

Public Engagement In Energy Infrastructure Projects:

Are We Getting It Right?

The Irish Context

Introduction: Ireland's Energy Transition

- Climate targets:
51% reduction in emissions by 2030,
net-zero by 2050
- Unprecedented scale of transition
- Importance of public engagement





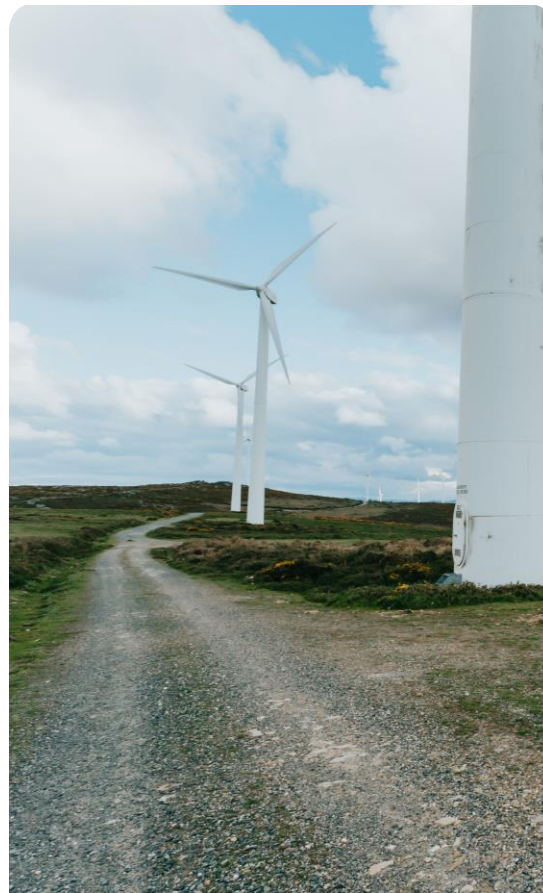
Why Public Engagement Matters

- Integrates local knowledge
- Ensures fair distribution of benefits
- Creates community ownership
- Tailors transition to Irish context



Legal Framework Overview

- Access to Information on the Environment Regulations 2007-2018
- Planning and Development Act 2000
- EU EIA Directive
- Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021





The Aarhus Convention in Ireland

Three Pillars:

- Access to Information
- Public Participation
- Access to Justice



Risks of Inadequate Engagement

Three Categories:

- Financial Risks
- Operational Risks
- Reputational Risks



Financial Risks Deep Dive

- Project delays
- Increased costs from appeals and reviews
- Example: Wind farm project delays

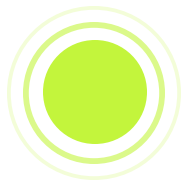




Operational Risks

Deep Dive

- Difficulty obtaining planning permission
- Implementation obstacles
- Example: Anonymous infrastructure project challenges



Reputational Risks Deep Dive

- Negative public perception
- Loss of social licence
- Example: Anonymous energy project controversy





Effective Engagement Strategies

- Early and proactive engagement
- Transparent communication
- Inclusive decision-making
- Addressing community concerns
- Demonstrating tangible benefits
- Long-term relationship building



Tailoring Engagement to Irish Communities

- Leveraging local structures
(GAA clubs, Parish Councils)
- Address Ireland-specific concerns
(boglands, heritage)
- Use local communication channels





Addressing Community Concerns

- Visual impact
- Noise
- Property values
- Environmental concerns
- Traffic and road safety

Community Benefits

- Community Benefit Funds
- Local employment and skills development
- Energy initiatives
- Tourism and education opportunities



Case Study: Success Story

- Community-owned wind farm in rural Ireland
- Key success factors and outcomes





Case Study: Challenges

- Large-scale wind farm proposal in the East
- Key challenges and lessons learned



Role of Public Engagement in Ireland's Energy Transition

- Building social licence
- Facilitating innovation
- Ensuring just transition
- Accelerating project timelines
- Building long-term support



Call to Action for Energy Companies

- Prioritise early engagement
- Go beyond compliance
- Embrace transparency and inclusivity
- Invest in community benefits
- Build long-term relationships
- Learn and adapt
- Collaborate for success



Thank You

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