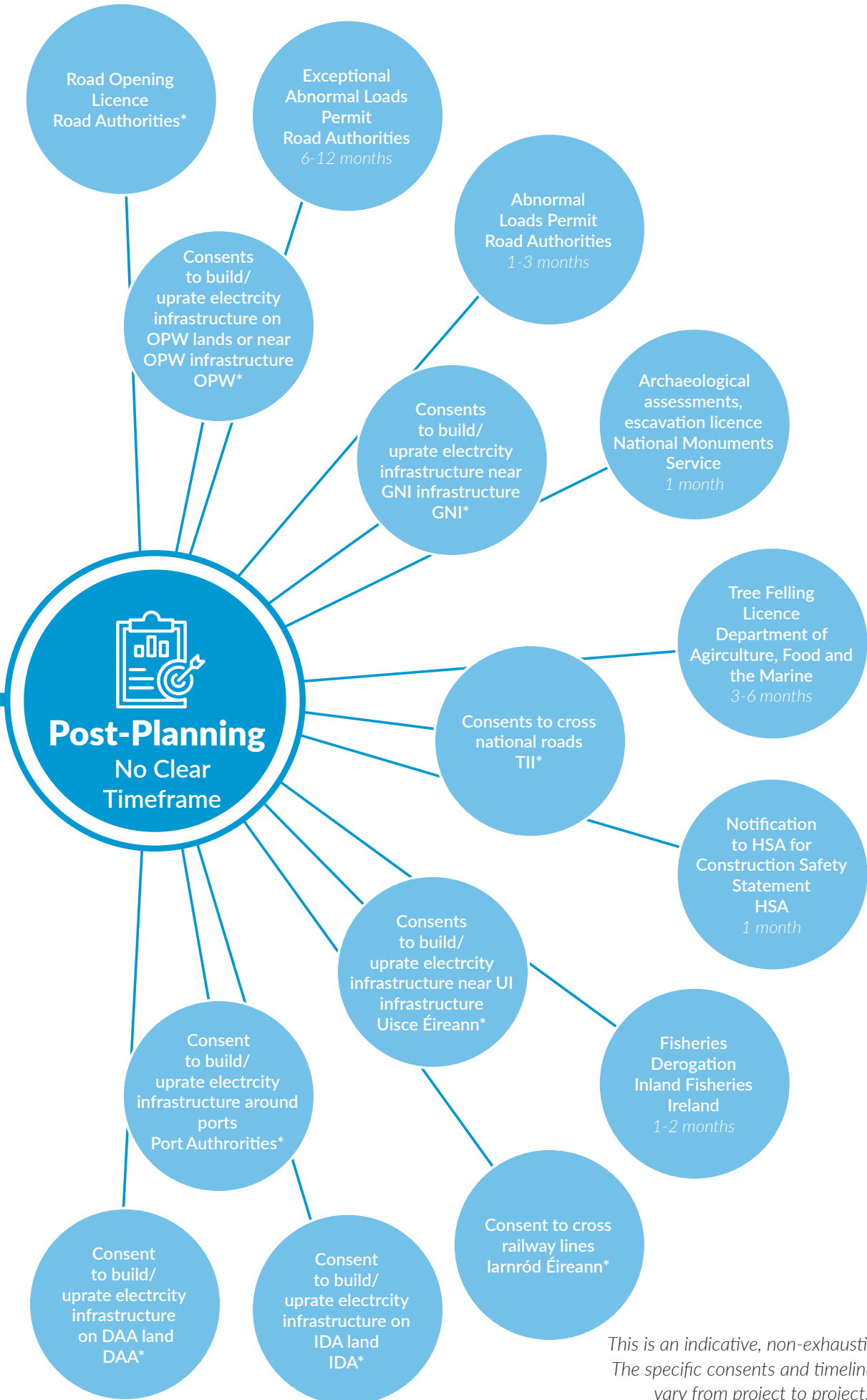
Electricity



List of potential licenses, permits, and consents that may be required for a national electricity distribution network project.



*no average timeline available



This is an indicative, non-exhaustive list. The specific consents and timelines will vary from project to project.

2. Water Sector

2.1 Background

Water and wastewater infrastructure is critical for facilitating housing, enabling sustainable economic growth, and safeguarding public health. Ireland's water and wastewater infrastructure and services are primarily delivered, operated and maintained by Uisce Éireann (UÉ), a publicly owned, regulated, commercial State body. UÉ operates and maintains over 750 water treatment plants, 1,000 wastewater treatment plants, and 1,700 pumping stations across the country. It also manages a network of more than 65,000 km for water and 26,000 km for wastewater.

Uisce Éireann supplies 1.7 billion litres of drinking water and treats 1.2 billion litres of wastewater daily, serving 1.85 million customers.

UÉ is regulated by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU), the independent economic regulator for water, and by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the independent environmental regulator. The CRU sets five-year revenue controls for UÉ, including limits on capital investments in its regulated asset base. UÉ is currently entering into its 4th Revenue Control period (RC4). The CRU also defines performance targets and monitors UÉ's delivery of water and wastewater services.

Water services in Ireland must also comply with the binding objectives set out in the European Directives that control water quality and wastewater treatment. To ensure compliance with European Directives, Ireland has developed a suite of regulatory frameworks with associated governance structures and processes. It is the role of the EPA to regulate UÉ's operational activities, in accordance with the legislative and process requirements.

