

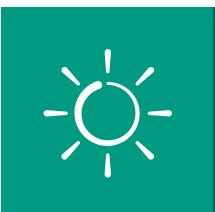


EirGrid.ie

The North Connacht 110 kV Project

# Community Benefit Fund Strategy

January 2026



This document is an outcome of EirGrid's corporate strategy 2020 – 2025. Launched in September 2019 the strategy implemented a fresh approach to stakeholder engagement as a key pillar of how EirGrid fulfils its duty as the national grid operator. This refreshed corporate strategy has been instrumental in how we have evolved engagement with our stakeholders over the subsequent years. Meaningful and effective engagement is essential for EirGrid to achieve our purpose - to transform the power system for future generations.

Our Community Benefit fund recognises the importance of local communities who support our work. A community benefit scheme has been created in proportion to the scale of the project and we have established a community forum on the North Connacht 110 kV project to ensure the scheme is designed for the local community, by the local community.

This community benefit fund strategy exemplifies how we are working together with external experts and our project stakeholders to collaborate with partners and communities who are key to achieving a cleaner energy future.

This strategy has been prepared by SECAD Partnership CLG in cooperation with EirGrid, the North Connacht 110 kV Community Forum and the wider North Connacht project communities.

We would like to sincerely thank SECAD and the local communities for their work and input to date.

This fund will provide an opportunity for communities to transform their area and leave a positive legacy in the area hosting the North Connacht 110 kV project infrastructure.

We look forward to further collaboration and engagement with all our stakeholders as this project progresses.

SECAD Partnership CLG  
[www.secad.ie](http://www.secad.ie)



# Table of Contents

## Introduction

About EirGrid	6
About SECAD Partnership CLG	7
The North Connacht 110 kV Project	8
EirGrid's Public Engagement Strategy	9
EirGrid's Community Benefit Fund Policy	9

## The North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Benefit Fund

10

The Policy Context	11
Key Policy Trends	12
Sustainable Development Goals	14
Area Profile	16

Demographics	18
Incidence of Disadvantage	20
Economic Activity and Infrastructure	21
Environmental Designations	22
Climate Action	23

## How We Developed This Strategy

24

Approach and Methodology	24
Overview of the Consultation Process	24
Key Stakeholders	25
The North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Forum	26
Online Community Consultation Survey	26
Local Stakeholder Agency Consultations	27
Needs Analysis and Data Review	27

## The North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Benefit Fund Strategy

28

Overarching Strategic Principles	28
Area of Benefit	28
Fund Priorities	29
Community Stream	30
Sustainability Stream	30
Biodiversity Stream	31
Grant Size & Value	31
Large-scale Investment Projects	31
Umbrella Projects	32
Types of Funding Support	32
Capital Investment	32
Purchase of Equipment	33
Technical and Professional Expertise & Support	33
Community Animation / Development / Co-Ordination Costs	33
Training & Capacity Building	33
Research and Development	33
Collaborative Investment and Other Funding Supports	33
Social Enterprise Support	34
Achieving a Balanced Approach	34
Supporting A Fair and Geographically Balanced Approach	34
Encouraging and Supporting Balanced Investment across the Fund Streams	35
Approval in Principle	35

## How Will the Fund Work?

36

Opening of Funds	36
Evaluation and Award of Funds	36
Fund Management	36

## Staying Connected

37

Appendix 1 – Contributing Reference Documentation	38
Appendix 2 – Contributing Organisations and Groups	39
Appendix 3 – Area SWOT analysis	40
Appendix 4 - Other Relevant Funds and Programmes	44

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# Introduction

The €1.53 million North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Benefit Fund has been established by EirGrid, in recognition of the importance of the local communities who support our work and the temporary disruption which may be caused within proximity of the cable line during the construction phase of the project. The fund will be delivered in three phases over the project period, est.2025-2028, and will focus on three core streams: Community, Sustainability & Biodiversity. It is anticipated that the fund will actively support communities within the North Connacht 110 kV project area to deliver on projects and initiatives which strengthen opportunities and address challenges across the three funding streams.

This is a strategy that has been designed collaboratively for the local community, by the local community. It covers the period of the North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Benefit Fund and is intended to guide the process for prioritising, selecting and supporting projects for investment under this initiative.

Significant stakeholder and public engagement are at the core of the strategy's development, and the outcome of this engagement underpins the strategic focus for the fund. Since its appointment as Fund Administrator in 2023, SECAD Partnership CLG has worked closely with EirGrid, the North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Forum, local communities and stakeholders to ensure the development of a community benefit strategy which directly meets the needs of those living within the geographical area of the project.



## About EirGrid

EirGrid operates and develops the electricity transmission grid in Ireland. This includes interconnection with neighbouring grids and the wholesale electricity market. The grid brings power from generators to the ESB distribution network that supplies every home, farm and business in Ireland. The grid is also used to deliver power directly to businesses that use large amounts of electricity. EirGrid ensures electricity is always available – today, tomorrow and for decades to come.

## About SECAD Partnership CLG

SECAD Partnership CLG is a local development company that works with a variety of stakeholders in rural areas including community and voluntary groups, disadvantaged target groups, job seekers, businesses (including private and social enterprise), farmers, schools and the corporate sector. SECAD facilitates a wide range of funds and services including social investment and employment support programmes implemented on behalf of several Irish Government Departments, State Bodies and energy clients. SECAD currently delivers major programmes such as LEADER and the Social Inclusion and Community Activation Programme (SICAP) along with other smaller schemes and initiatives, including a number of community benefit funds across Ireland.



St. Muredach's Cathedral, Ballina, Co. Mayo



## The North Connacht 110 kV Project

The North Connacht 110 kV Project will add a new line to the electricity grid in Co Mayo and Co Roscommon.

This new line will strengthen the grid in Connacht. It will provide electricity capacity to meet increasing electricity demand, supporting economic growth in the area. By connecting to renewable energy, it will also help to meet Ireland's climate action targets.

The construction phase of the project is due to commence in late-2025 and it is expected to be complete and operational by end-2028.

