

Meeting: Laois Kilkenny Community Forum

Date: 1st December 2022

Venue: Online

Participants:

Irish Rural Link- James Claffey, Brendan Mulry

EirGrid- Avril Wilson, Gustavo Mendez

M.CO- Coleen Savage

Laois Kilkenny Community Forum Representatives, Michael McEvoy, Lawrence Vessey, Tomas Healy Deirdre McMahon and Pat Farrell,

Apologies – Cllr Thomasina Connell, Eamonn Brophy

Meeting chaired by Irish Rural Link and draft minutes compiled by: Irish Rural Link

Item	Description	
1.	Introduction James Claffey (Chairperson) opened the meeting, facilitated introductions and introduced the agenda.	
2.	Minutes of previous meeting Minutes from the previous two meetings (June 9 th & October 20 th) were proposed by Michael McEvoy and seconded by Pat Farrell.	
3.	Project Update from EirGrid Gustavo Mendez from EirGrid provided a project update and preview of expected 2023 activity. (Presentation attached) Main points outlined. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Planned completion of Kilkenny station refurbishment was delayed due to outages in works elsewhere. Remaining works to be completed in Q2 2023. Significant offline works completed.Ballyragget Station works made very significant progress and is now waiting to be energised when Kilkenny works are completed.Coolnabacky Station civil works will commence in early 2023.Landowner engagement to serve new Ballyraggett to Coolnabacky Line has been successfully carried out in 2022Works on this line due to commence in Q1 2023.	
	Questions/Queries, Comments	Response
	No Questions arose	
4.	Presentation on the EirGrid Community Fund Availability, priorities and next steps. Colleen Savage from M-CO provided an over of the EirGrid Community Fund (Presentation Attached) Main points outlined <ul style="list-style-type: none">Overview of Individual Project ProgressProjects all on track to finish as plannedAny feedback for improvements in the fund is welcomed.	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Evaluation form has been distributed to every beneficiary • If for any reason project changes are required, please reach out • Progress on the project will dictate fund dates. • A recap on the funding availability: Phase 1 €204, 600 (40%) has been released. Phase 2 €153,450 (30%) planned to be opened in September 2023 Phase 3 (€153,450 (30%) planned to be opened in 2024 or possibly 2025 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successfully funded projects in Phase one can reapply for funding available in Phase 2 & 3. • The main communities falling within the funding area (and therefore prioritised for funding) on the Laois side include, Coolnabacky, Timahoe, Ratheniska, Spink and Ballinakill. On the Kilkenny side, the main communities are Ballyragget, Ballyouskilll and Tinnalinton. • The Forum is requested to ensure that all communities within the funding area especially those who may not yet have benefited from the fund are fully aware of plans for the upcoming phase 2. • Community Needs already identified to date include; Community Infrastructure Sporting Facilities Heritage and Culture Older People Support Environment & Sustainability Young Person Support Tourism Facilitated • The Forum is asked to consider whether there are additional needs to be considered. • The upper and lower level of funding per project awarded will be consulted upon with the Forum.
	Questions/Queries, Comments	Response
	Can the evaluation form be reissued?	This will be done as requested
	Groups are encouraged to explore the possibilities in Leader in 2023	
	As value of fund is reduced in 2 nd phase might it be appropriate to reduce upper value of grant available to any one group?	This will be taken on board, and all applicants are strongly encouraged to avail of matching funding sources, and this will favourably be looked upon in assessment.
	Increasing the Minimum limit from €500 makes sense due to very strong construction inflation.	
	Is there any way a collective approach to tendering can be taken to ensure project value is maximised?	The possibility of this will be explored subject to governance requirements being met.
	Collective Tendering will make it easier to get three quotes	Sharing of Information between groups is strongly encouraged. It's recognized that getting quotations in is problematic in this climate
5.	Short recap on scoping study to ensure forum are	

	happy study reflects phase 2 of fund.	
	James Claffey (Chairperson) stressed that as the Scoping Study is now over a year old it is an appropriate time to review, new priority areas and technology resources needed and requested the forums opinion on this.	
	Questions/Queries	Response
	Geographic Scope is fine, and any changes could be open to challenge	
6.	Forum to communicate with communities re phase 2 of fund. Ensure areas that didn't apply are aware of phase 2	
	James Claffey (Chairperson) requested the important function of the forum to spread forum information and requested forum assistance in identifying the best way to spread information on the forum	
	Questions/Queries Comment	Response
	Negatively towards EirGrid in certain geographic areas had an effect on grant applications. Expectation that this is now less of an issue.	
	Is social media an option?	Yes, EirGrid will advertise through social media channels and Whatsapp group may be used next time
	Were Parish Newsletters used to spread news of the fund?	This will be used next fine.
7.	AOB	
	No Items emerged for discussion	
8.	Next Steps	
	The next meeting will be held on Thursday 23rd February online and the following meeting will be held on Thursday 18 th May (potentially in person and potentially widened to include a community information meeting).	
	James Claffey (Chairperson) thanked all members for their attendance tonight and throughout the year.	