

Why the Irish Electrical Industry Needs Private Wires

A White Paper for the Electrical Industries Federation of Ireland (EIFI)

Executive Summary

Ireland's electrical industry stands at a critical inflection point. Rapid electrification of heat, transport, industry, housing and digital infrastructure is colliding with grid congestion, connection delays and rising system costs. While continued grid investment remains essential, it is no longer sufficient on its own.

Private wires (direct lines) represent a necessary, complementary reform. Properly regulated, they accelerate renewable delivery, unlock new electrical projects, reduce system stress and create significant commercial opportunity for contractors, manufacturers, designers and service providers across the Irish electrical sector.

The Challenge Facing the Electrical Industry

Grid capacity is increasingly the binding constraint on project delivery. Electrical contractors and suppliers regularly face situations where projects are designed, funded and consented but cannot proceed due to long grid reinforcement timelines.

This impacts workload certainty, investment planning, apprenticeship pipelines and domestic supply chains. The result is inefficiency not only in the electricity system, but across the electrical industry itself.

What Private Wires Are – and Are Not

Private wires are licensed, point-to-point or limited-scope electrical connections linking renewable generators directly to defined customers. They operate under regulatory oversight and coexist with the national grid, which continues to provide balancing, backup and security of supply.

They are **not parallel to public grids, nor do they undermine public ownership of electricity infrastructure**. Instead, they ensure electricity can flow via the shortest, lowest-loss route where appropriate.

Why Private Wires Matter to the Electrical Industry

Private wires unlock a pipeline of projects currently blocked by congestion, including renewable generation, housing developments, business parks, retail centers, industrial clusters and EV infrastructure.

For the electrical industry, this translates directly into increased demand for medium and low voltage networks, substations, protection systems, earthing, control, metering and digital energy solutions.

System Benefits and Consumer Protection

By reducing unnecessary grid loading, private wires lower curtailment, reduces reliance on peaking gas plant and help suppress wholesale electricity prices under Ireland's marginal pricing model.

Critically, regulators retain the authority to refuse any private wire project that would increase domestic bills or compromise security of supply.

Fairness and public interest remain central design principles.

How EIFI Members Can Capitalise

For electrical contractors and EPCs, private wires mean smaller, repeatable projects with faster delivery cycles. Manufacturers benefit from increased demand for compliant switchgear, protection relays, control systems and energy management products.

Consultants and engineers gain higher value work in private network design, grid interfaces and power quality analysis, while service providers expand into microgrids, BESS and flexibility services.

The Strategic Role of EIFI

As the representative body for Ireland's electrical manufacturing and supplier base, EIFI is uniquely positioned to shape the private wires framework. Engagement with policymakers, regulators and system operators can ensure that standards, safety and industrial opportunity advance together.

Private wires align strongly with EIFI's objectives: enabling innovation, strengthening domestic supply chains, and accelerating Ireland's transition to a secure, electrified economy.

Conclusion

Private wires are not a threat to the grid – they are essential enabling infrastructure for the next phase of Ireland’s electrical development. For the electrical industry, they represent faster delivery, broader opportunity and a more resilient project pipeline.

The Electrical Industries Federation of Ireland should actively support and shape their introduction as part of a modern, efficient and climate-aligned electricity system.

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