**DRAFT MINUTES OF MEETING**

**Meeting:** Celtic Interconnector Community Forum

**Date:** 6th December 2022

**Venue:** Online

**Participating:**

Irish Rural Link – James Claffey, Brendan Mulry

EirGrid - Michelle Walsh, Avril Wilson

SECAD – Katie Kearns

East Cork Community Representatives - Evelyn Forde Carrigtwohill Community Council, Orla McGovern Castlemartyr Community Council, Aidan Magnier Glengarrif Woods Association, Fred Whelan Curtin Imogeela Community Sports Hall, Jim Barry Carrigtwohill & District Historical Society, Maria Walsh Youghal Chamber of Commerce, Ciaran O Sullivan Ballintotis Area Community Council, Cllr. AnneMarie Aherne East Cork MDC, Robbie Barry Knockrahra Area Community Development, Anne O’Neill Killeagh Inch Community Council, Micheál de Buitleir Co. Cork PPN,

Marguerite Cremin, Knockraha Environmental Group,

Apologies Michael Falahee Castlemartyr GAA, Cllr. Alan O Connor Cobh MDC, Cllr. Anthony Barry Cobh MDC, Grainne Furey Youghal Blue & Green Community Network

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**Compiled by** Irish Rural Link

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| Item | Description |
| 1. | **Introduction and Minutes of Previous Meetings**James Claffey (Chairperson) opened the meeting, facilitated participant introductions, and introduced the agenda. The minutes of the previous meeting (September 29th) were agreed, proposed by Aidan Magnier and seconded by Evelyn Forde. |
| 2. | **Recap on the Years Activities**James Claffey (Chairperson) provided an overview of the forum’s activities for the year and commenced with thanking all forum members for their contribution through the year. The forum appears to be working well in providing a clear open dialogue with EirGrid and the role of the forum to engage with the project and communicate information about the project to local groups and the wider community is working well. This year the forum met four times and will operate similarly in 2023. Should further meetings be required at any stage this will be facilitated. If there are any improvements that can be made to the forum or topics to address suggestions are always welcome.  |
|  | **Questions/ Comments**  | **Answers/Response** |
|  | Communication has been very good with advance notice and frequency of meetings appropriate. As the project proceeds more meetings may be necessary.  | The forum can meet as frequently as necessary decided through consultation with forum members. There is a clear understanding that forum members have busy diaries, and every effort is made to ensure appropriate notice etc is provided. Further comments can be provided to independent chair IRL.  |
| 3. | **Presentation from EirGrid on current status of the project**Michelle Walsh from EirGrid provided an update on the Celtic Interconnector Project.  Key messages included: * The project is on schedule
* On 25th November the Final Investment Decision process was completed with contracts signed in Paris.
* The project will now move to the construction phase of the process.
* Community Funding process will continue apace with SECAD having recently commenced the community benefit strategy consultation.
* Main contractors have been appointed for the Cable and Converter Station.
* The Main contractors are Siemens Energy for the converter stations and Nexans for the cable.
* It is envisaged that the AC cable will be first to be constructed staring in 2023. Civil works on the convertor stations also commencing in 2023. More information on commencement dates and construction details will be shared with the forum when available.
* Offshore Cabling will commence in 2024.
* In 2026 Commissioning tests will be carried and trial operation period will commence.
* Michelle can be contacted at any time for more information.
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|  | **Questions / Comments** | **Answer/Response** |
|  | The Cost of the project has increased by one third to €1.6 billion. Will the Community Benefit Fund be increased by one third to match this? | The Celtic Interconnector Community Benefit Fund is the first to benefit from EirGrid’s review of Community funds which in effect tripled the value of the fund. The fund value is calculated as a percentage of the cost of the land cable which is still within the allotted margin.   |
|  | It was understood that the value of the fund was in relation to the cost of the project. All potential beneficiaries will be affected by the increase in costs. EirGrid are requested to look again at paperwork produced for the fund. | Clarification that the value of the Community Benefit Fund is in relation to the cost of the land cabling which is still within the margin. The request for a fund review has already been submitted for consideration internally and will be followed up again.  |
|  | Are there Operating or Administration costs coming out of the €2.4 million fund or is this the capital available to Community groups? | This is the Capital available to community groups. Administration costs are carried by EirGrid.  |
| 4 | **SECAD Update on Community Consultation.** Presentation to be distributed directly by SECAD.Key Messages included:* Survey Launched on 23rd November and will close on 20th December. It has been distributed through a wide range of mediums.
* Six drop-in Sessions have been held and an online information session was planned for December 13th.
* To date over 140 responses have been provided.
* A dedicated SECAD webpage is being created.
* There is a higher level of submission from certain areas and the forum are asked for their support in addressing this challenge and to ensure that all age groups are appropriately recommended.
* SECAD will be in touch with Forum members directly to offer support in disseminating the survey.
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|  | **Questions / Comments** | **Answer/Response** |
|  | Is there a balancing mechanism to ensure that results aren’t skewed given unbalanced participation in the survey? | Geographic location is requested in the survey to ensure that certain areas cannot overly influence the strategy development. As an additional support, communities will be contacted on an individual basis to offer support in participating in the consultation |
|  | Is there potential that voting on project choice might prove divisive in pitting communities against each other? | Participatory Budgeting on a small or large scale, where communities themselves decide how the fund will be invested, is suggested as a possible option for the fund. Establishing the level of interest in this approach is part of the survey and can be considered by the forum as part of the strategy development.  |
|  | Clarification requested on whether schools are eligible for the fund? | Young people are stakeholders and school children with the assistance of teachers may respond. There may be a possibility that Boards of Management or Parents Association (as they are non for-profit community groups) can apply for the fund and this will be looked at by the Forum together with EirGrid.  |
|  | No community will be advantaged in terms of fund access as a result of greater participation in the survey.  |  |
|  | In relation to schools and the 2km fund boundary how will this be addressed?  | Project benefit in relation to boundaries and scoring mechanisms will be considered in the community benefit strategy  |
|  | Will individual Communities be given the responses of the survey? | Information gathered will outline individual community priorities, need and services identified which will be shared in the community benefit strategy  |
| 5 | **Any Other Business** |
|  | Can the community group Individuals participating in the Forum be identified in the minutes? | With the agreement of the forum this will be facilitated.  |
|  | Can the structure and governance of the forum be clarified? | The Terms of Reference for the forum will be recirculated.  |
| 6 | **Next Steps**The next Community Forum meeting will be confirmed in early January. SECAD will hold the next strategy workshop in early February where results of the community consultation will be outlined. EirGrid thanked the forum members, Irish Rural Link and SECAD for their work and participation throughout the year. James Claffey (Chairperson) closed the meeting and thanked members for attending.  |