2.2 Historic Investment in Water Services Infrastructure

Since UÉ's establishment in 2014, there has been significant investment in the operation and maintenance of water and wastewater assets to support current supply and demand needs and to ensure regulatory compliance.

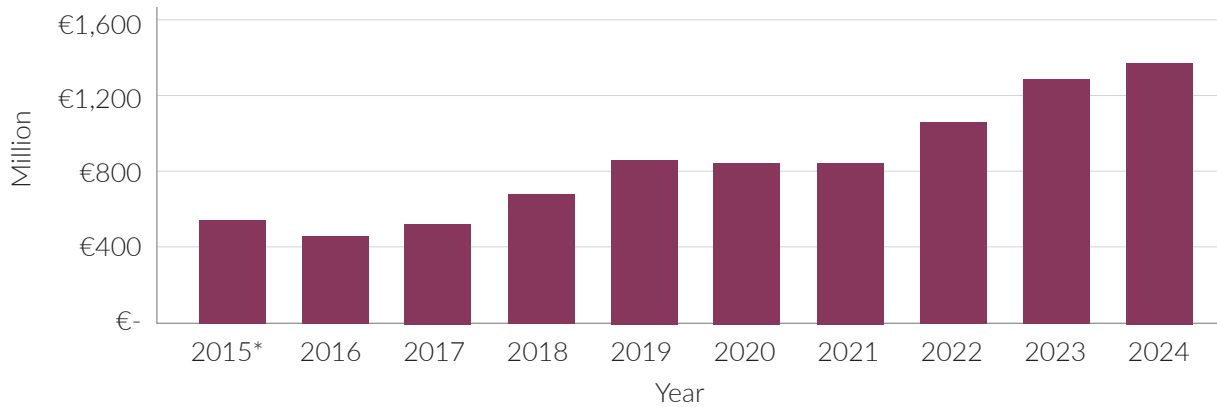
Investment in the sector has steadily increased over subsequent Revenue Control periods, increasing from investment of €1.7 billion in RC1 (2014 – 2016), to €5.4 billion in RC3 (2020 – 2024).

This investment has facilitated 195 new or upgraded water and wastewater treatment plants and allowed over 2 million people to be removed from boil water notices since 2014.

The net capital stock of infrastructure in the water sector is on par with other high-income European countries.

Figure 10

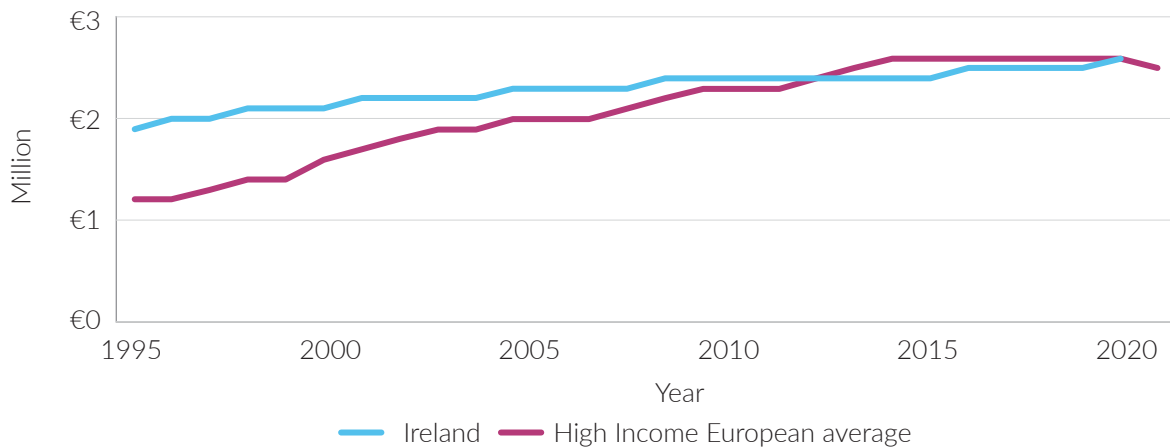
Capital Investment in Water and Wastewater Infrastructure 2015 - 2024



Source Uisce Éireann *Includes Spend for Domestic Metering Programme

Figure 11

Water Sector Net Capital Stock per Person 2020 Constant Prices



Source: IFAC

2.3 Water as Critical Infrastructure

Water and wastewater services are essential for supporting economic growth. As the population continues to grow, Ireland’s water and wastewater infrastructure must expand and meet the rising demand while maintaining service quality. By 2030, it is expected that 300,000 new houses across Ireland will be connected to the water and wastewater services supply network, and resilience of the supply and network for all customers is required.

