

East Meath – North Dublin Grid Upgrade

Community Forum

7.30pm, 9th April 2025, via Zoom

Attending (members): Deirdre Arthur (Craobh Chiarain GAA), David Branagan (Fingal Chamber), James Gaskin (St. Margaret's GAA), Philip McCormack (Batterstown Village Enhancement Assoc.), Walter Moran (Dunboyne AFC), Sheelagh Morris (St Margarets Action Committee), Liam O Gradaigh (alternate representative for St. Margaret's The Ward), Tom O'Mahony (Dunboyne Community Centre) Pearse Sutton (St. Margaret's The Ward)

Attending (guests): Grainne Duffy (EirGrid Community Liaison Officer), Dara McGowan (EMND Grid Upgrade Project Manager)

Apologies: -

Facilitation: Harriet Emerson

Welcome & Agenda

All those attending were welcomed and thanked for giving up their time to take part.

Harriet reported on the recent resignation from the Community Forum of Helena Merriman, who had represented St. Margaret's Parish Hall so conscientiously and effectively since the Forum was established. She extended her sincere thanks to Helena for all her time, constructive inputs, and work to represent the interests of her community. Helena's good humour and gentle style will be much missed. This sentiment was echoed by Grainne Duffy on behalf of EirGrid, who stressed that Helena remains an important member of the community, with whom the project will stay in touch.

James Gaskin was welcomed as the new representative for St. Margaret's GAA. Liam O Gradaigh had previously carried out this role in the Forum but will be the alternative representative for St. Margaret's The Ward, supporting Pearse Sutton.

Helena Merriman (St. Margaret's Parish Hall Committee),

Minutes of previous meeting & matters arising

The draft minutes of the previous meeting (5th November 2024) held at the Forrest Little Golf Club were previously circulated. These were approved. No matters arising were identified for further discussion.

Update from EirGrid – I: Project Delivery (*slides attached*)

Dara McGowan (Project Manager) gave a brief re-cap of the reasons why the East Meath North Dublin grid upgrade is needed as a key part of meeting national targets for electricity supply by 2030, and he set out developments since the project received planning. The 37.5km route, 20.5km of which is in County Meath and 17km in County Dublin, will include 26km along public roads and 11.5km across private land with upgrades to Woodland and Belcamp substations at either end. The project now moves to Ground Profiling Radar (GPR) and intrusive ground investigations where these are needed to further investigate sub-surface conditions, existing infrastructure, and so on. Road opening licences will be secure from the local authorities wherever physical investigations are needed. It is expected that these activities will be completed by June of 2025 and EirGrid will continue to work on design refinements.

At that point EirGrid will hand responsibility to the ESB, as the delivery partner, to put out a tender for construction of the works. This is expected to take place in Quarter 3 of 2025 and the contract for construction is likely to be awarded shortly thereafter, with production of detailed designs.

Construction work is expected to take place from 2026 to Quarter 4 of 2029, when the system will be energised.

Update from EirGrid – II: Community Benefit Fund

In parallel with progress on project development and construction, EirGrid has initiated a search for an independent fund administrator. The tender for this role will close at the end of April, with an appointment made in May or June. Once appointed, the Administrator will be introduced to the Community Forum, who will input to development of the Community Benefit Fund Strategy for the Project. The Administrator will have a clear Terms of Reference. They will survey the communities within the project area for their needs, and look for compliance with the Sustainable Development Goals, amongst other criteria. Once the Strategy is completed, this will be communicated to the communities concerned through information evenings and other activities. It is likely to be Quarter 3 of 2026 when construction begins and the Community Benefit Fund goes live.

As discussed previously, the Fund is divided into 3 equal parts; community, sustainability and biodiversity, and there will be 3 separate calls for applications with community groups able to apply to all 3 if they wish. It was suggested that Forum members might like to look at community projects that have been funded as part of the Laois-Kilkenny EirGrid upgrade project, or the Celtic Interconnector project, for examples of successful applications.

In response to questions about who the community can liaise with once construction starts, Grainne indicated that she has advocated on behalf of community groups with ESB and anticipates that they will appoint someone in a similar capacity as herself to be a contact person for community representatives if issues arise.

Future Community Forum Meetings & Updates

Members were asked how they would prefer to receive updates to the Community Forum in the future. It was agreed that email updates would be most appropriate, with an opportunity offered for a quick check-in meeting at significant milestones, if members wish for this. Harriet stressed that the Forum members are entitled to look for a meeting at any point if they feel that this is needed and can contact her about this.

Thank you to members

Harriet thanked the Forum members for their continued inputs, time, support and goodwill. She noted that EirGrid have acknowledged the value of the assistance and local knowledge supplied by Forum members, and that this has helped to inform the development of the project. She hopes that the information members have received will enable them to communicate effectively with their communities, so that they are primed and ready (for example with necessary permits or planning permissions in place) to gain maximum benefit from the Community Benefit Fund and other complementary funding opportunities.

Grainne also thanked the members for their work and re-confirmed that she will ensure they remain informed of project developments.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.20pm

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