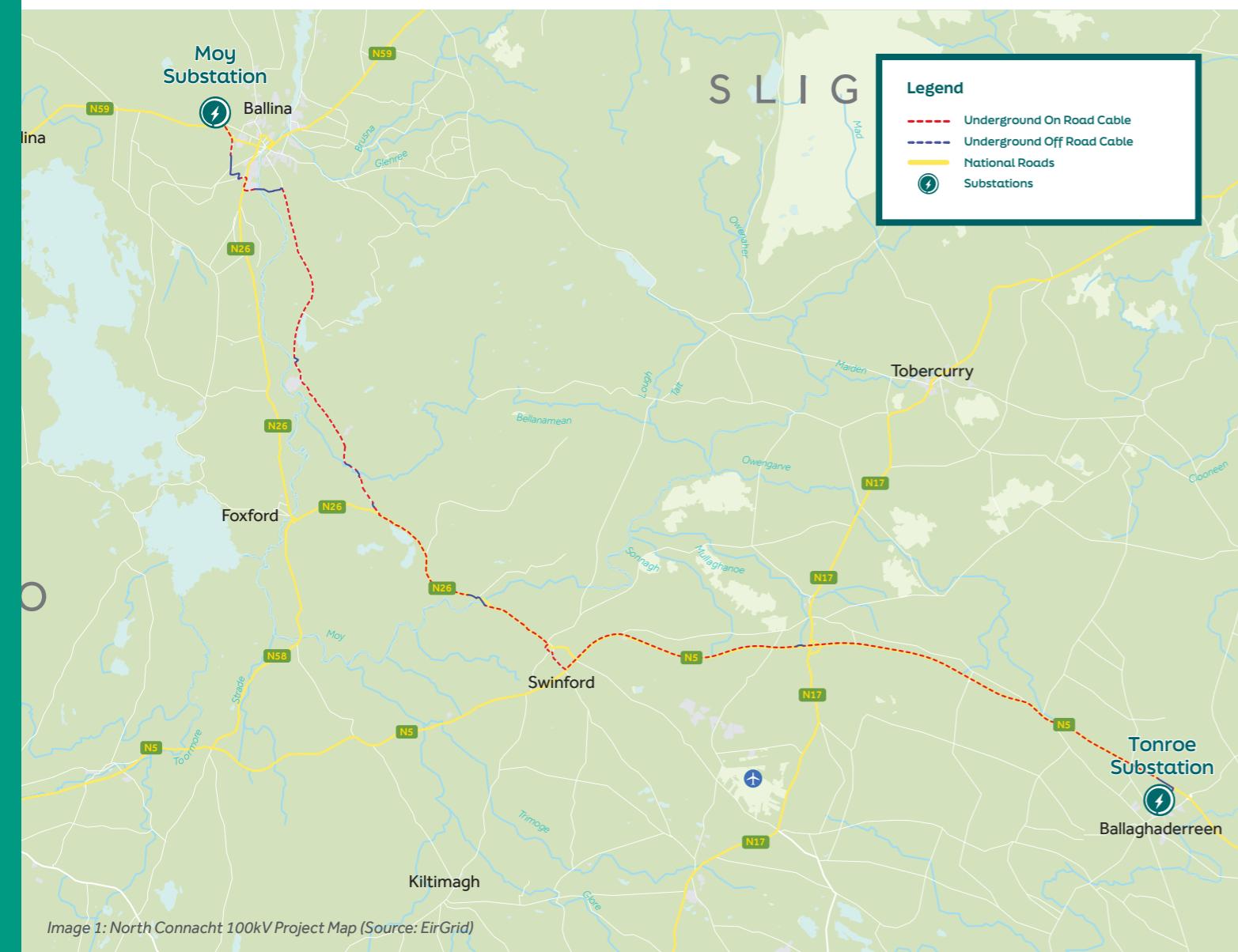


Image 1: North Connacht 100kV Project Map (Source: EirGrid)

## EirGrid's Public Engagement Strategy

EirGrid's Public Engagement Strategy reinforces the company's commitment to putting communities at the heart of decision making through early and regular engagement. A critical innovation under this approach is the creation of representative community forums at an early stage in the project development phase.

The forum represents the communities' interests in the development and delivery phases of the project and plays a key role in ensuring community involvement in the development of the community benefit fund strategy. The North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Forum was established in October 2021 and represents stakeholders in the project area.

The Community Forum serves to bring together key stakeholders in the community to:

- Represent the views of their organisation or community in relation to the project and its proposals.
- Consider the project and provide guidance on local needs and priorities.
- Assist in enabling the resolution of local issues resulting from the project in a timely manner.
- Support the project team in identifying local sources of information and analysis, strategies and proposals which may impact on, or need to be taken account of during project delivery.
- Provide feedback at key stages in the delivery of the project.
- Facilitate a 'local voice' and communicate information to a wider group of regional and local stakeholders.

## EirGrid's Community Benefit Fund Policy

EirGrid's Community Benefit Fund Policy recognises the importance of the local communities who support their work. Under this policy, a community benefit scheme is created in proportion to the scale of the relevant project.

Under this approach, the policy allows communities to gain from fund investment across three core streams:

- Community
- Sustainability
- Biodiversity

The decisions on how these funds are prioritised in local communities are the result of open, participatory and inclusive community consultations which result in the development of a strategy which is specific to each project area's needs.

The overall aim of these funds is to leave a positive legacy in communities hosting electrical infrastructure.

# The North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Benefit Fund

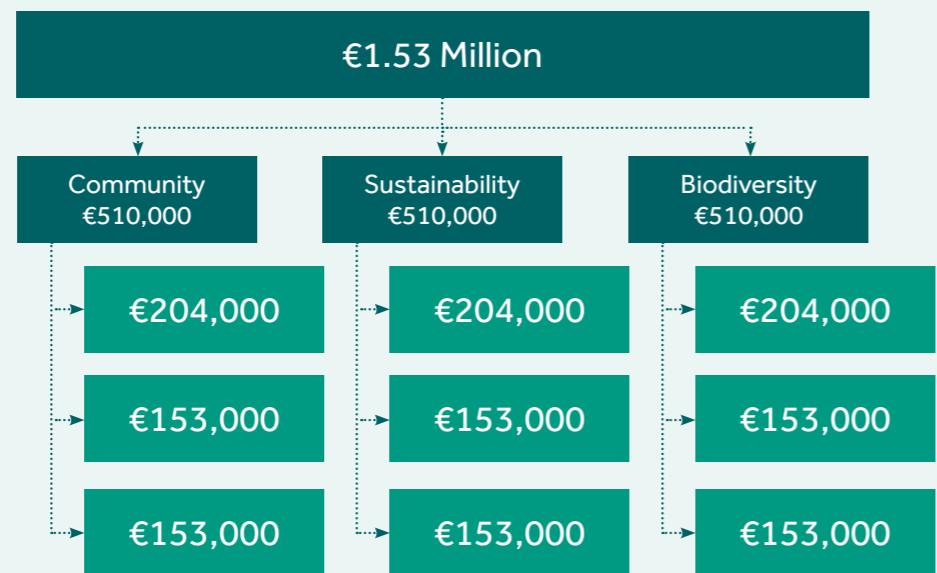
Based on the scale of the project, a Community Benefit Fund has been established for the North Connacht 110 kV Project area with a value of €1.53 million.

This is divided into 3 streams with an equal balance of funds across each stream as follows:

- Community Stream: €510,000
- Sustainability Stream: €510,000
- Biodiversity Stream: €510,000

The Community Benefit Fund will be released on a phased basis as the North Connacht 110 kV Project progresses.

The funds will be released across three stages which are as follows:



# The Policy Context

Current community, sustainability, and biodiversity policy literature at national, regional and local level has contributed to setting the context for the development of this strategy. This integrated approach ensures that the community benefit fund strategy aligns with wider policies and will provide local communities with greater opportunity to benefit from a broader range of supports. Policies, strategies and action plans considered can be found in Appendix 1.

When developing this strategy, national, regional and local policies have been considered to provide the foundational context across the community, sustainability, and biodiversity streams. By adopting this integrated approach, it ensures strategic alignment with broader policies, thereby enhancing the community benefit fund strategy and expanding opportunities for local communities to access a wider range of supports. A list of the policies, strategies and action plans which were reviewed in preparation of this strategy can be found in Appendix 1 of this document.

At the national level, key government policies and frameworks such as Project Ireland 2040, the Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 - Our Rural Future, and Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A Five-Year Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland 2019-2024 have been identified as relevant to the development of this strategy. Across these documents there is a consistent emphasis on the importance of adopting an integrated, cross-sectoral, and collaborative approach to the development of rural areas. Empowering communities to research, develop, and implement initiatives that address specific local needs is recognized as essential for creating vibrant and resilient rural communities. This strategy, which has

been guided by the Community Forum and informed by input from local communities, deeply reflects this approach and will ensure that actions supported through the fund will further enhance the sustainability of the local area for generations to come.

At a regional and county level, the strategy aims to support the aims and objectives of strategies and plans such as the North and Western Regional Assembly's Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (RSES), Mayo and Roscommon County Development Plans and Mayo and Roscommon Local Economic and Community Plans (LECP). These frameworks aim to address socio-economic development at a regional and county-level, with a focus on meeting people's social needs, addressing problems of poverty and social exclusion and building sustainable communities.

Ireland's Climate Action Plan has also influenced the development of this work. The plan is integral to the National Development Plan 2021-2030 and puts climate solutions at the very heart of our social and economic development. Ireland's National Biodiversity Action Plan also makes a critical contribution to the strategy as it strives to scale up biodiversity action in the protection and restoration of nature. County-wide Climate and Biodiversity Action plans for both Mayo and Roscommon have also been particularly carefully considered in the strategy development. Communities play a central role in delivering Ireland's Climate Action and Biodiversity plans by driving local initiatives that contribute to national sustainability goals. By integrating climate action and positive biodiversity action into daily life and decision-making at the grassroots level, communities ensure that efforts are both practical and lasting in our transition to a low-carbon economy. Where local town/village-based plans and strategies exist, these have also been considered in the shaping of this strategy.

## Key Policy Trends

Several key cross-cutting policy trends have been identified which have relevance across the three streams of the North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Benefit Fund.



### Empowering Rural Communities

Rural areas thrive when communities have sufficient resources and capacity to drive their own development. By empowering local community groups to develop and deliver on locally led projects, it greatly supports communities to establish sustainable projects, enhance quality of life and provide valuable local services while also preserving rural identity.