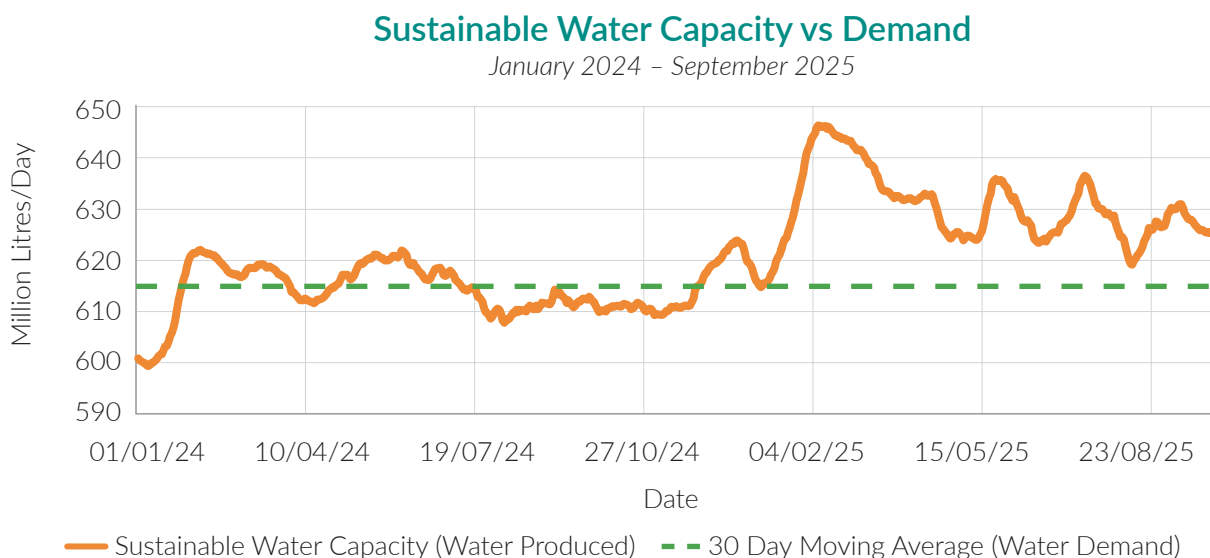
Ireland has a history of underinvestment in essential water and wastewater services, which has led to accelerated aging of infrastructure, high leakage rates along our networks, networks prone to bursts causing disruptions to supply, and untreated wastewater discharges into our waterbodies. In response to this, the State has significantly increased investment in water services.

However, due to the complex project approval and consenting processes there have been significant delays to the delivery of critical water and wastewater infrastructure projects. This situation is hampering progress in addressing the historic and emerging issues with the water service asset base, and preventing full realisation of the benefits that could be achieved for the investments made.

Much of Ireland’s existing water and wastewater infrastructure was built to serve a much smaller population. The existing asset base has been expanded to the limits of what it can achieve, and significant generational projects are now required to provide for appropriate levels of service for the existing population and to facilitate growth, economic development and climate adaptation.

The graph 12 below highlights the sustainable water capacity in million/litres per day (water produced) set against a 30-day moving average of water (demand) in the Greater Dublin Area between January 2024 and September 2025.

Figure 12



Source: Uisce Éireann

This is a significant and present issue that requires regular operational interventions to ensure continuity of supply.

In this regard, the 2025 National Development Plan Review commits to providing €2 billion in equity funding to Uisce Éireann in 2025 to enable the delivery of 300,000 additional homes by 2030. Investment in water and wastewater infrastructure under the fourth Revenue Control (RC4), which covers the 2025 to 2029 period, is expected to be c.€11.9 billion.

Delivering this investment will be critical for facilitating housing delivery and ensuring resilient water supply and wastewater infrastructure for the people of Ireland.

Case Study The Greater Dublin Drainage Project

The Greater Dublin Drainage (GDD) Project is an essential national infrastructure project to develop a new regional wastewater treatment facility and associated infrastructure to serve north Dublin and parts of the surrounding counties of Kildare and Meath. The project comprises of 14km of orbital sewer network, 11km outfall pipeline, a pumping station, regional biosolids storage facility, treatment plant, and a sewer diversion.

Once operational, the GDD will have the capacity to provide wastewater treatment for the equivalent of half a million people living and working in the area. The project will also support the economic and social development of the region by providing adequate wastewater capacity for current and future populations.



Judicial Review

On the 11th November 2019, An Bord Pleanála granted permission for GDD but leave was granted for judicial review in January 2020. The planning permission was quashed in November 2020 on one single ground which related to the statutory interpretation of Irish secondary legislation. It was held that, although the Board had requested observations from the EPA, it failed to correctly do so in compliance with its obligations under art 44 of the Wastewater Discharge (Authorisation) Regulations, 2007.

The planning application was then subsequently remitted back to the Bord in July 2021. The Bord then wrote to Uisce Éireann in August 2022 requesting that it update its application and accompanying environmental assessments. An Addendum to the EIAR was prepared updating each chapter of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) along with a new NIS. This updated information was submitted to the Bord in October 2023 and was then subject to public consultation during the summer of 2024. Planning approval was granted by An Comisúin Pleanála in July 2025. However, on the 4th September 2025, leave was granted for judicial review against the new decision. This case is listed for hearing on the 8th and 9th of December.

Impacts

The scale of delay and its associated consequences will not be fully known until the conclusion of the ongoing judicial review proceedings. However, it is clear that delays to the delivery of the Greater Dublin Drainage Project will severely constrain growth and development, including housing, in the Greater Dublin Area, with serious consequences for current and future generations.

As it stands, 49 percent of all Ireland's wastewater is treated in the GDA and 40 percent at Ringsend Wastewater Treatment Plant. The current upgrade at Ringsend utilises the remaining development space at the site. Existing treatment facilities are already operating near or above capacity.

By 2028 Uisce Éireann may be unable to grant new connections to the wastewater network in major parts of the Greater Dublin Area, which would not be the case had the Greater Dublin Drainage Project not faced these delays.

The delay to delivery also has cost implications. The project was initially projected to cost approx. €600 million if delivered on time. However, Uisce Éireann CEO's stated concern that costs could climb to double that amount, given the delays and inflation levels during that period, though Uisce Éireann will not know the full ramifications of the cost of the delay to the project until it goes through the formal tender process.

