

North Connacht Community Forum

Minutes of Meeting on 25th May at 7pm in The Great National Hotel Ballina

Attending:

Angela Wallace (North Mayo, West Sligo Heritage Group), **Susan Heffernan** (Mary Robinson Centre), **Mags Downey Martin** (Ballina Chamber of Commerce), **John O Hara** (Mayo County Council), **Joe Murphy** (Roscommon County Council), **Padraic Walshe** (Fr Peyton Centre)

Kevin Deignan (Charlestown / Sarafields GAA), **Sean O Sullivan** (Conn Rangers FC),

Also in attendance – **Eve Hughes** (SEAI Mayo and Roscommon), **Orla Nic Suibhne** (SEAI Mayo and Roscommon), **James Golden** – Mayo Leader

Bobby McCormack (Development Perspectives and Chairperson of the Forum / **Eoghan O Sullivan** , **Avril Wilson**, **Kelly Woods**, **Michal Smietanka**, **Jason Kenna** and **Rory Comerford** from EirGrid.

Apologies; Tommy Killeen, Neil Cruise (MCC), Laura Dixon (MCC), Anne May Reape (MCC) Thomas from Roscommon Leader, **Pat Towey and David O Gara** (Ballaghaderreen Mens Shed), **Kieran Gallagher** (Swinford Amenities Development CLG and Athletic Club), **Joe Drury** (Charlestown Development Association), **Philip Durkin** (Swinford Community Park), **Anne Kearney** (Bonnifinglas Graveyard Committee), **Patricia Cassidy** (Charlestown Swimming Pool), **Patricia Madden** (Community Resource Centre), **Tomas Beades** (Roscommon Leader)

Minutes:

Meeting minutes for meeting 5 were proposed by JM and seconded by JOH. The minutes for meeting 6 could not be agreed as those present at meeting 6 were not present on the night.

Matters arising.

No matters arising.

Agenda:

Bobby presented the agenda and running order of the evening.

Project Update - Michal Smietanka

Michal advised that various surveys and Ground Investigations have been conducted since September 2022, investigations on-roads will take place in the summer 2023 – localised traffic management arrangements will be installed to reduce impacts to road users. EirGrid continue to liaison with landowners who will facilitate installation of the cable in their land. EirGrid are in coordination with county councils and Transport Infrastructure Ireland to introduce minor adjustments to the proposed cable alignment to reduce construction impacts to roads and road users.

Q: How much extra capacity to the station will be added following energisation of the project and will it be available to community groups to avail of the 5mw?

A: 50mw extra capacity will be added to the station after the project energises. EirGrid liaise with connections over 30mw, therefore the DSO would be responsible for community group connection of 5mw.

Update on Community Benefit Fund- Avril Wilson

Avril presented a high-level road map of the project and community benefit milestone. After receiving planning, a fund administrator will be appointed. The fund administrator will work with community forum on developing a community benefit strategy for the area.

Mayo LEADER Presentation- James Golden

James presented an overview of what LEADER do and how the community can apply for grants available.

JOH thanked James for the work he does with the local community.

Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland (SEAI) Presentation - Orla Nic Suibhne

Orla updated the forum on what SEAI do and how they can work with the community in developing projects.

It was noted that Mel Gavin is Northwest Regional Contact and Ken Russell contact for Roscommon

Questions and discussion for Eirgrid Group

Q: What is the length of time expected for An Bord Pleanála decision?

A: EirGrid initially allowed for 6 months turnaround for a decision from An Bord Pleanála. It is now approaching a year, and it is believed to be because of the backlog within the Bord and other issues reported in the media. EirGrid have raised this issue at department and ministerial level.

Q: Is there going to be a lot of traffic disruptions along the on-road route?

A: EirGrid will be working with the county council traffic management team and will be taking into consideration events and other occasions to reduce impact at business times. The traffic management will be On smaller road, a stop – go system may be required during the civil works. EirGrid have increased the distance of each joint bay to 1km to reduce the impact to traffic and it is planned to have passing bay.

Q: how much will the overall project cost

A: current estimate is €140m

Q: Is monument protection considered?

A: Yes, monument information will be provided to ESB and will be carefully considered during the construction phase.

Questions and discussion for Mayo LEADER

Q: When will the LEADER Fund open?

A: It is predicted Oct/ Nov 2023.

Q: Is the same process of the expression of interest like before?

A: Yes, it will be very similar.

Q: If over €200k is received in previous 3 years, can you be considered this year?

A: The €200k cap doesn't apply to community groups only to private operators.

Avril from EirGrid encourages the forum to get community to use other funds to package the application for project funding.

Questions and discussion for SEAI

Q: Ballina Energy masterplan- does it cover the size of the town.

A: It covers more than the town, it covers 11k house.

Q: Has energy masterplan being costed.

A: Yes, with retrofits

Next meeting: Is planned for September/ October and if there is any update on the planning decision before then the forum will be updated.

AOB:

- Mary Robinson Centre is hosting Climate Conference on 6th and 7th July, everyone welcome to register for workshops or fieldtrips.
- Eirgrid will come back post meeting with confirmation and clarity if the overhead line upgrade is included or not in the community benefit fund area of benefit. Action is with Eoghan O'Sullivan