### Social Inclusion & Equality

Rural development policy prioritises inclusion by supporting women, young people, older people, new communities and marginalised groups. Public funding policy in this area seeks to provide skills training, capacity building, integration supports which promote active participation in economic and social life. These efforts help reduce isolation and create more resilient rural communities.



### Enhancing Rural Services & Infrastructure

Sustainable rural communities depend on strong infrastructure and access to key services. Investment in transport, healthcare, housing, education and adequate community/recreation infrastructure ensures that people can live and work in rural areas without sacrificing quality of life. Programmes like "Our Rural Future" focus on maintaining vibrant, well-connected rural towns and villages.



### Placemaking

A placemaking approach enables communities to create accessible, functional, attractive and distinctive towns and villages which reflect their individual identity. It creates high quality, vibrant, consolidated and attractive urban and rural settlements which represent the connection between people and place. It supports regeneration through the creation of well-designed public realm spaces, such as public spaces, parks and recreational infrastructure while also promoting environmental improvements and enhancements. It also seeks to actively tackle vacancy and dereliction.



### Digital Inclusion & Connectivity

Expanding broadband and digital infrastructure are essential to bridging the urban-rural divide. The National Broadband Plan and digital skills training programmes aim to ensure that rural communities and businesses can access e-commerce, remote work, education, and essential services. Strengthening connectivity fosters innovation and economic growth in rural areas.



### Climate Action & Resilience

Climate change considerations permeate the policy landscape at a local, national and international scale. Commitments to reducing carbon emissions and adapting to the impacts of climate change run from the UN Sustainable Development Goals right through to local action plans and strategies. Rural areas play a crucial role in Ireland's transition to a low-carbon economy. Policies supporting renewable energy, sustainable land management, and climate adaptation empower communities to address environmental challenges. Incentives

for green technologies and nature-based solutions help reduce carbon footprints while boosting rural economies.



### Just Transition

The Just Transition is a policy framework that ensures rural communities, workers, and businesses are not left behind as Ireland moves towards a low-carbon economy. It focuses on creating sustainable jobs, upskilling workers, and supporting rural economies in adapting to renewable energy, biodiversity protection, and climate-friendly agriculture. By prioritising social fairness and economic resilience, the Just Transition aims to balance environmental action with strong community and labour-market protections.



### Habitat Protection & Restoration

Conserving and restoring Ireland's natural landscapes is essential for biodiversity and climate resilience. Government initiatives support peatland restoration, afforestation with native species, and wetland conservation. These projects help protect wildlife, improve water retention, and store carbon.



### Community-Led Conservation

Local engagement is key to successful biodiversity restoration. Cross-community collaborations can successfully support a landscape-based approach to biodiversity actions such as rewilding projects, eco-tourism initiatives, and citizen science programmes. Leadership, education, awareness building and funding are critical enablers for communities to take ownership of positive conservation efforts.



### Outdoor Recreation and Natural Heritage

Ireland's natural heritage is critical to our tourism, recreation and wellbeing sectors. It is imperative, however, that we protect the environment through better planning and development of outdoor recreation, in keeping with best practice management of landscape and habitats. Responsible, informed and careful use of these resources must be considered to reduce biodiversity loss and maintain diverse, functioning and interconnecting ecosystems.



### Community Health and Wellbeing

On a national and local scale, an emphasis is placed on supporting actions which focus on improving quality of life, ensuring equality and addressing economic, environmental and social influences. Collaboration, interaction and co-ordination at a local, level can significantly improve physical and mental wellbeing for all in the community. Social interaction and supporting social connectedness are key to building strong communities for health and wellbeing.



# Sustainable Development Goals

The North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Benefit Fund will be underpinned by the objectives of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Sustainable Development Goals are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. The 17 Goals were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which set out a 15-year plan to achieve the Goals.



Image 2: The Sustainable Development Goals (Source: United Nations)

Ireland's Sustainable Development Goals National Implementation Plan 2022-2024 provides a whole-of-government approach to implementing these goals. A key Strategic Objective of this plan is to achieve greater partnerships for delivery of the Goals, with an emphasis on the active role which civil society and communities can play. The call to 'think global, act local' highlights the fact that universal challenges can only be met through local action.

"SDGs provide a critical framework for community development as they reflect the social justice, economic justice and environmental justice concerns of community work and community workers and designate the processes of participation, empowerment and collective action required to achieve change." (Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: 5 Year Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector 2019-2024, Government of Ireland).

To support this call to action, the North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Benefit Fund, will place a strong focus on supporting initiatives that align with one or more of the Sustainable Development Goals. The fund will encourage creative and innovative thinking around providing solutions on a local level which address sustainability challenges in communities. Each call for funding will require applicants to demonstrate how their project aligns with the SDGs and explain how it contributes to the achievement of the goals.



# Area Profile

The North Connacht 110 kV project infrastructure development occurs in a linear pattern which runs from Ballina, Co. Mayo to Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon. The area falls within the administrative boundaries of two Mayo municipal districts – Ballina, Claremorris-Swinford and one in Roscommon - Boyle.

The area is predominantly rural with extensive spatial distribution. The predominant labour markets within the area are Ballina, Swinford, Charlestown/Knock and Ballaghaderreen.

## Ballina

Ballina is a town in north County Mayo. With a population of 10,556 (CSO, 2022 Census figures), it is the second largest town in Mayo. It is categorised as a 'key town' under RSES, defined as a regionally, strategic employment centre of significant scale that can act as a regional driver to complement and support the higher-order urban areas within the settlement hierarchy.

It is a busy, vibrant town with a good variety of community facilities and services such as the Family Resource Centre, Ballina Arts Centre, Mary Robinson Centre, Craoibhin Ballina, Volunteer Centre, sporting organisations and facilities, swimming pool, library and playgrounds. There are a number of primary and secondary schools, and the town is served by train with links to Dublin and the Western region.

A strong tourism town, Ballina's location on the River Moy favours salmon fishing, with the Ballina Salmon Festival held annually in July. The festival includes Heritage Day, where most of the centre of the town is closed to traffic and the streets fill with arts and craft stalls and demonstrations of transport from days gone by. The festival finale is a Mardi Gras followed by a fireworks display. Some of the local tourist attractions include two museums in the town, the Jackie Clarke Collection and Belleek Castle Museum.

## Swinford

Swinford is a town in County Mayo, located just off the N5 road, 18 km from Ireland West Airport, Knock. In the County Development Plan, it is classified as a 'Self-Sustaining Growth Town' with a moderate level of jobs and services, its own labour catchment area, and playing an important role in supporting the social, economic and cultural life within the rural community.

The town's population is 1,459, according to 2022 figures. There is a good variety of community facilities, amenities and services in the town such as the Swinford Amenity Park, Tennis Courts, Golf Course, Swinford Cultural Centre, The Courthouse and Swinford Library. Situated on a tributary of the River Moy, Swinford is also known for its fishing waters, including the Callow lakes and the lakes of Conn and Cullin.

Since the 1980s, Swinford has hosted one of County Mayo's largest summer festivals, the Siamsa Sráide Swinford (Fun in the Streets of Swinford). This street festival of pageantry, céilí dancing, and heritage displays depicts the traditions of East Mayo. The five-day festival takes place in the first week of August and features live bands playing open-air concerts as well as a Heritage Day, history walks and a busking competition.

## Charlestown

Charlestown is a town in County Mayo, located on the N17 road near its junction with the N5. Charlestown was built in the mid-19th century on the initiative of Lord Dillon's agent, Charles Strickland, adjoining Bellaghy in County Sligo. According to 2022 census, the town has a population of approximately 1,172. It is classified as a Self-Sustaining Town in the County Development Plan as it has moderate levels of population growth and a limited localised employment base.

There are two schools in Charlestown, St. Attracta's National School and St. Joseph's Marist Convent. There is a good variety of community facilities, amenities and services in the town such as the Charlestown Arts Centre, CBD Recreational Centre, Charlestown GAA, library, playground, outdoor swimming pool and health centre.

## Ballaghaderreen

Ballaghaderreen is a town in County Roscommon. It was part of County Mayo prior to 1898. It is located just off the N5. The population was 2,387 in the 2022 census and it is classified as a Self- Sustaining Growth Town in the County Development Plan.

Ballaghaderreen has operated as a fairs and market town since the 1700s and continues in the role of a large market town and service centre for the surrounding areas.

