

## Meeting: Laois Kilkenny Community Forum

**Date:** 12<sup>th</sup> December 2023

**Venue:** Online

### Participants:

Irish Rural Link- James Claffey, Brendan Mulry,

EirGrid- Avril Wilson, Owen Zombogula

MaREI Centre - Evan Boyle

Laois Kilkenny Community Forum Representatives - Michael McEvoy, Cllr. Paschal McEvoy Tomas Healy, Pat Farrell, Cllr Pat. Fitzpatrick, Cllr. Thomasina Connell,

Apologies – Juanita Dunphy, Deirdre McMahan

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

Item	Description	
1.	<b>Introduction</b> James Claffey (Chairperson) opened the meeting, facilitated introductions and introduced the agenda.	
2.	<b>Minutes of previous meeting</b> Minutes from the previous meeting (July 18th, 2023) were proposed by Tomas Healy and seconded by Paschal McEvoy.	
3.	<b>MaREI Centre – Research on Community Benefit</b> Evan Boyle (MaREI) presentation on 3 Year Collaborative Project with EirGrid on Public Engagement strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 Strands of Research, International Comparisons, Strategies and Community Benefit Funds.</li><li>• 3 EirGrid Community Benefit Funds included Laois Kilkenny looking at the phased approach and experience of communities with the process. Outputs will inform community and EirGrid future practise.</li><li>• <b>Request to hold 2-hour Online workshop/Focus group</b> with beneficiaries of the fund with members of the Laois Kilkenny Community Forum and community group towards the end of January.</li><li>• Any forum member <b>who does not wish to be contacted by email</b> by Evan Boyle to inform James Claffey by Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> December.</li></ul>	
	<b>Questions/Queries, Comments</b>	<b>Response</b>
	Has EirGrid engaged the MaREI Centre to carry out this work?	The MaREI centre have worked with EirGrid since 2018. In this case the MaREI centre prepared a project proposal which was part funded by EirGrid, Science Foundation Ireland and external parties. The impact and benefit of the Community Benefit Fund on beneficiary communities is a main focus. What is the scope for improvement and

		how might learnings be used by other agencies or organisations doing similar work.
4.	<b>Project Update from EirGrid</b>	
	<p>Owen Zombogula from EirGrid provided a project update since the July meeting and preview of proposed 2024 project activity. Main points outlined.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Stations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Kilkenny – All work completed and station is energised - Q3 2023.</li> <li>- Ballyragget – All work completed and station is energised - Q3 2023.</li> <li>- Coolnabacky – Civil Contractor mobilisation expected in Q1 2024. Delay due to issue with Discharge Document Approval.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>Overhead Line Progress</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ballyragget- Kilkenny 110kV line completed and energised - Q3 2023.</li> <li>- Ballyragget -Coolnabacky – 110kV line on the Kilkenny Side works substantially completed. 90% of Structures in place and 25% of Stringing completed.</li> <li>- Ballyragget - Coolnabacky 110kV line on the Laois side, OHL CEMP approved by Laois County Council for the Laois side of the line. Work to commence in Q1 2024.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
	<b>Questions/Queries, Comments</b>	<b>Response</b>
	What is the CEMP?	Construction Environmental Management Plan. There are a number of conditions attached to relevant planning permissions which are the responsibility of the ESB or their appointed contractor to discharge.
	Starting dates have been repeatedly moved over 2023 and there are local rumours of difficulties with this phase of the project. Can EirGrid confirm that all delays have now been resolved and that work will commence Q1 2024?	In terms on the OHL there is confidence that this will commence in Q1 2024 as approval has been granted by Laois Conty Council. ESB are working diligently with their contractor in terms of the Coolnabacky CEMP progression. EirGrid’s primary role in the process is in relation to the original planning grant. EirGrids role in construction activities is primarily adherence, supervision, and coordination. Construction related document submittals such as CEMP’s do not fall under EirGrids remit.
5.	<b>Update on the EirGrid Community Benefit Fund</b>	
	<p>Avril Wilson (EirGrid) clarified that delays will unfortunately mean Phase Two of the fund will now open in late Q1 or early Q2 2024. There may be some scope to commence prior to works in Coolnabacky. The forum will be informed as soon as any update is available. M-CO will be attendance at the next forum meeting. Given the smooth roll-out of Phase One of the fund it is envisaged that opening Phase 2 will not prove a lengthy process.</p>	

	<b>Questions/Queries, Comments</b>	<b>Response</b>
	Will new groups be permitted to apply for funding in Phase 2?	Yes, new groups will be welcome to apply once projects are in the area of benefit.
	Will stringing in Coolnabacky have to have been carried out before local groups in Laois are entitled to apply?	No, when Phase Two of the Fund opens it will be open to all local groups in the full project area regardless of specific progress details, similar to Phase One.
	It's important that forum members be fully informed of total project progress irrespective of EirGrid specific responsibility wherever possible.	EirGrid project team will continue to bring project updates to the forum as they have been doing since the forums establishment. significant progress has been made in 2023 and we hope that more progress will be made in 2024.
<b>6</b>	<b>Forum Meeting Quorum Size</b>	
	Quorum Size. James Claffey (Chairperson) recommended 50% plus One as the quorum requirement for official forum meetings to be agreed at this meeting and inserted into the group Terms of Reference. <b>There was full agreement in the meeting with the proposed quorum size of 50% plus One and this will be inserted in the Groups Terms of Reference.</b>	
	<b>Questions/Queries, Comments</b>	<b>Response</b>
	Would the 50% plus One quorum have been met for every meeting in 2023?	Yes, this figure was met for all 2023 meetings but not for one meeting in 2022 primarily due to a local bereavement that affected members attendance.
<b>7</b>	<b>Meeting Dates for 2024</b>	
	12 <sup>th</sup> March, 11 <sup>th</sup> June, 10 <sup>th</sup> September	
	Dates are subject to change upon the request of forum members or the Eirgrid project team and progress on Phase Two of the Community Benefit Fund.	
<b>8.</b>	<b>AOB</b>	
	No items emerged for discussion	
<b>9.</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	
	James Claffey (Chairperson) thanked all members for their attendance and work on the forum throughout the year. He wished all members and their families a very happy Christmas and 2024.	