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DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING

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Meeting: Celtic Interconnector Community Forum

Date: 5th March 2024

Venue: Online

Participating:

Irish Rural Link – Seamus Boland, James Claffey, Brendan Mulry

EirGrid - Michelle Walsh, Avril Wilson, Shane Cooney

SECAD - Katie Kearns, Elaine Barrett

East Cork Community Representatives - Jim Barry Carrigtwohill & District Historical Society, Robert Barry Knockraha Area Community Association, Marguerite Cremin Knockraha Environmental Group, Cllr. Anthony Barry Cobh MDC, Michael de Buitleir Cork County PPN, Cllr. AnneMarie Ahern East Cork MDC, Cllr. Alan O'Connor Cobh MDC, Evelyne Forde Carrigtwohill Community Council, Maria Walsh Youghal Chamber of Tourism and Development, Fred Whelan Curtin Imogeela Community Sports Hall

Apologies: Gráinne Furey, Youghal Blue and Green Community Network

Minutes Compiled by Irish Rural Link

Item	Description
1.	**Introduction and Agenda** Seamus Boland (Chairperson) opened the meeting, facilitated participant introductions, and introduced the agenda.
2.	**Minutes of last Forum Meeting - October 17th 2023** The Minutes of the last forum meeting were agreed. Proposed by Cllr. Anthony Barry and seconded by Evelyn Forde.
3.	**Update on Celtic Interconnector Project Progress -** (Presentation Attached) Michelle Walsh (EirGrid) provided an update on the Celtic Interconnector Project. Key messages included: **Cable Works** • First of HVAC cables delivered ahead of the start of cable laying activities this summer

• 45% of the trenching and ducting works are completed on the HV AC section – Knockraha to Ballyadam
• Section B is due to complete reinstatement this week
• Section E trenching and ducting is progressing on schedule
• Section C trenching and ducting commencing 07 March
• Section F due to commence, on completion of Section E
While works are progressing to schedule there is recognition that road closures are a cause of stakeholder concern.

Claycastle Landfall
• Preliminary Test archaeological dig is to take place in March ahead of any wider archaeological dig in Autumn.

Marine Surveys
• Due to commence in April/May 2024

Ballyadam Converter Station
• Groundworks continue
• Site access at Hedgy Boreen is challenging. EirGrid in discussions with county council regarding repairs

Project	Action
Road traffic disruption and Delays	• Communicate frequently and transparently. Well established Road Closure Application process – Text updates and letters to affected residences managed by Sorensen – Elaine Cronin. Queries acknowledged and responded to within 24 hours. • Maintain good signage and traffic management. e.g. Additional signage in place to redirect traffic from Watergrasshill to Carrigtwohill and reverse • Maintain traffic management on Longstown Hill until Woodstock reopens during key hours. • Remain open to feedback and adapt where feasible. • Promote information to help understanding of process -see Celtic Interconnector | Projects | EirGrid – Animation with explainer – Forum members encouraged to share with community.
Communication	• Cable Information Days to be confirmed - early April 2024 • Promote communication of road closure information – see Celtic Interconnector | Projects | EirGrid • Promote registration for newsletter (In excess of 600 people are already registered)- and text updates. • See https://www.eirgrid.ie/celticinterconnector#Community%20Forum

	for communication aids in community forum section of website.
Increased use of alternate routes	• Communication of approved diversion routes • Use of additional signage where possible to alleviate traffic issues. • Continue to work closely with authorities. • Continue to work closely with communities and road users.

Cable Route Programme 2024-2025 (Changes marked in Red)

Section End	Area	Start	End
C	C Ballynakilla – Upper Garranes March 2024 April 2024	March 2024	April 2024
F	Poulaniska	March 2024	April 2024
J	Gortacrue	April	May
G	Poulaniska - Carrigane	May	May
H	Carrigane	May	August
K	Gortacrue – Ballyspillane	May	July
L	Westpark	July	July
I	Carrigogna	August	October
M	Shanty Path	July	September

All subject to change and licence requirements.

Timeline Summary
- **2024** – Marine Surveys, Continuation of trenching and ducting works for HVAC and HCDC land cables, Commencement of installation and joining of HVAC and HVDC Land cables, Convertor Station Installation progress, Community Benefit Fund Phase 2 anticipated
- **2025** – Commencement of Offshore marine cable installation, completion of installation and jointing of HVAC and HCDC land cables, convertor station buildings complete
- **2026** – Completion of offshore marine cable installation, Submarine cable protection campaigns, commissioning tests, Interconnector system tests, Trial operation period commences, Community Benefit Phase 3 anticipated.

