An Bord Pleanála Oral Hearing

Córas Iompair Éireann/Iarnród Éireann

Dublin to Cork Railway Line Level Crossings

Opening Statement & Background

David Vaughan

INTRODUCTION

1. Good morning Inspector, ladies and gentlemen.

2. My name is David Vaughan and I am a Programme Manager in the Capital Investments division of Iarnród Éireann.

3. As you are aware, this oral hearing is in relation to the application by Coras Iompair Éireann, which I will also refer to as CIÉ, under the Transport (Railway Infrastructure) Act 2001 for a Railway Order.

4. If granted, the Railway Order will authorise CIÉ to acquire necessary land and to carry out all works necessary to enable it to eliminate or upgrade seven numbered manned level crossings along a 24 kilometre section of the Dublin to Cork Railway Line between Limerick Junction and Mallow straddling the Cork/Limerick county boundary. These are the last remaining manned level crossings on the Dublin-Cork Railway Line.

5. The Level crossings XC187 Fantstown and XC201 Thomastown are in County Limerick, lying directly south of Limerick City close to the Cork-Limerick border, while the remaining sites are located in County Cork, directly north of Mallow.

6. Before setting out a brief background to the proposed project, I wish to briefly describe my role and qualifications.

7. I have over 23 years experience in Iarnród Eireann. Iarnród Éireann – Irish Rail (IÉ) is a designated activity company, limited by shares, registered in Ireland at Connolly Station, Dublin 1. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of Coras Iompair Éireann (CIÉ).

8. I hold a Bachelor of Engineering (Hons) degree in Civil, Structural and Environmental Engineering from Trinity College Dublin. I also hold a Postgraduate Diploma in Project Management from Trinity College Dublin, a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Dublin City University and a Master of Science (MSc) in Railway Systems Engineering and Integration from the University of Birmingham. I am a Chartered Member of the Institution of Engineers of Ireland (IEI).

9. My experience has been accrued in the design and delivery of railway infrastructure projects across the Iarnród Eireann network. I have project managed and been the programme manager (project director) for an extensive portfolio of projects in the rail sector.

10. I have been the Programme Manager and Project Director since 2018 with direct involvement in the feasibility stage of the project, including consideration of alternative options to close or de-man the level crossings, as noted in the 2019 feasibility study by Iarnród Eireann (EIAR Volume 5 Appendix 1K).

11. These matters are set out in detail in Chapter 1 (Introduction) and Chapter 2 (Project Need and Alternatives) as part of the environmental impact assessment report (EIAR) and will be further addressed by my colleagues in their statements and the evidence provided to this oral hearing.

12. Together with my colleagues my role included the appraisal of options, including elimination/de-manning of the 7 level crossings, property requirements, legal/planning strategy, safety approvals strategy, capital costs, operational costs, and programme requirements of proposed solutions as noted in the Iarnród Eireann feasibility study. I was also responsible for the appointment of a suitably expert and

experienced project management, technical services, property and legal team to manage the delivery of the project.