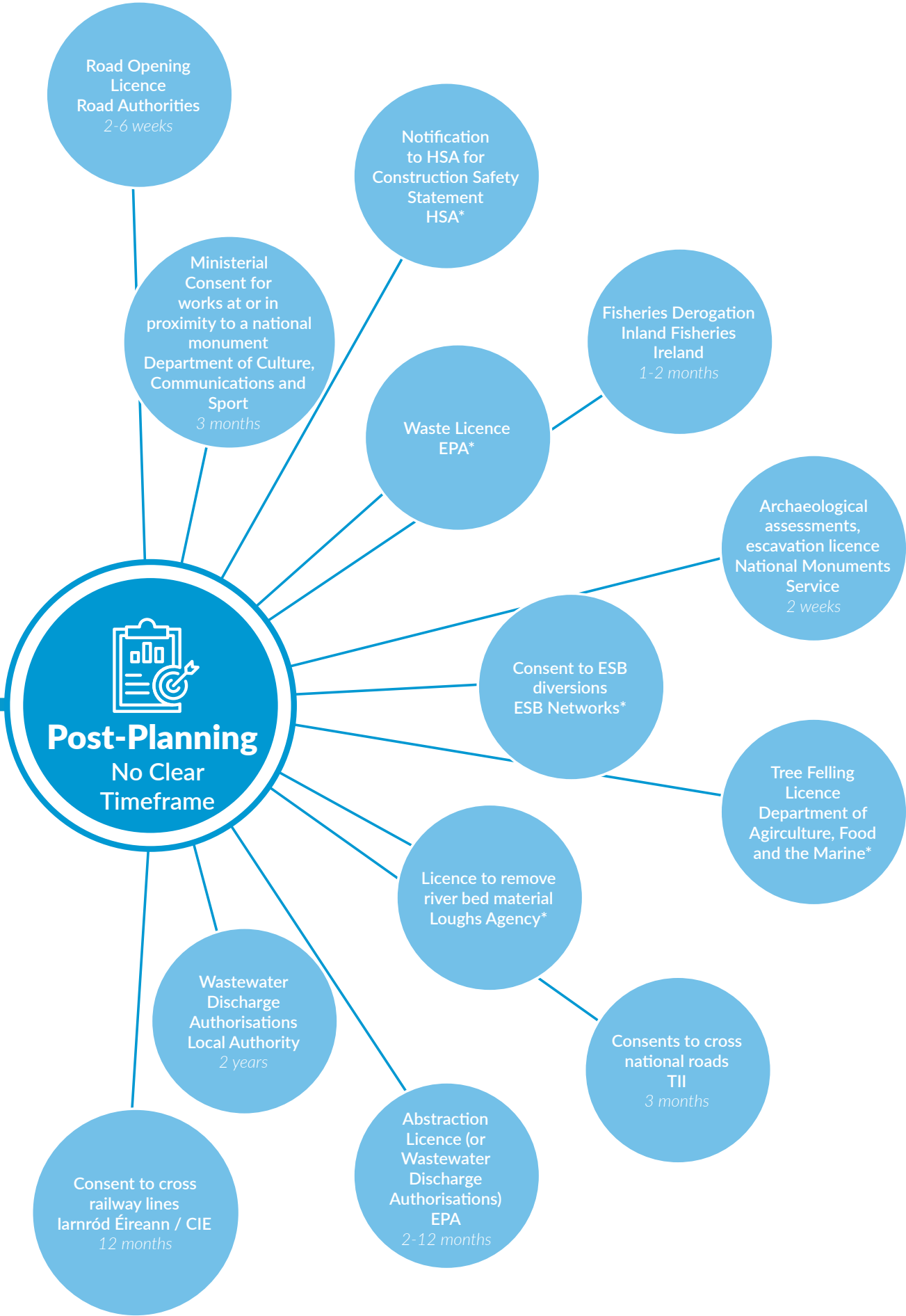
Figure 13

Water 

List of potential licenses, permits, and consents that may be required for a national water/ wastewater project.



*no average timeline available



This is an indicative, non-exhaustive list. The specific consents and timelines will vary from project to project.

3. Transport Sector

3.1 Background

Transport infrastructure is critical for spurring on economic growth, enabling new residential developments, supporting social inclusion and through ports, facilitating the development of offshore renewable electricity. Ireland's land transport network consists of almost 5,300 km of national roads, almost 2,000km of public rail lines¹⁵, local and national public bus services (including 250+ Bus Éireann routes, 130+ Dublin Bus routes, and an increasing number of Local Link services¹⁶), as well as the Luas light rail system. In addition, the National Planning Framework recognises the importance of high-quality international connectivity to Ireland's overall competitiveness, noting that investment in our ports and airports will be key to achieving this.

The key institutional bodies and arrangements for delivering land transport infrastructure and services in Ireland include:

- The **Department of Transport** (D/Transport) – responsible for transport policy and management of the overall budget, both capital and current. D/Transport is also the Approving Authority for local and regional roads.
- The **National Transport Authority** (NTA) – the Approving Authority responsible for public transport.
- **Transport Infrastructure Ireland** (TII) – the Approving Authority responsible for national roads¹⁷.
- **Sponsoring Agencies** – There are several Sponsoring Agencies in the transport sector, including:
 - Iarnród Éireann in the heavy rail sector (i.e., Inter City, DART, and Commuter)
 - Local Authorities across both roads and active travel
 - TII for light rail and metro (i.e., Luas and MetroLink).

The Sponsoring Agencies are responsible to either D/Transport, NTA, or TII, as Approving Authorities, depending on which portfolio the project in question sits within.

