

Minutes of Meeting 18 of Kildare Meath Community Forum – 25th of March 2025

Online

Meeting started @ 7.05pm

In attendance

Philip McCormack (Batterstown Village Enhancement Association), **John Kennedy** (Clane Community Council), **Jim Kenehan** (Kilcock Tidy Towns), **Pat Smith** (Meath Chamber, **Sharon Langan** (Naas Basketball), **Anne Cowley** (Twomilehouse say No Action Group), **Yvonne Everard** (Meath County Council), **Donna Phelan** (Kildare County Council)

Apologies: **Peter Melrose** (Kildare County Council), **Karen Mahon** (An Taisce Meath), **Michael Gunn** (Longwood anglers),

Also in attendance – Bobby McCormack (Independent Chair from Development Perspectives), **Grainne Duffy** (EirGrid), **Ciaran O Reilly** (EirGrid)

The mins of the previous meeting were agreed (Proposed by Philip and seconded by Jim) with no matters arising

The Community Forum meets for the first time in 2025, welcoming new members Yvonne and Donna. Bobby leads introductions and housekeeping matters. The group briefly reviews the minutes from their informal November meeting, which was combined with a celebratory meal. Bobby mentions there is positive news to discuss, which Ciaran and Grainne will elaborate on later in the meeting.

Kildare Meath Grid Upgrade Project Update

In the meeting, Ciaran provided an update on the Kildare Meath Grid upgrade project. He highlighted the project's importance in strengthening the electricity network in Kildare and Meath, and its role in helping Ireland meet its climate targets. Ciaran also discussed the planning application process, which included a consultation period, responses to observations, and an environmental impact assessment. The project has now received planning permission from ABP, marking a significant milestone.

Underground Cable Project Progress

The meeting discussed the progress of a major infrastructure project involving an underground cable. Ciaran explains that ground investigation work is underway to gather geotechnical information for the tender process, which will help avoid uncertainties during construction. The project timeline is outlined, with construction expected to start in late 2026 and energization planned for late 2029. Grainne then discussed the community benefit fund, estimated at 2.4 million euros, which will be distributed across three strands: community, sustainability, and biodiversity. A fund administrator will be appointed in the coming months to develop the funding strategy and guidelines in consultation with local communities.

Administrator Appointment and Community Funds

Grainne discussed the administrator appointment and offered her availability for one-on-one or group meetings. Bobby invited the rest of the Forum members to raise questions or unmute themselves. Jim asked about the community benefit funds guidelines, to which Grainne clarified that they would be written by the group with the fund administrator and endorsed by the internal Community Benefit Fund board. Ciaran suggested using examples from the Celtic Interconnector Community Benefit Fund for reference. Grainne confirmed that they would provide training for community groups on how to apply for the funds.

Anne raised a question about how the new line would help achieve the 80% renewable energy target, particularly in relation to the current coal-fired Money Point. Ciaran explained that the new line, part of the Kildare Meath project, is about future-proofing the grid for renewable energy sources like wind and solar. He mentioned that the government's plan is to increase the amount of renewables on the system through onshore wind, onshore solar, and offshore wind. The Kildare Meath project will enable the connection of renewable energy sources dispersed around the country. Philip asked about the timeline for the community benefit fund, and Grainne explained that the fund administrator would be on board by October of 2025 and would work with the communities to carry out surveys and development plans. Yvonne asked about the funding coming as far as Batterstown, and Grainne confirmed that it would. Lastly, Jim asked about the construction timeline and whether the funding would be available as the construction progresses, to which Grainne clarified that the funding would be open to everyone across the whole length of the line and the study area, regardless of where the construction starts.

Construction Timeline and Community Engagement

The meeting involved a discussion about the construction timeline and the involvement of multiple work crews to expedite the process. The team also discussed the potential impact of the project on various communities and the need for a strategic approach to ensure inclusivity and awareness. The fund administrator's role in determining the successful applicants was also highlighted. The team agreed on the importance of engaging with various community groups and clubs to ensure a fair distribution of the fund.

Community Engagement and Route Planning

In the meeting, Philip expressed his efforts to inform local community groups about the upcoming fund, but received limited responses. Grainne confirmed her involvement with schools and emphasized the importance of community representation in the project. Ciaran introduced an interactive map tool on the Eirgrid website for route planning. The group discussed the timeline for the next meeting, with John suggesting a meeting after the summer when the fund administrator is settled. Donna agreed, emphasizing the need for the fund administrator to be up to speed before seeking expressions of interest.

Waiting for Fund Administrator Appointment

In the meeting, Bobby, Donna, Jim, Grainne, Ciaran, and Sharon discussed the importance of waiting until the fund administrator is in place before proceeding with the next steps. They agreed to keep the communication channels open and check in with the Eirgrid team in September. Grainne emphasized the need for definitive dates and assured the team that they are following procedures to get the fund administrator appointment. Ciaran mentioned that the County Council's engineers, municipal district, and roads departments will be monitoring the traffic management plans and construction environmental management plans. The team also discussed the importance of keeping the public informed about the construction process.

Date and time of next meeting

It was agreed that further consultation take place with the forum members who were not present, however the consensus of those attending was to look at Sept 25 so a fund administrator was in place.

AOB

Bobby and Grainne thanked everyone for coming. The meeting was concluded by 8.20pm