THE BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT

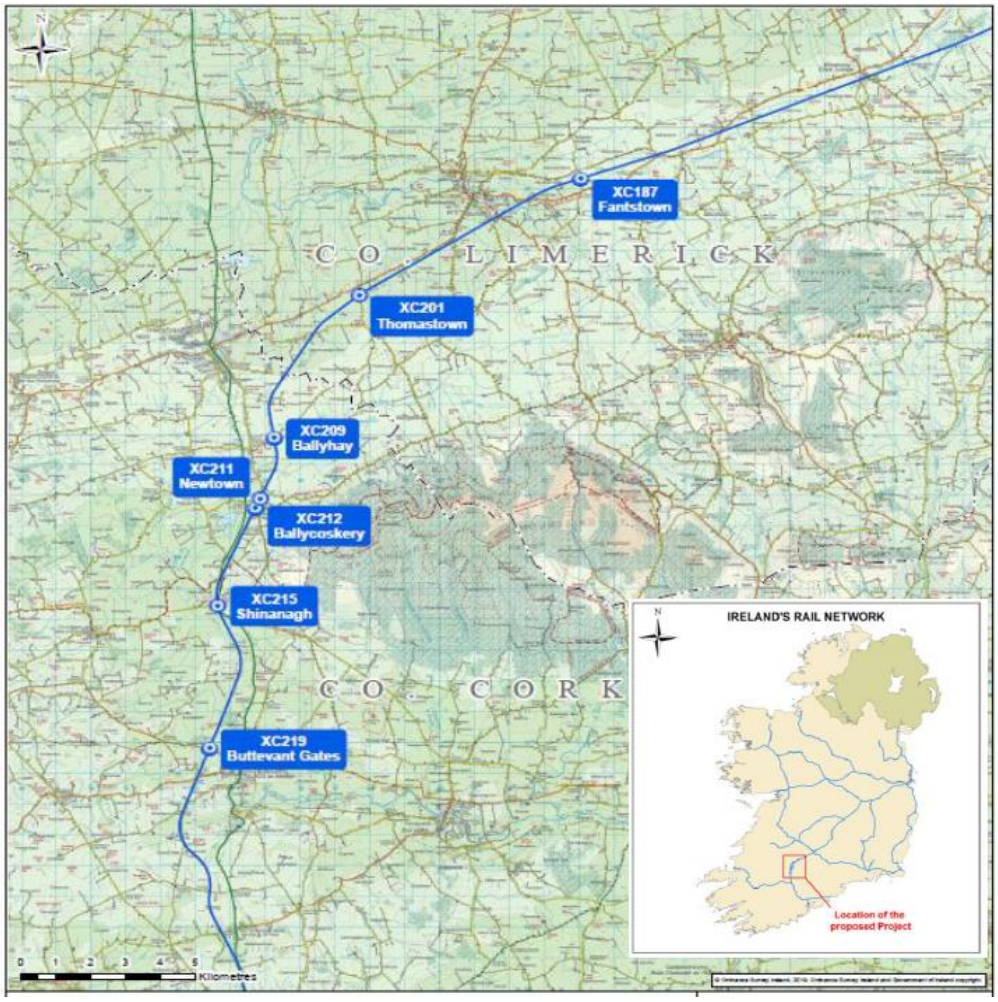
13. On 2 December 2020 and 9 December 2020 respectively, the Iarnród Éireann and CIÉ Boards, passed resolutions authorising that this application be made to An Bord Pleanála for a Railway Order in relation to the Cork Line Level Crossings project on the Dublin-Cork Railway Line.

14. As mentioned, the proposed project is located along the Dublin-Cork Railway Line and specifically that section of the Dublin – Cork Railway Line between Limerick Junction and Mallow Stations, straddling the Limerick/Cork county boundary. There are 7 manned public road level crossings in operation on a 15 mile/24 km section of the Dublin – Cork Railway Line where rail speeds can reach up to 160kph.

15. There are 30 to 35 scheduled trains (combined directions) passing over the subject level crossings on the Railway Line daily. The majority of these trains are locomotive hauled express services to/from Cork each weighing 440 tonnes and capable of carrying up to 420 passengers.

16. In addition, there can be up to 10 unscheduled train movements daily, which could be engineering trains, freight trains, or other track recording vehicles. The crossings are the only remaining manned level crossings on the Dublin – Cork Railway Line. Figure 1 sets out the location of the crossings.

Figure 1



INTERFACE BETWEEN A RAILWAY LINE & ROAD

17. The safety issues arising from the interface between a railway line and a road has been a characteristic of all railways for centuries and remains so to this day.

18. The proposed Railway Order in this application seeks to address the inherent health and safety issues which arise due to the interface between a railway line and a public road. The function of a level crossing, where there is an overlap in two different transportation modes, is such that there is a heightened risk of an accident occurring. Train collision with vehicles at level crossings remains one of the single

biggest accident types that contribute to the overall risk on the rail network. It is the duty of CIÉ to maintain the operational safety of the railway network and it is an objective of both CIÉ and IÉ to remove, or upgrade, level crossings in Ireland where possible and practicable.

19. This Railway Order application seeks to address the safety risks associated with the road rail interface at the seven manned public road level crossings on this section of the Dublin – Cork Railway Line. The proposed Project seeks to eliminate/upgrade these level crossings and considers the level of relief infrastructure required to facilitate the closures where this arises.

20. In addition to its primary safety objectives concerning level crossings, in the Iarnród Éireann Strategy 2027, Iarnród Éireann have committed to providing additional services to achieve a 30-minute service at peak times between Dublin and Cork.