3.2 Historic Investment in the Transport Sector

The 2000s marked a decade of major progress in Irish transport infrastructure, with the successful planning and delivery of the Major Inter-Urban motorway network connecting Dublin to Galway, Limerick, Cork, and Waterford, as well as the delivery of the Luas light rail system. These achievements significantly boosted Ireland's economic and social development, as well as its international reputation. However, the post-2008 financial crisis led to sharp cuts in capital investment.

Capital investment in transport began to increase again under Ireland's capital investment plan, *Building on Recovery: Infrastructure and Capital Investment 2016-2021*. Since then, the National Development Plan has undergone several updates, with the latest *National Development Plan Review 2025* allocating €22.33 billion in capital funding for transport over the 2026 to 2030 period¹⁸, with an additional €2 billion of Infrastructure, Climate and Nature Fund for the Metro project over the period.

15. ARUP (2024), [All-Island Strategic Rail Review](#)

16. [Transport for Ireland](#)

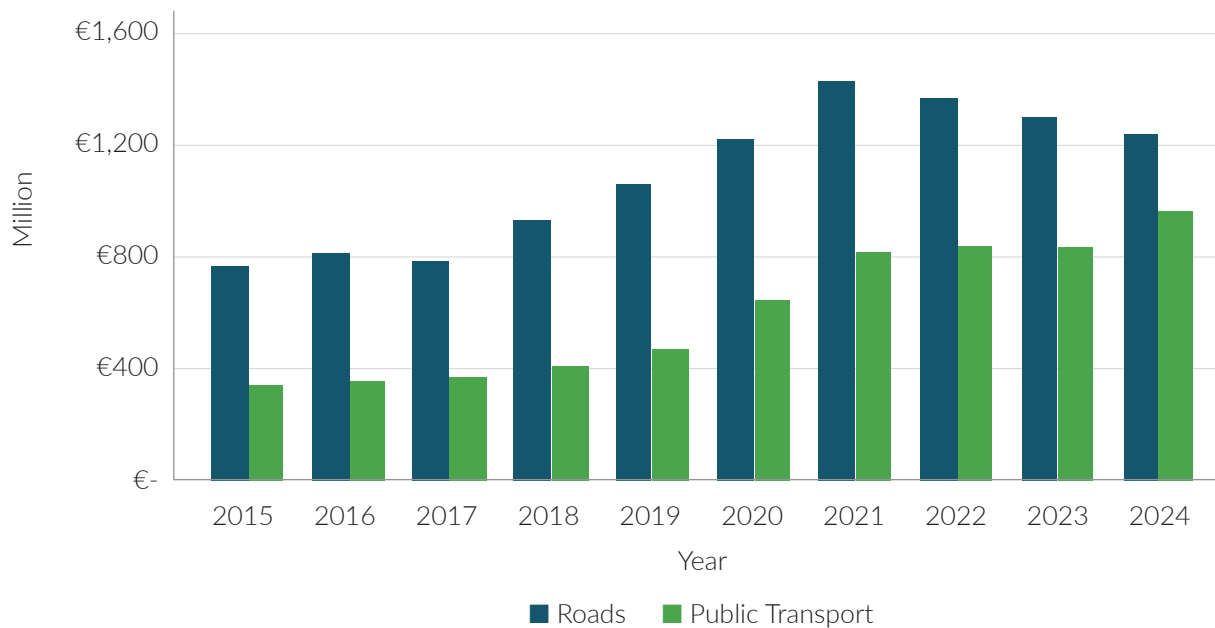
17. NTA and TII are additionally each responsible for a diverse range of ancillary infrastructure and services such as active travel, greenways, customer-facing operations, and various regulatory functions in connection with transport.

18. Government of Ireland (2025), [National Development Plan Review 2025](#)

Figure 14 below presents the public investment in roads and public transport infrastructure over the last 10 years. It highlights that between 2015 and 2024, circa. €10 billion was invested in road infrastructure, both national and regional, and circa. €6 billion was invested in public and sustainable transport infrastructure.

Figure 14

Public Investment in Road and Public Transport Infrastructure 2015 - 2024



Source: Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General.

3.4 Transport as Critical Infrastructure

Ireland’s growing population is placing increasing pressure on our transport infrastructure.

Transport infrastructure is critical for enabling new residential developments, supporting social inclusion, enhancing accessibility to key employment areas and minimising negative health effects associated with congestion¹⁹.