The town has number of community services, clubs and facilities such as Ballaghaderreen Community Resource Centre, Ballaghaderreen Men's Shed, Ballaghaderreen Playground, Ballaghaderreen GAA Club, Ballaghaderreen Handball Club, Ballaghaderreen Tennis Club, Ballaghaderreen FC. There is also a Family Resource Centre, Youthreach and Further Education and Training Centre located in the town. In Ballaghaderreen, there is an active and engaged Town Team which brings together people from community, business and statutory sectors to promote the town as a good place to live, do business and spend time. In March 2017, Ballaghaderreen became an Emergency Reception and Orientation Centre (EROC) for hundreds of refugees from the Syrian Civil War. In April 2018, the community was honoured with a People of the Year Award for welcoming the refugees into the community.

Key Settlements in close proximity to the North Connacht 110 kV Project Area		
Large Towns	Medium Towns	Small Towns
Ballina	Swinford Ballaghaderreen	Charlestown



# Demographics

According to 2022 Small Area census figures, the total population for the area outlined in the map below is approximately 23,716 with slightly more females (11,999) than males (11,717).

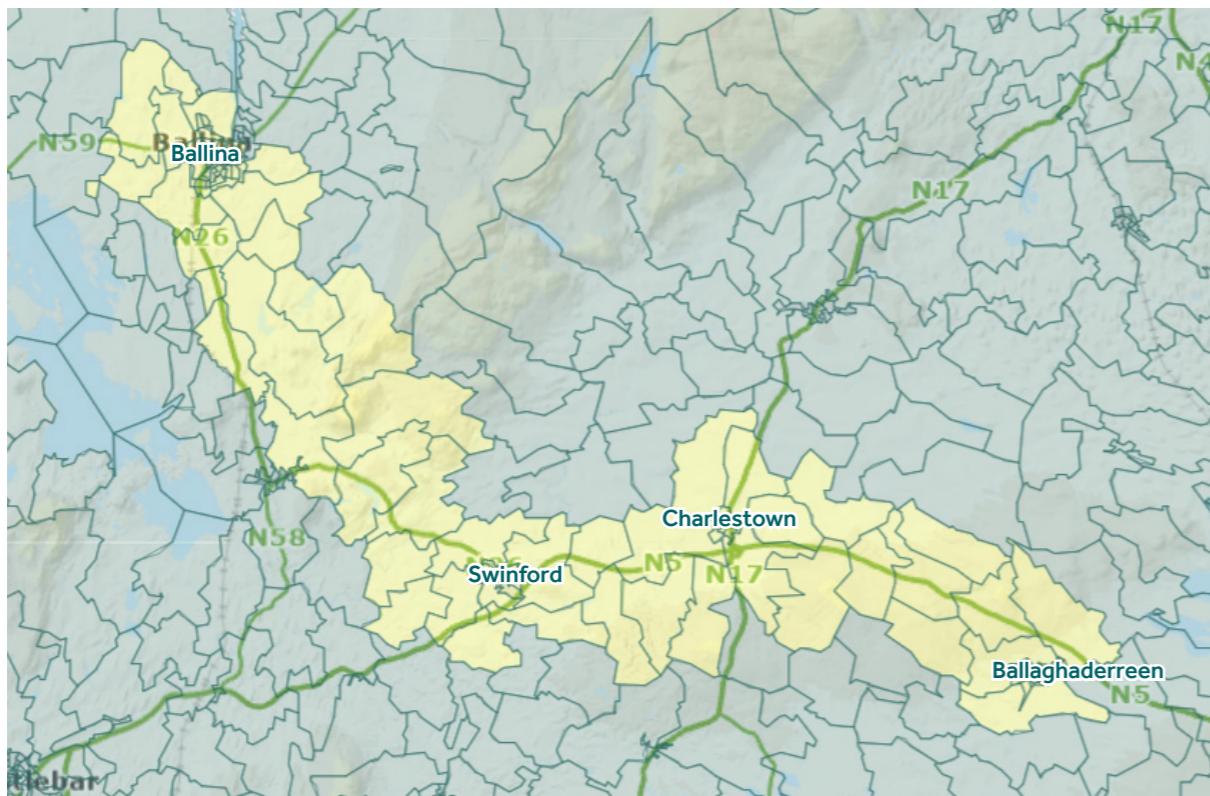


Image 3: Small Areas within 2km Area of Benefit Map



Figure 2: Small Area Population Profile by Age

Between 2016 and 2022, Mayo's population grew by 5.2%, while Roscommon's population grew by 8.9%, which was above the national growth rate (8.1%). Mayo County Development Plan predicts a county-wide population growth rate for Mayo of 11.6% from 2016 to 2028, with Ballina at a rate of 24.4%, Swinford at 19.3% and Charlestown at 15%. In Ballaghaderreen, population is predicted to increase 19% between 2022 – 2028 according to figures in the Roscommon County Development Plan.

2022 census results also show net positive inward migration in Mayo & Roscommon counties since 2016, in fact net inward migration in both counties was not only positive but outweighed natural increase. This indicates that new communities are moving to the area. In Ballaghaderreen and Charlestown, the usually resident population born in Ireland is significantly higher than the National average whereas Ballina and Swinford are more in line with national averages.

Both counties also have quite significant ageing populations in comparison with national averages. Mayo has the highest average age nationally at 41.6 years (compared with 40.2 years in April 2016) and Roscommon's average age increased from 39.7 to 40.8 years, putting it at third highest in the state. Nationally, the average age of the population in 2022 was 38.8, up from 37.4 in April 2016. Within the Electoral Districts surrounding the project area, 26% the population are aged over 60, with a similar percentage aged 19 or under. In Census 2022, 22% of the Irish population reported having a long-lasting condition/ difficulty or disability. According to the CSO statistics, just over 23.8% of those living in Electoral Districts within close proximity of the project area stated they have a disability, which is slightly above the national average.

## Incidence of Disadvantage

According to Pobal's HP Deprivation Index, the area comprises Electoral Districts (ED) ranging from 'Disadvantaged' to 'Marginally Above Average'. Within those, there are six

SAPs (Small Area Populations) classified as 'Extremely Disadvantaged' which are in the Ballina Urban, Ballina Rural and Ardnaree South Urban ED's. This represents 4.8% of the total area population, with 38.4% living in what is classified as 'Disadvantaged' areas.

Electoral Districts	HP Description 2022	Population 2022		% Population Growth since 2016
		Population 2022	% Population Growth since 2016	
Ballina Rural	Marginally Below Average	3199	7.17	
Ballina Urban	Disadvantaged	4246	2.46	
Ardnaree South Urban	Disadvantaged	2416	-0.17	
Ardnaree South Rural	Marginally Above Average	3096	0.39	
Attymass West	Marginally Below Average	273	15.68	
Attymass East	Marginally Below Average	378	-1.31	
Callow	Marginally Above Average	442	11.34	
Toomore	Marginally Below Average	1724	8.36	
Cuildeo	Disadvantaged	357	2.29	
Swinford	Marginally Below Average	2629	4.04	
Meelick	Marginally Below Average	541	-4.25	
Sonnagh	Marginally Below Average	1242	6.52	
Kilbeagh	Marginally Below Average	1068	6.16	
Cloonmore	Disadvantaged	434	-0.91	
Ballaghaderreen	Disadvantaged	3254	19.37	
Edmonstown	Marginally Below Average	458	9.57	
Carrowmore	Marginally Below Average	896	-1.43	
Mount Falcon	Marginally Below Average	1300	3.26	
<b>Total</b>		<b>27,953</b>	<b>4.92</b>	

Census 2022 data also demonstrate variations in rates of employment across the main towns of the area, with below average levels of short-term unemployment, but above average numbers of long-term unemployed in Ballina, Swinford and Ballaghaderreen.

county is comprised of the individual labour markets of Swinford, Charlestown/Knock, Ballaghaderreen, Ballyhaunis, Claremorris and parts of the Sligo town labour catchment (WDC, 2022). The Hollister manufacturing facility in Ballina, County Mayo, is a significant

Census 2022 – % Unemployment Rates (CSO Data)					
	Ballina	Swinford	Charlestown	Ballaghaderreen	National
Short term unemployed	2.30	1.63	0.99	2.96	3
Long term unemployed	5.35	4.97	3.96	5.86	4

According to data from the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage, the absolute number of adults accessing homeless services in Mayo and Roscommon has progressively risen over the past number of years, increasing from 5 in 2016 to a recent high of 44 in 2022 (LECP Briefing Notes, Northern and Western Regional Assembly, 2022).