21. Furthermore, as we move towards delivering a more sustainable national transport network and reduced journey times, CIÉ and Iarnród Éireann are cognisant of the potential future higher speed and higher frequency services on the line.

22. To deliver infrastructure upgrades of this scale, the potential safety risk posed by existing level crossings along this line must be addressed and interventions, such as within this proposed project, be delivered.

PROJECT NEED AND ALTERNATIVES

23. The evolution of the proposed project and the alternatives considered are set out in the EIAR at Volume 2, Chapter 2: Project

Need and Alternatives and this matter is further addressed in the evidence of my colleague Gerry Healy.

24. The Need for the proposed project is two-fold: to reduce the safety risk profile of the railway; and to increase operational reliability. However, reducing risk and improving safety is the primary need for the proposed project.

25. In 2010/2011 concept stage schemes were developed for overbridge schemes to eliminate where feasible each of the level crossings. None of the schemes were progressed at the time due to funding constraints.

26. In 2018, Iarnród Éireann and CIÉ conducted a feasibility study to identify and appraise options for the elimination/de-manning of the 7 no. subject level crossings.

27. Options for the elimination/de-manning of the level crossings included:

- Do Nothing
- closure (extinguishment of the public right of way across the level crossing),
- provision of alternative access through the construction of an access road and/or overbridge (based on the 2010/2011 concept stage schemes), and
- upgrade to a CCTV level crossing.

28. These options were appraised by CIÉ and Iarnród Éireann in accordance with the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sports' Common Appraisal Framework for Transport Projects and Programmes with the best performing option being identified for each level crossing.

29. The best performing option for XC187 Fanstown was straight closure. For XC209 Ballyhay, two equally performing options were identified and brought forward for further appraisal. These options were an alternative access road and/or overbridge OR to upgrade to 4 barrier CCTV level crossing. The best performing options at the remaining five level crossings; XC201 Thomastown, XC 211 Newtown, XC212 Ballycoskery, XC215 Shinanagh and XC 219 Buttevant was to provide an alternative access road or an overbridge.

30. In 2019, in order to determine the emerging preferred option at each of the level crossing points, Jacobs Engineering Ltd (Jacobs) undertook an option selection analysis at each location identified as requiring an overbridge or alternative access road. This work took into account the work undertaken previously as detailed above and was supplemented with additional options as identified during site visits, including an underbridge (rail over road) option at one location (XC 212 Ballycoskery). The best performing option at each location was determined following a comparative Multi Criteria Analysis (MCA) utilising key criteria of all the feasible options that were identified at each location. Further to the identification of each best performing option these were taken forward for further development and preliminary design.

CONCLUSION

31. The proposed project, an application for a Railway Order, has undertaken a detailed and robust assessment of alternatives which has been shaped through consultation.

32. The proposed Project is primarily driven by the need to improve safety on the Cork – Dublin Railway Line. It is clear that any road/rail interface such as a level crossing has a potential safety issue and the full hierarchy of plans and guidance cited in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2 of the EIAR supports where feasible the removal of level crossings throughout Ireland. The proposed elimination/upgrade of the subject level crossings through new diversions, roads, bridges and CCTV will help to both reduce and remove the safety risk. The elimination/upgrade of the subject level crossings will also help to improve the operational reliability of the Dublin – Cork Railway Line and that of the local road network as it will reduce/remove instances of delay associated with the level crossings.

33. Inspector, my colleagues will now address these matters in more detail and set out our response to the submissions and observations received, as follows:

Presenter	**Company**	**Precis**
Gerry Healy	Jacobs Engineering	Over view of the Railway Order and Railway works
David Dineen	CIÉ	Referencing
Rory McDonnell	Jacobs Engineering	EIA Coordination Planning including Planning policy changes since lodgement of Railway Order
Heidi Sewnath	Jacobs Engineering	Overview of EIAR Surface Water Population and Human Health
Colin Wyllie	Jacobs Engineering	Traffic and Transport
Chris Conroy	Jacobs Engineering	Noise and Vibration
Susie Coyle	Jacobs Engineering	NIS; Biodiversity.
Bryn Coldrick	Archaeological Management Solutions (AMS)	Cultural Heritage
Richard Barker	Macro Works	Landscape and Visual

34. I will now hand over to Gerry Healy.

Thank you.