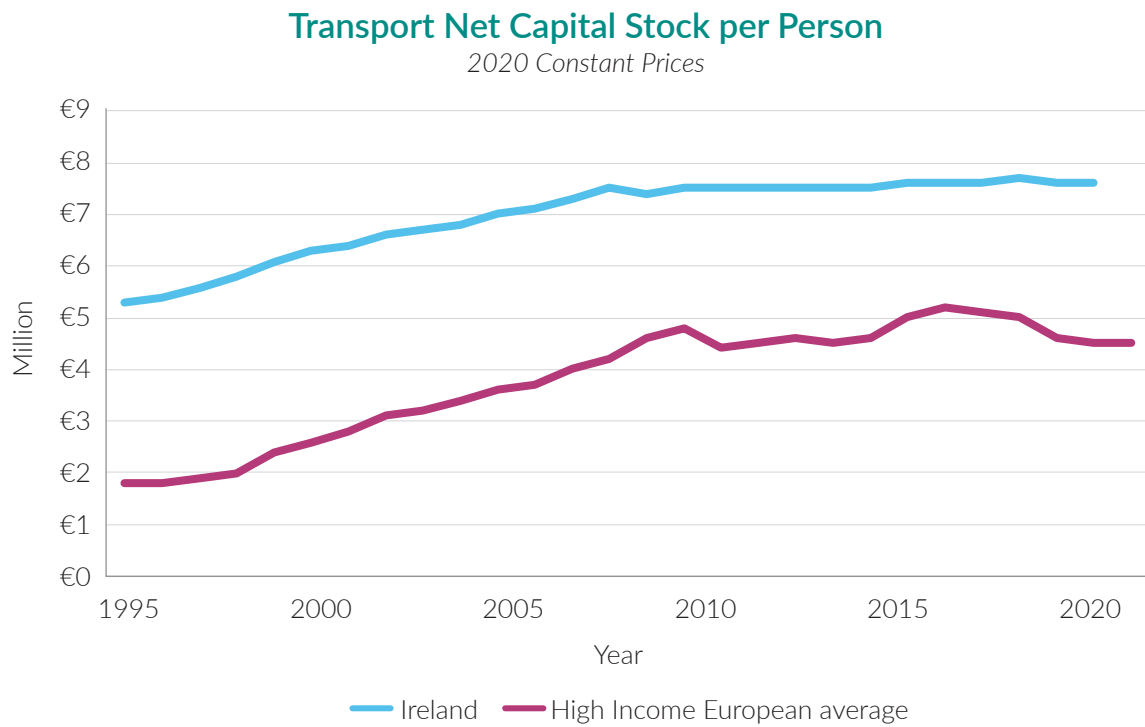
Transport systems also support regional development by connecting communities to economic opportunities, reducing spatial inequality, and supporting the viability of towns and cities outside Dublin.

Despite ongoing investment in transport infrastructure over the last decade, the slowdown in investment following the 2008 financial crash has given rise to an infrastructure deficit in the sector. Figure 15 below highlights that the real net capital stock of transport per person in Ireland has grown but remains below other high income European countries.²⁰

19. Department of Transport (2025), [The Economic Cost of Congestion in the Regional Cities 2022-2040](#) - Congestion-related costs per person are projected to rise significantly by 2040—reaching €1,047 in the Greater Dublin Area (GDA), €891 in the Galway Metropolitan Area (GMA), and €309 in the Cork Metropolitan Area (CMA). These figures highlight the urgent need for investment in transport infrastructure to support sustainable development, reduce economic losses, and improve quality of life across Ireland’s cities.

20. IFAC (2024), [Ireland’s Infrastructure Demands](#)

Figure 15



Source: IFAC

This infrastructure deficit gives rise to hours lost in congestion, particularly at peak times, impedes access to employment, education, and social opportunities, and ultimately results in negative economic, social and environmental impacts. These issues will be further exacerbated by a growing population, unless the deficit is addressed, underlining the necessity to accelerate infrastructure delivery in this sector.

Case Study M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy National Road

The M28 Cork to Ringaskiddy National Road project, involves the upgrade of approximately 12.5km of the N28 National Primary Route from the N40 South Ring Road to Ringaskiddy, Co. Cork. Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) is the funding authority for this project.

The existing N28 is predominantly a single carriageway road and suffers from significant congestion, resulting in considerable delays at peak times at certain locations. The road does not have the capacity to cater for current traffic volumes at peak times or future expected increases in traffic.

This project is an important infrastructure development for the Cork region, as it will improve accessibility to key employment areas such as Cork City and the Ringaskiddy Strategic Employment Zone, while also connecting to major population centres like Carrigaline. It will also cater for residential and employment growth, competitiveness and efficiency, as well as provide safer roads and improved air quality. Furthermore, the N28 corridor itself is part of the Trans-European Transport Network, accessing the Tier 1 Port at Ringaskiddy. This requires that the Port is served by a high-quality road (either a motorway or express road), designed and built for motor traffic.



Prioritisation of Infrastructure & Financial Constraints

Project inception began in 2001 but faced a number of setbacks before it progressed to the planning stage in 2017, largely due to the project not being prioritised from a delivery and funding perspective. The M28 project was put on hold between 2003 and 2004, during which time the delivery of the Major Inter-Urbans was the transport investment priority. The project was then paused again in 2009 in the wake of the financial crisis and following a decision from ABP (now known as ACP) not to approve Port development in Ringaskiddy, and restarted in 2013, with the publication of the Ports Policy, which identified Ringaskiddy as a 'Tier 1' port.

Judicial Review and Slow Process

The period from submitting the planning application (2017) to construction commencing on the M28 (2025) was approximately 8 years, with the most significant challenge being the approval and procurement phase. Planning was granted 14 months after the application was lodged. The project was then subject to a Judicial Review, which resulted in the project being stalled for 30 months (Oct 2018 – Mar 2021). Following the project exiting Judicial Review in March 2021, the project did not go out for tender until 2024, with the contract awarded in April 2025.

Impacts

The project is now scheduled for completion in 2028, 27 years following initial project inception, and 12 years since the project recommenced in 2012. Lack of prioritisation in terms of delivery and funding slowed the project in the initial design phase, while slow planning, approval, and procurement processes resulted in Phases 4 and 5 of project delivery lasting 8 years alone.

The required investment cost to deliver the project is now estimated to be €456 million. However, given that construction sector material costs have increased by c.27% since 2021, the delivery cost of this project would have undoubtedly been lower had it not faced these delays.