## Economic Activity and Infrastructure

In County Roscommon, there is a relatively high dependence on agriculture, traditional sectors, retail and public services to support the local economy. County Mayo has a diverse economy, with key sectors including agriculture, tourism, renewable energy, manufacturing, and marine industries.

According to CSO figures, the average unemployment rate within the local Electoral Districts was 10% in 2022 which is above the national rate of 8% in April 2022. There were particularly high unemployment rates in Ardnaree South Urban (25.4%), Ballina Urban (19%) and Ballaghaderreen (19%).

Due to the extensive spatial distribution of medium-sized settlements across Mayo (population > 1,000), the east of the

local employer with over 1,000 employees. In Ballaghaderreen, the meat processing and manufacturing industries offer key local employment opportunities. Across the area, the local economy is largely boosted by numerous small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating primarily in retail, hospitality, and professional services.

In relation to Tourism, Roscommon County is located within Fáilte Ireland's Hidden Heartland tourism region. Ballaghaderreen has several sites of heritage interest for visitors such as The Cathedral of the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St Nathy and St Nathy's College. County Mayo is part of the Wild Atlantic Way, with Ballina holding the title of 'Salmon Capital of Ireland' and Ballina Quay listed as a Mayo Wild Atlantic Way Discovery Point. It is also home to the Jackie Clarke Collection, a popular visitor attraction and an important private collection of 100,000 Irish history materials dating back 400 years. Swinford, a historical market town, is also a popular angling destination, attracting anglers from all over the world to fish the waters of the River Moy. Charlestown also has several interesting heritage attractions and is situated within easy access of some great golf courses, fishing lakes & rivers, and near several walking & cycling trails.

The region is serviced by the N5 and N26 National Primary Routes which access M6 and M18 Motorways, providing access to major urban centres to the east, west and north-west. Ballaghaderreen is a gateway town to the West of Ireland, located only fifteen minutes from Ireland West airport. Ballina is serviced by Irish Rail, linking it to Dublin and Westport. As a predominantly rural area, however, public transport is limited and mostly provided by Bus Eireann Regional Services and a number of Local Link routes. As a result, there is a high car dependency in the area, with the most common mode of transport by personal vehicle.

Like many rural towns in Ireland, over the last number of years Ballaghaderreen has experienced a decline in its economic vibrancy and experiences a relatively high level of dereliction. Ballaghaderreen had the highest commercial vacancy rate in Roscommon as of December 2021, with a rate of 26.4 per cent. This was significantly above the county's average of 13.2% and the national average of 11.7% at that time. In an effort to support its ambition for vibrant economic growth, it has been designated as a key town for the development of Creative Industries in Roscommon. In 2024, Ballaghaderreen was also awarded almost €500,000 Town and Village funding for the development of the Plots Town Park.

## Environmental Designations

Within the vicinity of the North Connacht 110 kV Project cable route, there are extensive natural environments, providing a wide range of conservation and preservation opportunities. There is a range of designated environmental sites which are protected by national and European legislation. These include Special Protection Areas (SPA), Proposed Natural Heritage Areas (pNHA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC).

- The River Moy is of significant biodiversity value across most of the project area and is registered as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC,002298). The Moy Valley is also listed as a Proposed Natural Heritage Area (pNHA, 002078).
- Towards the western end of the project route, Killala Bay/Moy Estuary is a designated SAC (000458) with a pNHA (000458) south of Ballina and stretching in towards the town.
- Lough Hoe Bog, north-east of Attymass is a designated SAC (000633).
- Killaturly Turlough, south-east of Swinford is a pNHA (000511)
- Stretching between Charlestown and Ballaghaderreen are the pNHA's of Derrynabrock Bog (000457), Tawnaghbeg Bog (000547), Gowlaun Bog (000502) and Kilgarriff Bog (000510).
- Towards the eastern end of the project route, Tullaghanrock Bog (002354) and Callow Bog (000595) are designated SACs, with Lough Gara pNHA (000587) and Lough Gara SPA (004048), Northeast of Ballaghaderreen.

A number of undesignated lakes, natural woodlands, bogs and waterbodies are also scattered throughout the project area offering valuable biodiversity habitats and feeding grounds. Riparian habitats of rivers and lakes support a diverse range of wildlife, many of which are protected, including salmon, trout,

lamprey, otters, kingfishers, freshwater pearl mussels and wildfowl species such as common scoter and wintering populations of geese and ducks. Bogs, fens and heaths support wildlife such as birdlife, Irish hare, butterflies and moths and are home to unusual and rare flora such as rare orchids.

Both Mayo and Roscommon County Development Plans acknowledge the significant role of peatlands and wetlands in the area from a climate and biodiversity perspective. They highlight the importance of conservation and restoration of these areas to allow them to optimise their carbon sequestration and drainage capacity, while supporting the wide variety of flora and fauna unique to these habitats. A range of priority activities are identified such as invasive species management, protection and restoration of peatlands and water quality management.

## Climate Action

There is a growing commitment within the region to engage in climate action and promote environmental sustainability through community involvement. Several climate action initiatives and groups are actively engaged in promoting environmental sustainability and addressing climate change. One such example is The Mary Robinson Centre in Ballina which acts as a hub for thought leadership, education, and advocacy on climate justice and focuses on empowering vulnerable communities affected by climate change.

Both Mayo and Roscommon County Council have established a Climate Action Office and have pro-active Climate Officers in place. With strong support through SEAI mentorship programmes, there are also a number of Sustainable Energy Communities within the area of benefit, such as Ballaghaderreen Town Team and Ballina Community Clean Up.

There is a strong local awareness of the renewable energy sector as it plays a pivotal role in the economic and environmental landscape of northeast County Mayo and Roscommon. The region's abundant natural resources have facilitated the development of various renewable energy projects, significantly contributing to Ireland's sustainable energy goals.



# How We Developed This Strategy

## Approach and Methodology

To place communities at the heart of this strategy, a collaborative, 'bottom-up approach' has been adopted whereby local communities and stakeholders have been provided with an opportunity to inform and shape the community benefit fund priorities for the North Connacht 110 kV project area. This process involved an in-depth community consultation which took place over the period May 2024 – February 2025.



The purpose of this consultation was to:

- » engage communities, individuals and local stakeholders in strategy development.
- » allow as many voices as possible to be heard when shaping strategic priorities.
- » ensure maximum input from those impacted and living in the Area of Benefit.

## Overview of the Consultation Process

The table below outlines the activities undertaken to engage and consult with local communities in the development of this strategy.

Consultation Activity	Description
Community Forum Strategy Workshops	3 x Community Forum workshops carried out with Community Forum members to explore strategic approaches and opportunities to maximise impact of investment for local communities.
Community Forum Member Interviews	Interviews were conducted with Community Forum members to identify local plans, priorities, opportunities and challenges for communities within the project area.
Online Community Consultation Survey	183 online submissions were received. Approximately 32% of submissions were received from individuals with 68% from community representatives & stakeholders.
Information Drop-in Sessions	5 Drop-In information sessions were held across the area in Ballina, Attymass, Swinford, Charlestown and Ballaghaderreen. The purpose of these sessions was to provide information on the consultation process and provide assistance with the online survey if required.
Online Information Session	An online evening information session was held to provide details of the community benefit fund and the online consultation process.
Meetings with Relevant Agency Stakeholders	As part of the strategy development process, interviews were held with a range of stakeholders including Local Authority Staff, Coillte, SEAI, PPN and Social Finance Providers.

## Key Stakeholders

In planning for the community consultation, a number of stakeholders were identified as key contributors to the development of this strategy. These stakeholders have played a vital role in ensuring that the fund is shaped around the opportunities and needs of those living in local communities.



## The North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Forum

The Community Forum has played a significant role in supporting the development of this strategy. Through active engagement and participation in workshops, consultations and discussions, Forum members have advocated for the needs and priorities of local communities and ensured that these have been reflected throughout this document. Forum members will continue to play a key role in the delivery of this strategy through actively promoting the Community Benefit Fund in their area and encouraging organisations to engage.

