



THE IRISH ACADEMY OF
ENGINEERING
ENGINEERING & TECHNOLOGY

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP IN A TIME OF GREAT CHANGE

ACADEMY NEWS –April & May 2026 – Activity by Academy Members

This has been a very busy time for our Academy and in this Academy news bulletin are some key recent highlights:

- **8th April 2026** - The [Critical Infrastructure Bill 2026](#), passed stage 1 in the Oireachtas on 8th April. This is a key outcome from the work of the Academy and the Accelerating Infrastructure Task force.

It allows the Government to designate specific infrastructure projects or programmes as "critical," on the recommendation of the Minister for Public Expenditure, Infrastructure, Public Service Reform and Digitalisation. Infrastructure is defined broadly in these sectors: transport, energy, and water/wastewater systems.

Once designated, public bodies involved must prioritise that project over other work, move quickly, streamline approvals, run processes in parallel where possible, and report to the Minister on request. The Minister can also issue binding directions to those bodies.

- **28th April 2026** - The President of Ireland launched the Business and Law Chapter of the University of Galway Alumni Society on at the Law Society of Ireland, Blackhall Place. Pictured at the event were:



Rosemarie Loftus, President of the Law Society, Uachtarán na h-Éireann Catherine Connolly, and Martin Hogan, Irish Academy of Engineering.

Martin Hogan FIAE is also photographed with



Ms Justice Maire Whelan, the former Attorney General and judge in the Court of Criminal Appeal and Martin Hogan FIAE

- **30th April 2026** - President Sean Finlay, Special Adviser Tom Leahy and Energy Chair Eamonn O Reilly met Harry O Rahilly and Sarah Marsh of the British Embassy in Dublin to discuss energy issues effecting Ireland and the UK. They were joined by Damien Owens DG of Engineers Ireland.
- **2nd May 2026** - The Business Post published an article by Barry O’Sullivan FIAE – **Energy security crisis demands facing reality and taking action**

Barry O'Sullivan Consello
Energy security crisis demands facing reality and taking action

Ireland's energy debate has, for too long, focused almost exclusively on decarbonisation at the expense of security, availability and affordability.

Instability in the Middle East has, once again, exposed a hard truth: Ireland is acutely vulnerable and dangerously unprepared. The International Energy Agency has warned that the current crisis could exceed the combined impact of the 1970s oil shocks and the war in Ukraine. For Europe, already under strain, the implications are serious. For Ireland – an island at the edge of the system, heavily reliant on imports – the risks are even greater.

To sustain growth and opportunity, Ireland cannot do without secure, plentiful and affordable energy, ideally produced at home and as low-carbon as possible.

Conversely, energy here today is constrained, expensive and predominantly imported.

The scale of our exposure is stark. Ireland imports around 80 per cent of its gas and 17 per cent of its electricity from Britain, which itself depends heavily on imports. Around half of Ireland's gas is used for electricity generation.

While the transition to renewables is essential, it will take time. The Irish Academy of Engineering has made clear that natural gas will be needed well beyond 2050 to support intermittent renewables. The fact is that offshore wind operates roughly 20 per cent of the time, solar less than 10 per cent, and both are variable. That is why the EU classifies natural gas as a transition fuel.

Therefore, Ireland must maximise indigenous supply, strengthen pipeline imports, and, critically, face reality and develop liquefied natural gas (LNG) capacity and storage.

Across Europe, high energy costs are already driving investment and jobs. Ireland is particularly exposed, with electricity prices at about 33 per cent above the EU average. Volatility will only increase in the years ahead.

The consequences affect everyone: households struggling with bills, small businesses under pressure and large employers reassessing competitiveness. Energy security also underpins essential public services.

The current government has, at least from the outset, shown a greater intent and realism and has also been responsive with measures to support the public and industry through the current crisis. But how do we turn the reactive into proactive?

In the short term, practical steps are available. Ireland should prepare for winter by maintaining Moneypoint's coal capacity as a temporary backup. While it's not ideal environmentally, countries such as Germany and Italy are taking similar steps.

We should also make better use of renewable energy already being generated. Around 10 per cent of renewable electricity is currently wasted. Supporting battery storage with a grant scheme for homes and small businesses would help shift usage from peak times and reduce reliance on imported energy.

Incentives for using surplus renewable power and more flexible pricing mechanisms could further improve efficiency. These are proven measures elsewhere in Europe.

At the same time, barriers to small-scale local generation should be reduced. Current policies limit uptake among households and businesses that could otherwise contribute to supply.

Ireland must also urgently advance the aforementioned LNG and gas storage capacity, particularly through the Killybeggs project on the Shannon estuary. The private sector needs to be allowed to deliver its solution and it can be done within three years, at no cost to the taxpayer. That's faster and more cost-effective than state-led emergency solutions, which do little to address underlying price pressures. Increased competition in gas supply would also help lower costs.

Another immediate opportunity lies in biofuels. Countries like Denmark produce over 40 per cent of their gas from biogas, while Ireland produces just 1 per cent. Similarly, we could increase the amount of indigenous biodiesel from food waste to strengthen supply and reduce cost at the pumps.

Looking further ahead, structural reforms are needed. Grid infrastructure must be upgraded to enable offshore wind, where generation is stronger and more consistent. However, Ireland has seen little major transmission development in over two decades. A more pragmatic approach would involve private sector investment in offshore infrastructure, alongside accelerated onshore delivery by EirGrid.

Natural gas exploration should also be reconsidered. Domestic supply would be more secure, lower cost and lower-carbon than imported alternatives.

Ireland's growing dependence on imported electricity is another concern. Today, around 17 per cent of electricity is imported, compared to Europe's most energy-secure countries. It may now be time for Ireland to re-examine nuclear as part of a balanced, long-term energy strategy.

Finally, governance must reflect the scale of the challenge. Appointing a dedicated energy minister would ensure sustained focus and accountability.

Almost a century ago, Ireland committed 20 per cent of GDP to electrification through the Ardara project. Today, in a far stronger position, we face a different but equally important challenge, though one not requiring anything like the same eschewer commitment.

There are many practical actions that can be taken that will help security of supply and cost to consumers. A crisis demands that we move quickly.

Barry O'Sullivan
 is a senior adviser with CEO advisory firm Consello

“Grid infrastructure must be upgraded to enable offshore wind, where generation is stronger and more consistent**”**

- **28th May 2026** - Past President Seamus McKeague will receive from ManufacturingNI (MNI) a **Manufacturing Hall of Fame Award**. Seamus has accepted this on behalf of **Team Creagh** past and present and will attend the manufacturing day and awards dinner on 28th May 2026.

Good examples of how the Academy delivers on its mission of providing thought leadership in a time of great change. Our thanks go to our active membership and the support of our Patrons as we look forward to our AGM and Fellows lunch on 14th May 2026.