The very long timeline for the delivery of this infrastructure project also impacts that region's economic development opportunities, hindering access to key employment centres, affecting competitiveness and investment potential. Communities in Shanbally and Ringaskiddy Village continue to experience high traffic volumes, and the associated negative health impacts of such. Furthermore, delays would stall the delivery of other beneficial developments such as the relocated port infrastructure and the regeneration of Cork Docklands.



Appendix 2: International Best Practice

Introduction

Infrastructure is a pivotal cornerstone for economic development, social wellbeing and environmental sustainability across the globe. However, the delivery of public infrastructure faces several persistent challenges and barriers over the world. Therefore, learnings and best practice approaches to delivering infrastructure should be examined at an international level.

This includes utilising resources developed by international institutions, as well as examining approaches taken by other countries facing similar challenges to infrastructure delivery. Considering how these tools and approaches would work within the specific Irish context can inform our response to unlocking infrastructure delivery.

International Organisations Frameworks

Ireland is not unique in facing challenges to effective infrastructure delivery. To help countries overcome barriers to infrastructure delivery, a number of international institutions have developed robust frameworks and guidelines outlining best practice principles for infrastructure delivery all of which have been considered in this Report.

For instance, the OECD provides a wide range of materials regarding best practice in the delivery of infrastructure, including an online Infrastructure Toolkit, which provides best practice guidance to policymakers on the planning, financing, and delivery of infrastructure, as well as frameworks for infrastructure governance and public infrastructure investment. The IMF also provides a standardised framework to assess infrastructure governance practices, known as the 'Public Investment Management Assessment (PIMA)', which provides actionable recommendations specifically tailored to country-specific needs and capacities.

The EU's Simplification Agenda

Speed, coherence, and simplification are the key priorities for the European Commission. The current European Commission's Political Guidelines emphasise the priority focus on the **simplification, effective implementation, and enforcement** of EU policies and laws to facilitate a more efficient environment in which to do business in Europe. These efforts are also at the heart of the Commission's focus to strengthen European competitiveness.

To deliver this, the Commission's first work programme of this mandate is heavily focused on simplification initiatives, involving the introduction of several proposals aimed at cutting red tape and simplifying rules. In just six months, the Commission has adopted six packages of initiatives ('omnibuses') designed to cut regulatory burdens and simplify legislation, saving European businesses more than €8.6 billion annually²¹. This shows an overall trend for the push for reform to reduce barriers to infrastructure delivery and competitiveness across Europe.

International Legislation

Ireland is not alone in facing barriers to infrastructure development. Many other countries encounter similar challenges and have introduced legislation aimed at improving infrastructure delivery. Of particular interest in the Irish context are the legislative steps that have been taken in other common law jurisdictions to address barriers to infrastructure.

Ireland's Planning and Development Act (PDA) 2024 introduces a robust plan-led system, statutory timelines, and judicial review reform. It establishes a clear hierarchy of planning instruments – from the National Planning Framework and National Planning Statements to Regional Strategies and Development Plans – each with defined content and alignment obligations. The Act also strengthens public consultation and environmental integration, and introduces mandatory decision-making timelines for planning authorities and An Coimisiún Pleanála.

However, when compared holistically to the approaches taken in New Zealand, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, it is clear that Ireland has not yet embedded infrastructure delivery as a central strategic function to the same extent as other jurisdictions.

It should be noted that these legislative amendments are quite recent, making it difficult to fully assess their long-term impacts. Furthermore, these jurisdictions are not EU Members and thus operate in a different context to Ireland. Nonetheless, examining these case studies can offer valuable learnings for Ireland. The actions proposed in this Report, which draw from a review of the international best practice examples, will ensure a strategic Government focus on infrastructure delivery.

UK

The UK *Planning and Infrastructure Bill 2025* aims to speed up and streamline the delivery of new homes and critical infrastructure in the UK through the introduction of a number of reforms across the various facets of the project delivery process.

The Bill seeks to deliver a faster and more certain consenting process for critical infrastructure, in part through streamlining Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects consultation requirements, and empowering the Secretary of State to disapply development consent requirements for certain Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. The Bill also seeks to reduce opportunities for judicial review through

21. European Commission (2025), [2025 Annual Overview Report on Simplification, Implementation and Enforcement](#)

making provision for the removal of the paper permission stage for judicial reviews of National Policy Statements and Development Consent Orders, and removes the right to appeal for cases deemed totally without merit at the oral permission hearing.

The Bill also contains a number of specific sectoral reforms. It introduces reforms aimed at increasing the efficiency and strategic alignment of electricity network connection process, including conferring time-limited powers on the Secretary of State and Ofgem to enable prioritisation of the connections queue. In the Transport Sector, the Bill makes a number of amendments to the Highways Act 1980, such as establishing powers to enable temporary possession of land to better frame land negotiations and reduce time taken, introduce statutory deadlines for the decision stage of the process, and simplifying the various ways of handling orders and schemes under the Highways Act.

Australia

The *Infrastructure Australia Amendment (Independent Review) Act 2023* enacted reforms to the Infrastructure Australia Act 2008. The most notable reforms include a new governance structure and strengthened mandate for Infrastructure Australia, the Australian Government's independent advisor on nationally significant transport, water, energy, communications, and social infrastructure investment planning and project prioritisation.

The Act provides this statutory body with powers to conduct audits, develop Infrastructure Priority Lists, and evaluate proposals against national criteria. The Infrastructure Priority Lists set out Infrastructure Australia's recommendations on the highest priority nationally significant infrastructure proposals that are ready for Australian Government investment for planning or delivery. Infrastructure Australia also provides advice to support better infrastructure decision-making, including identifying opportunities for reform.