## Online Community Consultation Survey

Through engagement with the Community Forum, a range of thematic priorities emerged across the project area alongside several challenges where local needs were not currently being met. These considerations informed the development and design of an online consultation survey which opened on 2nd September 2024 and remained open for submissions until 18th October 2024.

	183 online submissions received
	Submissions received from communities across the proposed Area Of Benefit with representation from individuals (approx. 32%), community representatives (Approx. 52%) and stakeholders
	Submissions received from all age groups with good representation from individuals and relative community representatives/schools etc.
	40+ groups and individuals represented at in person and virtual consultation information sessions

Figure 4: Engagement with the Online Community Consultation Survey

## Local Stakeholder Agency Consultations

Many key local stakeholders, agencies and groups participated in the online survey and a number of short interviews were also held with agencies and organisations where potential collaborations were identified as part of the community consultation process. This included representatives from the Local Authority, Local Development Companies, PPN, SEAI and social finance providers. Some important observations, recommendations and inputs were gathered through this process and can be summarised as follows:

- The Community Benefit Fund has significant potential to provide valuable match funding for many existing public funding programmes.
- Communities should be encouraged to engage with SEAI to establish themselves as Sustainable Energy Communities and develop their Energy Masterplans. This would allow for a set of actions to be identified that could be supported through the Community Benefit Fund and other funding streams such as LEADER and the

Community Energy Scheme (formerly Better Energy Communities).

- Providing support for Research / Feasibility / Animation / Planning / Co-ordination / Facilitation costs has the potential to enable communities to establish impactful initiatives and projects across the area of benefit.
- The Sustainable Development Goals should play a strong role in shaping the development of the strategy.

## Needs Analysis and Data Review

Data gathered from the consultation process was analysed and categorised in order to identify local priorities and needs. A SWOT analysis was conducted (see Appendix 3) to greater understand the opportunities and challenges for communities within the local area and to identify supports which may be required to facilitate new projects and ideas. The findings of this process have informed the strategic priorities for the Community Benefit Fund.

	Review and analysis of qualitative and quantitative consultation data
	Application of SECAD and EirGrid fund expertise and experience
	Extensive collaboration and discussion between EirGrid and SECAD
	Shared commitment to support local communities to address local challenges and pursue opportunities under the three fund streams

Figure 5: Collaborative process for applying consultation findings to strategic recommendations

# The North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Benefit Fund Strategy

The following outlines the strategic approach for the delivery of the North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Benefit Fund within the framework of the EirGrid Community Benefit Fund Policy.

The strategy is outlined in a series of 'strategic statements' that have emerged from the inputs received from local communities during the consultation process, guidance and advice received from the North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Forum and the experience brought to this process by the EirGrid and SECAD teams.

This strategy covers the period of the North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Benefit Fund and is intended to guide the process for prioritising, selecting, and supporting projects for investment under this initiative.

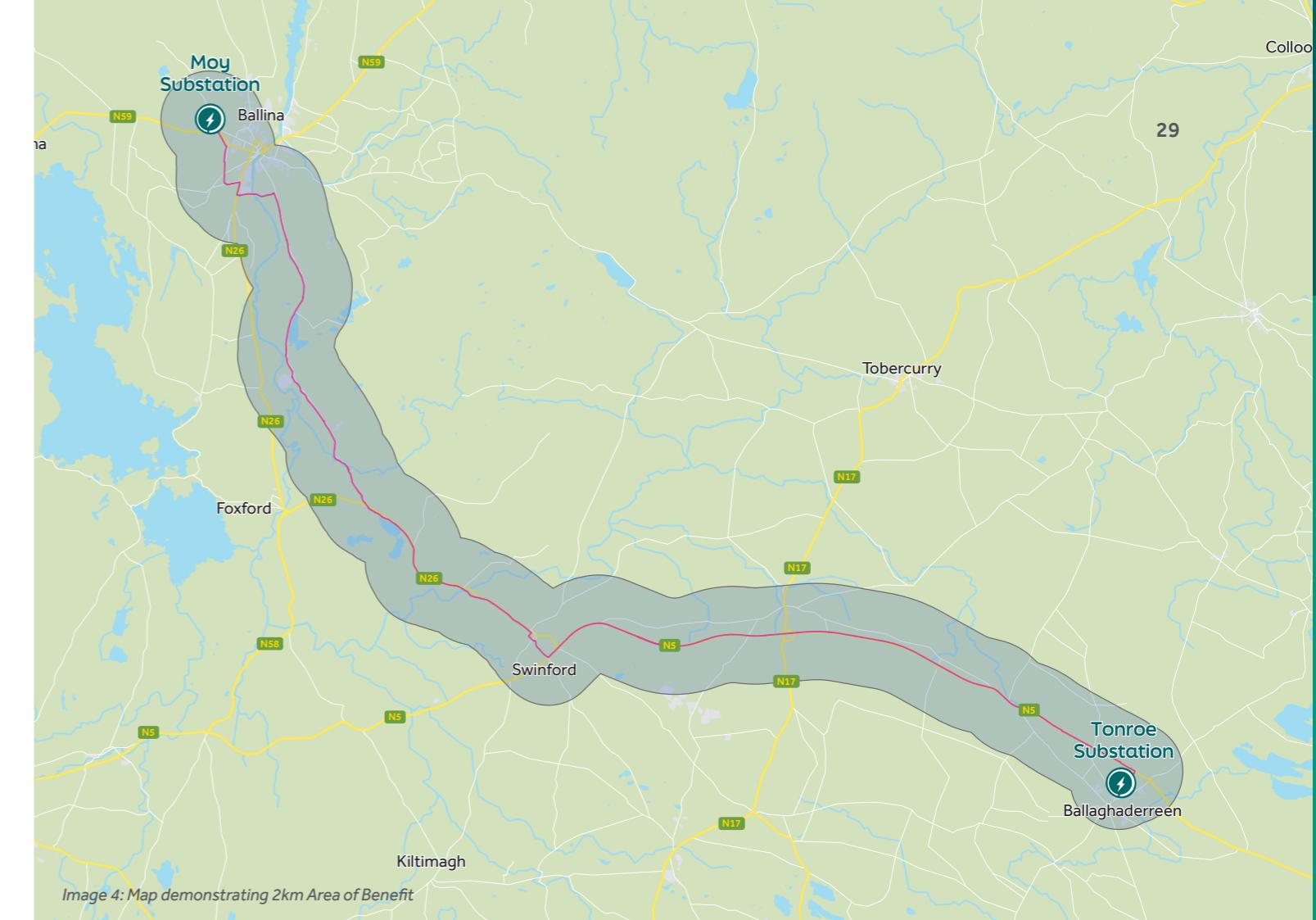
## Overarching Strategic Principles

The following principles underpin the North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Benefit Fund strategy:

- ✓ The fund shall support projects which are community-led
- ✓ The fund shall seek to leave a positive legacy within communities which host North Connacht 110 kV Project infrastructure
- ✓ The fund shall support projects which align with the Sustainable Development Goals
- ✓ The fund shall be delivered using a fair and balanced approach
- ✓ The fund shall encourage and promote collaboration across and between communities within the Area of Benefit

## Area of Benefit

A 2km 'area of benefit' (AOB) will be applied to either side of the cable line and priority will be given to projects located within this zone. Evaluation criteria will be weighted to prioritise projects closest to the cable line. In areas, however, where the nearest main service centre is outside of the 2km zone, projects and initiatives may be considered where a proven direct benefit to residents within the AOB can be demonstrated.



## Fund Priorities

The fund will support projects which align with:

- ✓ Priorities identified through the community consultation
- ✓ EirGrid Community Benefit Fund Policy
- ✓ National policy vision for a thriving & vibrant Rural Ireland
- ✓ Sustainable Development Goals

A broad range of local priorities under each of the three Community Benefit Fund streams were identified through the local consultation process.

## Community Stream

The community stream aims to reinforce community cohesion, wellbeing and education. It will support communities to implement projects which leave a positive legacy for those living within the Area of Benefit.

