



28th October, 2022

Submission on the “Review of the security of energy supply of Ireland’s electricity and natural gas systems” on behalf of the Community Energy Federation of Ireland (CEFI)

A Chara,

Having reviewed the document as outlined, please see below our response to its overall contents/direction.


1. Overall, there is a significant lack of recognition in the document as to the potential that communities can play in helping address these issues
2. Risks – energy generating assets going into overseas ownership – therefore the need to ensure that communities are encouraged to develop as much generation capacity as possible to ensure ownership remains in Ireland. There are energy security and socio-economic benefits in this approach.
3. AD- renewable gas. While small, it could be very important from both an energy and agriculture point of view. Put in place a scheme such as RESS (though much simpler) to provide a secure price for gas generated – particularly through community initiatives
4. Small scale high head hydro – can play its part but no thought or interest seems to be expressed in its potential – again something many communities could develop quickly and effectively if enabled (removal of barriers)
5. Barriers – there is just no end to the difficulties in trying to get projects (particularly community) up and running in this country – planning, grid capacity, long timelines, costs – just problems at every twist and turn. All Departments/stakeholders (ESB Networks etc.) need to get together to sort these. It simply cannot be that a project that has planning must wait circa 12 months before DSO Generators can even look at providing a grid offer for its connection so it can progress to the next stage. Then another long wait re RESS. Different thinking required here – parallel processes for example, rapidly speeding up timelines for shovel ready projects etc. (particularly community)

The issue of grid/network capacity is also proving to be a significant barrier in terms of providing opportunities to develop new projects or indeed to facilitate connection of existing micro community project. Perhaps there is an opportunity here to look at new technologies that would enable locally generated electricity to be used locally rather than requiring significant grid infrastructure to transport it. It is also suggested that consideration should be given to providing additional grid capacity in areas where there is a significant potential to develop new projects – particularly community owned initiatives.

6. Investment: User friendly mechanisms need to put in place for individuals, national/local businesses, co-ops, local authorities and communities to invest in renewable energy projects that are community owned or part owned by the community. Credit unions and other financial institutions also need to be partners in this process.
7. There are significant supports for community initiatives across Europe and significant support at EU Policy level. Ireland is lagging way behind in this regard – communities seem to be seen as a nuisance rather than a potential solution.

We trust that you will take our observations into consideration and should you require any additional information, or wish to seek additional clarity/input in relation to any issue raised here, we would be glad to engage with you.

We would be very happy to contribute to future discussions on these (and other related) topics to offer positive, viable solutions to help provide a strong, sustainable and secure energy supply for Ireland into the future – one that ensures communities can take a full and active part in delivering and benefiting from.



Chairperson



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