The Act also mandates the publication of an annual budget statement and an annual performance statement on the outcomes being achieved in relation to the public infrastructure investment programme, to inform the Government's annual budget process on infrastructure investment. Infrastructure Australia is also required to publish a summary of each proposal evaluated every quarter.

New Zealand

New Zealand's *Fast-track Approvals Act 2024* establishes a permanent fast-track approvals regime for a range of infrastructure and development projects that deliver regional and national benefits. The Act provides for a 'one-stop-shop' approach, combining the multiple resource consents, notices of requirement, and certificates of compliance and approvals that were required under previous legislation.

Expert panels consider required approvals as a single application package, making it quicker and easier to get the approvals usually required for large and complex projects. While any person can apply to have projects of regional or national significance considered for fast-track approval, the Act contains a list of 149 specific projects, approved by Government, that can directly access the Fast-track pathway without Ministerial referral.

Canada

Canada's *Building Canada Act 2025*, which is part of the One Canadian Economy Act, seeks to streamline the regulatory approval process for infrastructure projects of national importance. The Act provides for the designation of certain infrastructure projects as being Projects of National Interest, which are subject to a streamlined federal review process. This process includes the consolidation of multiple permits and approvals in a single conditions document.

The Act introduces a Federal Major Projects Office that acts as a single point of contact for strategic infrastructure projects. This Office streamlines inter-agency engagement and provides a centralised interface for project proponents. The Office evaluates projects, advises on whether they meet the criteria to be deemed a Project of National Interest, and applies the streamlined regulatory review process. The Office also supports the Government of Canada's review of policies, regulations and legislation to make changes to achieve a two-year timeline for all federal decision-making for major projects.

Conclusion

Taken together, these international examples show a clear pattern: governments facing similar delivery challenges are simplifying regulatory pathways, introducing statutory and time-bound decision processes, strengthening national prioritisation and override mechanisms, and centralising coordination to reduce duplication and conflict. These shared principles reinforce the direction of travel in this Action Plan and demonstrate that the reforms proposed for Ireland are consistent with what is working elsewhere.

Acronyms and Glossary of Terms

Acronym	Full Title
A	
ACP	An Coimisiún Pleanála
AGO	Office of the Attorney General
AIT	Accelerating Infrastructure Taskforce
ARET	Accelerating Renewable Electricity Taskforce
C	
CAP	Climate Action Plan
CCMA	County and City Management Association
CPO	Compulsory Purchase Order
CRU	Commission for Regulation of Utilities
CSG	Construction Sector Group
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CTP	Construction Technology and Practice
CWMMF	Capital Works Management Framework

Acronym	Full Title
D	
DAO	Distribution Asset Owner
DCEE	Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment
DETE	Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DFHERIS	Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science
DHLGH	Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage
DJUSTICE	Department of Justice, Home Affairs and Migration
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation
DSO	Distribution System Operator
DTAOISEACH	Department of the Taoiseach
D/Transport	Department of Transport
E	
EAP	External Assurance Process
EG	EirGrid
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
ENTSOE	European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ESBN	Electricity Supply Board Networks
ESRI	Economic and Social Research Institute
G	
GCCC	Government Construction Contracts Committee
GDA	Greater Dublin Area
GDD	Greater Dublin Drainage Project

Acronym	Full Title
GIS	Government Information Service
GNI	Gross National Income
GW	Gigawatt
H	
HAO	Housing Activation Office
I	
IFAC	Irish Fiscal Advisory Council
ID	Infrastructure Division
IÉ	Iarnród Éireann
IG	Infrastructure Guidelines
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IROPI	Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest
J	
JR	Judicial Review
JUTCH	Joint Utilities and Transport Clearing House
L	
LA	Local Authority
LDA	Land Development Agency
LGMA	Local Government Management Agency
M	
MARA	Maritime Area Regulatory Authority
MIC	Maximum Import Capacity
MAC	Marine Area Consent
MMC	Modern Methods of Construction
MPAG	Major Projects Advisory Group

Acronym	Full Title
MUL	Maritime Usage License
N	
NDFA	National Development Finance Agency
NDP	National Development Plan
NIO	National Investment Office
NIS	Natura Impact Statement
NPF	National Planning Framework
NPS	National Planning Statement
NPWS	National Parks and Wildlife Service
NSIC	North-South Interconnector
NTA	National Transport Authority
NTMA	National Treasury Management Agency
O	
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPR	Office of the Planning Regulator
P	
PBC	Preliminary Business Case
PR6	Price Review 6
R	
RAS	Risk Appetite Statement
RC4	Revenue Control 4
RC3	Revenue Control 3
S	
SDZ	Strategic Development Zone
SEM	Single Electricity Market

Acronym	Full Title
SID	Strategic Infrastructure Development
T	
TER	Total Energy Requirement
TII	Transport Infrastructure Ireland
TAO	Transmission Asset Owner
TSO	Transmission System Operator
U	
UÉ	Uisce Éireann
W	
WSP- EMR	Water Supply Project Eastern and Midlands Region
WWDA	Wastewater Discharge Authorisation



An Roinn Caiteachais Phoiblí Bonneagair
Athchóiriúcháin Seirbhíse Poiblí agus Digitíúcháin
Department of Public Expenditure Infrastructure
Public Service Reform and Digitalisation