Priorities under this stream include:

- ✓ Revitalising Town and Village centres
- ✓ Upgrade and Development of Outdoor Recreation & Amenity Space
- ✓ Engaging Older People, Active Ageing, Ageing in the Community
- ✓ Arts, Culture and Heritage projects
- ✓ Improved Sporting Facilities
- ✓ Social Inclusion & Integration of New Communities
- ✓ Development of Facilities for Young People
- ✓ Multi-purpose and shared facilities/services, such as community 'hubs'
- ✓ Encouraging Connectivity between Community Facilities/ Amenities in towns and villages
- ✓ Improving Accessibility of Community Buildings and Facilities
- ✓ Community-led Tourism
- ✓ Social Enterprise
- ✓ Community Childcare
- ✓ Community Health & Wellbeing Initiatives

## Sustainability Stream

The sustainability stream aims to enable communities to take positive sustainable action across a broad range of activities. This includes transforming how communities think about, generate and use energy and resources. It will also support communities to implement projects which address climate change, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, strengthen resilience and contribute to an inclusive and sustainable future for people and planet. Applicants requesting funding under the sustainability stream will be strongly encouraged to undertake an energy audit or enlist professional expertise to ensure projects align with best practice and will make a positive contribution towards the fight against climate change.

Priorities under this stream include:

- ✓ Community Training & Awareness Campaigns
- ✓ Renewable Energy Projects
- ✓ Energy Efficiency Upgrades for Community Buildings & Facilities
- ✓ Sustainable Use of Water Resources
- ✓ Waste Reduction and Circular Economy Projects
- ✓ Retrofitting and Reuse of Heritage Buildings for Community Purpose
- ✓ Community Gardens & Orchards
- ✓ Youth Climate Action Initiatives
- ✓ Rural and Community Transport Initiatives
- ✓ Remote Working/Distance Learning Facilities
- ✓ Community Transport & Active Travel
- ✓ Research, Feasibility and Expert Technical Assistance
- ✓ Climate Crisis Community Response Initiatives

## Biodiversity Stream

The biodiversity stream aims to contribute to significantly improving the biodiversity of an area and ensuring its ongoing sustainability, leaving a lasting positive biodiversity legacy. Proposed biodiversity projects must be carefully researched with the support of a biodiversity specialist and comply with relevant environmental licensing. While communities will own their projects, they must have a strict inspection schedule and comply with relevant regulations.

Priorities under this stream include:

- ✓ Development of Biodiversity Action Plans
- ✓ Feasibility Studies to develop large-scale biodiversity projects
- ✓ Training, Education & Awareness
- ✓ Conservation of Local Habitats (e.g. bogs, rivers, lakes, forests)
- ✓ Establishment of Native Woodlands
- ✓ Biodiversity Trails
- ✓ Tidy Towns Initiatives (e.g. pollinators, gardens, parks etc.)
- ✓ Supporting Invasive Species Management
- ✓ Research, Mapping and Ecology Specialist Support
- ✓ Nature-based Flood Relief Solutions
- ✓ Biodiversity & Wellbeing Initiatives

## Grant Size & Value

- ✓ The fund will support a range of project sizes from small initiatives to large-scale, legacy projects.

The consultation process indicated a broad range of projects and initiatives requiring varying investment levels. In line with these findings, the fund will support small to large-scale projects with grant awards ranging from €1,000 - €75,000.

Projects will be categorised as:

<b>Small initiatives</b>	<b>€1,000-€10,000</b>
<b>Medium initiatives</b>	<b>€10,000-€40,000</b>
<b>Large Initiatives</b>	<b>€40,000-€75,000</b>

## Large-scale Investment Projects

- ✓ The fund will support large-scale investment projects which will be of long-term benefit to the community and engage multiple local user groups

Large-scale Capital, Facilities and Equipment projects must demonstrate how they will be of benefit to the entire community and engage multiple local user groups.

It is expected that, where other applicable funding streams exist, the community benefit fund will be utilised as matching or additional finance.

An exception to the €75,000 maximum grant amount may be considered for a large-scale project or initiative which will be of significant impact to all those living across the entire area of benefit and beyond.

## Umbrella Projects

- ✓ The fund will support new, multi-community and smaller groups/initiatives through 'umbrella projects'.

To encourage small and emerging groups to avail of the funds, the fund will support new, multi-community and smaller groups initiatives through an 'umbrella project' mechanism. An umbrella project is where a lead applicant, such as a Community Council, might make an application on behalf of several smaller groups or projects within the community. The lead applicant can "bundle" together a number of sub-projects or initiatives and will take responsibility for managing administrative and compliance requirements of the overall grant application. This can help shorten the application process for small beneficiaries, reduce the amount of paperwork and make it possible to involve target groups that would otherwise be difficult to reach. This mechanism will also encourage collaboration and capacity building for smaller groups.



## Types of Funding Support

The fund will support community projects through grant investment in:

- ✓ Capital Investment
- ✓ Purchase of Equipment
- ✓ Technical and Professional Expertise & Support
- ✓ Community Animation / Development / Co-Ordination Costs
- ✓ Training & Capacity Building
- ✓ Research & Development

Through the community consultation process, a variety of supports were identified as critical to the development and implementation of projects across all three streams. Through the above grant investments, this strategy aims to support communities to drive forward locally led projects which build on their strengths and opportunities and address their needs and priorities.

### Capital Investment

The fund will support investment in the capital infrastructure where there is an identified need within the community, e.g. the costs involved in upgrading existing or establishing new infrastructure for community use. Support for land purchase will also be considered where a clear need has been identified within the community for land ownership in order to develop a high impact, legacy project under one or more of the fund streams. Communities must be able to demonstrate how land purchase will enable project delivery and how it will be managed. The community purpose/planned use(s) of the land must also be clearly identified.

## Purchase of Equipment

The fund will support the purchase of equipment required by community and voluntary groups to undertake their activities.

## Technical and Professional Expertise & Support

The fund will support communities to procure specialist, skilled, technical expertise which is critical to project planning and delivery.

Communities will be supported to procure professional expertise where it is deemed critical to the development of projects or initiatives. This may be for a specific purpose such as to research, plan and finalise details for high-impact projects, or to engage specialist expertise to develop projects in line with best practice or regulatory requirements (e.g. qualified and experienced project engineers/architects/ecologists/heritage specialists/energy efficiency expert, etc.).

## Community Animation / Development / Co-Ordination Costs

A direct need has been identified in the area for output-based animation and community development resources which will support voluntary efforts to bring projects and initiatives to fruition, particularly in relation to stakeholder engagement, relationship-building and collaboration, preparing grant applications, project co-ordination and project oversight.

To enable sustainable local development, the fund will support Animation / Project Development / Co-Ordination roles which are directly linked to the establishment and growth of sustainable, collaborative community-based initiatives within the Area of Benefit and which will have long-lasting impact for those living in the area. These roles, which will be limited to one per applicant, may be considered for key towns and villages within the Area of Benefit, or to support the development and implementation of area-wide projects and initiatives. They must support the

development of collaborative projects which benefit the whole community, are providing services for the most vulnerable or isolated people in the community or are implementing climate change/environmentally focused initiatives.

## Training & Capacity Building

The fund will support local community and voluntary organisations to deliver training and capacity building programmes under one or more of the fund streams. The purpose of this will be to strengthen knowledge and awareness around the priorities identified during the consultation.

## Research and Development

The fund will support the costs of research and development to enable groups to investigate new approaches to addressing local challenges or opportunities under the priorities outlined on [page 36](#). This may include undertaking feasibility studies or practical research necessary to support the development and implementation of innovative new projects or initiatives for the local area.

## Collaborative Investment and Other Funding Supports

- ✓ The fund will encourage collaboration and co-financing of investment where other funding streams exist.
- ✓ The maximum grant award for projects will be 90% project costs (except for umbrella projects which may be funded up to 100% in certain circumstances)
- ✓ Large projects will require a larger match finance contribution

It is important that this community benefit fund supports and supplements existing funding streams that local communities have access to. To maximise the impact of the fund, a collaborative and co-financing approach will be encouraged, particularly where large-scale investments are concerned, and other sources of public funding exist.

For projects to be sustainable, collaboration is key. EirGrid and SECAD Partnership CLG will work closely with communities, local authorities, NGO's and State agencies to ensure that communities maximise the opportunities open to them in transforming their area to meet their needs.

### Social Enterprise Support

- ✓ The fund will support social enterprise as a solution for meeting a gap in community-based services

The fund will support Social Enterprise as a solution for meeting a gap in community-based services, supporting vulnerable or isolated people in the community, or which are leading the implementation of climate change/environmentally focused initiatives across the Area of Benefit.

