

# Letter shows Eirgrid's options

**Mary Kavanagh**

mary.kavanagh@leinsterexpress.ie

THE state power company Eirgrid four years ago met with An Bord Pleanála representatives to discuss future grid connections of wind power and a possible expansion of the controversial proposed substation.

A letter obtained by the Leinster Express shows that seven representatives from Eirgrid met with four representatives from An Bord Pleanála on August 5, 2009. This is a written record of the first pre-application consultation between the two parties, regarding the proposed substation.

This document states that the substation "can be used to cater for increased supply in the region (conventional and/or renewable generation), so the project will therefore facilitate integration of renewables on the grid".

When asked by the Leinster Express if Eirgrid had always intended to connect their proposed substation to local renewable energy outlets (wind turbines), a spokesperson for the company said: "There are no proposals for any other connections to this substation other than what is being proposed with the Laois-Kilkenny project". They also declined to confirm what the substation's spare bays will be used for.

Chairman of Ratheniska Timahoe Spink Substation Action Group, John Lowry said that the group were not surprised to find out this information.

"They weren't upfront with anything to anyone. They



What the proposed substation will look like, according to Eirgrid

were denying to us that they were putting in renewables all along. They were in consultation to An Bord Pleanála in April 2009, before they advertised their plans for the substation. It's funny that they can't tell us what's happening, they are keeping us in the dark. It's obvious that they're planning for renewables, whether its windfarms or other forms".

He said that a lot of submissions have been collected against the substation and many more are due in. "The circle is widening, people are very concerned about their health and about the aquifer. The water supply of south Laois will be in jeopardy".

He urged people to look up Eirgrid's plans online or in Laois County Council to view the scale of the project, and

get their submissions into An Bord Pleanála before March 21.

Senator John Whelan has hit out at the company, stating that Eirgrid cannot be trusted, and calling for them to immediately withdraw their "grossly misleading and inaccurate" planning application from An Bord Pleanála.

"In my view it exposes a disgraceful level of deception on the part of Eirgrid, who have never been upfront with either the community or their elected public representatives, regarding the nature and purpose of what they are planning in Laois. They have now earned the bad reputation they have throughout the community as the people who put the con into consultation".

The senator said that the

letter shows Eirgrid's deception of the local community, as well as elected members and councillors in the county.

"This 2009 letter irrefutably proves that Eirgrid have been willfully and deliberately misleading the community and attempting to subvert the transparency of the planning process all along.

It is scandalous behaviour from Eirgrid and undermines the integrity of entire public consultation an planning process. the entire planning application from Eirgrid is in my view tarnished and discredited and is thrown into serious doubt. Even though I attempted to repeatedly engage with Eirgrid I have found to my dismay that they have never ever been upfront about this project and planning application".