Questions/Comments	Answers/Response
On Section F what is the purpose of the bays that have been installed?	These are passing bays. At approximately every 600 metres joint boxes need to be installed to join the lengths of cable. These joint bays will be installed adjacent

		to the passing bays. This will allow traffic to drive onto the passing bay and around area of the joint bay. This allows work to continue on the joint bay undisturbed and allows the traffic to continue to flow. This avoids the need for a road closure. After works are complete at the jointing bays the passing bays will be removed and the hedgerows and road will be reinstated.
	Will earthen bank be restored and trees replanted when the passing bays are finished with?	Soil is stored and will be reinstated with appropriate planting in consultation with council ecologists. If there is particular interest in the process please get in contact.
	In Section A the reinstated road surface is slightly higher than it was before. The road margins are now unsafe as there is a drop into soil and mud. Will stone fill margins be filled for raised road?	Wet weather has accentuated this problem. EirGrid are working with council roads engineers to address this issue in accordance with the council requirements.
	There should have been awareness of conditions when working on Section A. Woodstock Road works have greatly discommoded residents. Unacceptable level of HGV traffic should have been obliged to use alternative roads suggested by EirGrid and Sorensens. The Woodstock Road will be reinstated but the Longstown Road is very damaged. Hopefully the Carrigan Road works will be carried out more efficiently. The N25 Alternative Road will be a big assistance. Hedgy Boreen damage needs to be fixed asap. Project is getting a bad name as a result. As soon as the Carrigan Road works commence the Hedgy Boreen damage will increase as a result of all the extra traffic travelling on the road.	Discussions with council on Hedgy Boreen to fix issues asap. There are passing bays on the Woodstock and Carrigan Roads to avoid road closure during the cable pulling and jointing phases as opposed to during the trenching and ducting phases.
3.	**Update on Community Benefit Fund** Elaine Barrett (SECAD) provided an update on the Celtic Interconnector Community Benefit Fund. Key messages included: • Phase 1: Opened Thursday 29 June and closed Friday 15th September 2023	

- Funding Phases: 40% at construction phase, 30% mid project and 30% when the project goes live.
- Fund principles:

-Must support projects that are community-led.

-Will leave a positive legacy within communities that host the Celtic - Interconnector infrastructure.

-Will support projects which align with the Sustainable Development Goals .

- Funding streams: Community, Sustainability and Biodiversity
- Fund strategy: Resulting from collaborative consultation process led out by SECAD and supported by EirGrid
- The outcome from the first phase of the Celtic Interconnector Community Benefit fund was announced on Monday 11 December 2023.

Phase 1 – Funding Breakdown
- 52 submitted applications.
- A total of €3.95 million requested in grant aid, from the 52 applications.
- Biodiversity Stream awarded €198,897, Community Stream awarded €320,000, Sustainability Stream awarded €320,000.
- Community Stream attracted the most applications.

Questions/Comments	Answers/Response
To be noted that Community Stream is most popular in terms of applications.	

4.	**Breakout Groups on Community Benefit Fund Feedback.** The Forum was divided into two Breakout Groups with five forum members in each group in order to gather feedback to consider the Community Benefit Fund operation and elicit recommendations for the next phase of the fund. The breakout discussions lasted for 15 minutes. Main points raised are summarised below.

Question	Feedback/Comment
How did you find the application process?	• Some participants said their community groups found the process to be 'bit laborious with a lot of questions' which was difficult for smaller groups. • Some participants said a lot of detail was requested and asked if this was necessary. • Many said the help from SECAD for smaller groups with the application process was appreciated and made the application process less daunting. • SECADs assistance and local knowledge was very beneficial 'They were all very helpful and supportive' 'It can be daunting but there was great support'

			• There was a general acceptance that there was a limited fund available. • For some participants, 'It (the application process) was 'pleasurable.'
		Have you any recommendations for how we can support the next phase of funding?	• The Forum members views were 'genuinely taken on board' in terms of the structure of the fund. • The fund is split evenly but there were some suggestions made that it might be rebalanced in favour of the community stream. • SECAD local knowledge and their knowledge of this process was very important. • Completing the drawdown of funding is causing some projects difficulties when only 50% of the grant can be drawn down at commencement. This can lead to further stipulations. More support or project extensions for community groups may need to be considered here. • In terms of smaller applications, some groups are looking at umbrella projects and consideration needs to be given to how best support smaller projects (less than €1000).
		How can we support bio-diversity projects?	• Important to stress that there won't be any money left over. If funding needs to be reallocated, it will be. • There was a request to consider a rebalance towards community or at least provide examples of Community/biodiversity projects • A further round of consultations to provide additional supports on Biodiversity project ideas may be beneficial. • SECAD have a lot of inhouse expertise. 'It would be unfortunate to see money spent on biodiversity consultants or training if projects were to go that route?'. • Biodiversity Projects ideas don't come as naturally as Community Project ideas but nevertheless this stream is very important, albeit somewhat less familiar. 'It should be supported as best we can'. • Exemplars are very important. EirGrid very open to support community groups in any way. • What communities want is community projects. There's a lot of biodiversity funding available. There's not enough community project funding.

5	**Any Other Business** No issues arose. Members are free to contact Irish Rural Link with any issues they wish to put on the agenda.
7	**Next Steps** The next Community Forum meeting will be arranged for May/June 2024. I issues arise in the meantime forum members are encouraged to reach out to Irish Rural Link, SECAD and EirGrid teams. Seamus Boland (Chairperson) closed the meeting, thanked members for attending and their ongoing work on the forum.