## Achieving a Balanced Approach

### Supporting A Fair and Geographically Balanced Approach

- ✓ While recognising the multiple and diverse communities which are located across the area of benefit, the fund shall seek to achieve a fair and balanced geographic approach towards the distribution of funds over the lifetime of the fund.

The geographic balance of funds across the Area of Benefit will be reviewed by SECAD Partnership and EirGrid after each funding round and communities which have not yet secured funding will be encouraged and supported to submit applications in future rounds.

Greater direct impact to the centre of Swinford town during the construction phase will also be given due consideration during the project evaluation process.

Through the evaluation process, communities which have not been awarded funding in earlier rounds will be given priority in the third phase of funding, subject to the submission of quality funding applications towards eligible projects. This will be done to ensure that all communities impacted by the infrastructure will feel the benefit of this fund.

### Encouraging and Supporting Balanced Investment across the Fund Streams

- ✓ In line with EirGrid's Community Benefit Fund Policy, balanced investment across the three streams shall be maintained. Any change to this would be exceptional.
- ✓ Communities will be encouraged to consider all three funding streams in preparation of their project plans and funding applications.

Over the lifetime of the fund, SECAD Partnership and EirGrid will work together with communities to achieve a balanced investment across the three streams (Community, Sustainability & Biodiversity) as outlined in EirGrid's Community Benefit Fund Policy.

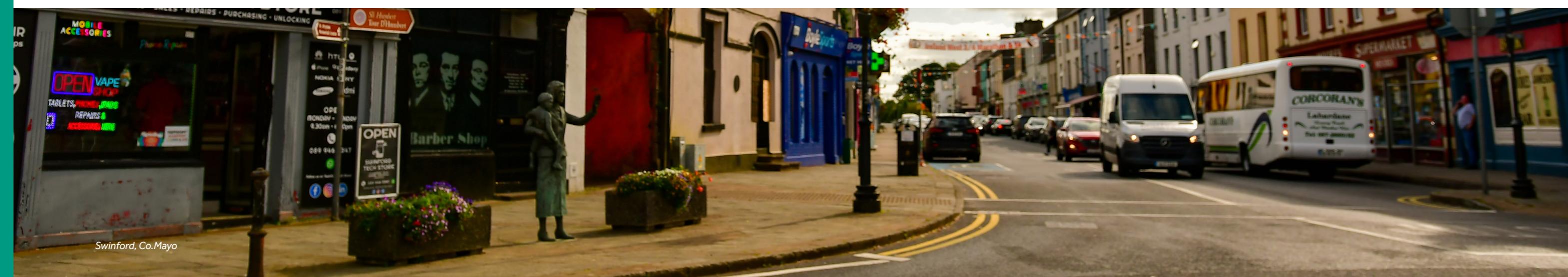
SECAD Partnership and EirGrid will work together with communities to explore opportunities to address all three streams in the development of their projects and initiatives. Large projects will be strongly encouraged to consider all three streams in their project plans. Flexibility will be allowed for projects to draw funds from across streams where applicable to the project.

### Approval in Principle

- ✓ The fund will support high-potential projects that have a clear project plan but require additional time to complete full project applications through an 'approval in principle' approach.

To support a balanced approach, 'Approval in Principle' will provide high-potential projects with a conditional award of funding which will enable leverage of other funds and investment required to deliver the project. Eligible 'Approval in Principle' projects must be significantly developed e.g. asset in place, feasibility established, project plan developed, etc.

Priority, however, will be given to projects which are 'shovel ready' at the time of application.



# How Will the Fund Work?

As the appointed Fund Administrator for the North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Benefit Fund, SECAD Partnership will work with EirGrid to ensure the effective management of the funds within the framework of EirGrid's Community Benefit Fund Policy and in line with the North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Benefit Fund Strategy.



Figure 6: Community Benefit Fund Application Flowchart

## Opening of Funds

The opening of each round of funding will be widely publicised through a range of communication channels. The funds will remain open for applications for a period of six to eight weeks, and applications will be submitted via an online portal. Application guidance documentation will be provided, and support will be available to applicants from SECAD Partnership throughout this time.

## Evaluation and Award of Funds

Following the closing date, applications will be evaluated by an impartial grant making panel. This panel will be comprised of SECAD Partnership, EirGrid and independent panel member(s) with community development expertise. Additional expert guidance may also be sought as part of the project evaluation process if applicable. Funding will be allocated at each round following a competitive scoring process.

## Fund Management

- ✓ Should the case arise where a full budget is not fully allocated under a funding round, any unused funds (i.e. underspends) will be rolled forward to be available at the next round.
- ✓ Funds which may be committed to a project but not utilised in full (i.e. project underspends) will be rolled forward to be available at next round.
- ✓ SECAD Partnership and EirGrid will undertake a review of any unallocated funds following the final funding round and consider recommendations for best use of funds to ensure full allocation.

# Staying Connected

Further information and updates on the North Connacht 110 kV Project Community Benefit Fund can be found on SECAD Partnership's website at [www.secad.ie/what-we-do/north-connacht-110-kv-project](http://www.secad.ie/what-we-do/north-connacht-110-kv-project).

You can also follow SECAD on:

Twitter: @SECADCork or  
Facebook: @secadcork

SECAD Partnership CLG  
Midleton Community Enterprise Centre  
Owennacurra Business Park  
Knockgriffin  
Midleton, Co. Cork  
P25 Y893, IRELAND

Tel. 021 461 3432  
E-mail: [info@secad.ie](mailto:info@secad.ie)  
Website: [www.secad.ie](http://www.secad.ie)

For information in relation to the North Connacht 110 kV infrastructure project, please visit [EirGrid.ie/northconnacht](http://EirGrid.ie/northconnacht) or contact:



**Eoghan O'Sullivan**  
Community Liaison Officer  
+ 353 87 247 7732



# Appendix 1 – Contributing Reference Documentation

- Sustainable, Inclusive and Empowered Communities: A Five-Year Strategy to Support the Community and Voluntary Sector in Ireland 2019-2024
- Rural Development Policy 2021-2025 - Our Rural Future
- Project Ireland 2040, National Planning Framework, Government of Ireland
- National Implementation Plan for the Sustainable Development Goals 2022-2024
- Healthy Ireland Framework 2019 – 2025
- Roadmap for Social Inclusion 2020 - 2025
- Town Centre First, A Policy Approach for Irish Towns
- National Positive Aging Strategy (NPAS)
- Young Ireland, The national policy framework for children & young people, 2023-2028
- National Volunteering Strategy 2021 - 2025
- Climate Action Plan 2024 'Securing Our Future'
- National Biodiversity Action Plan 2023-2030
- All-Ireland Pollinator Plan 2021-2025
- Embracing Ireland's Outdoors: National Outdoor Recreation Strategy 2023-2027, Government of Ireland
- Sport Ireland Policy on Sport and Physical Activity in the Outdoors, 2020
- The People's Transition: Community-led Development for Climate Justice, 2020
- 'EU action for Smart Villages', European Commission, 2017
- Making Remote Work, National Remote Work Strategy
- Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy 2020-2032, North and Western Regional Assembly
- Roscommon County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028
- Roscommon Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)
- Mayo Local Economic and Community Plan (LECP)
- County Mayo Biodiversity Action Plan, 2010 – 2015
- Mayo Climate Action Plan, 2024-2029
- Roscommon Climate Action Plan, 2024 – 2029
- Nature and Wildlife in Roscommon - Action for Biodiversity, Roscommon County Council, 2012
- LEADER Local Development Strategy, County Roscommon Sub-Regional Area 2023-2027
- County Roscommon Migrant Integration Strategy 2023-2028
- Mayo Migrant Integration Strategy 2022-2026
- EirGrid Community Benefit Fund Policy 2022
- EirGrid Stakeholder Engagement Plan 2022
- Local Energy Masterplans, Local Biodiversity Action Plans and Local Community Development Plans where available.

# Appendix 2 – Contributing Organisations and Groups

Attymass Community Centre	Culmore National School
Attymass Development Association	Derrinabroc National School
Attymass Parents Association	East Mayo Athletics Club
Ballaghaderreen FC	Father Peyton Centre
Ballaghaderreen GAA	Foroige, Charlestown
Ballaghaderreen Handball club	Glebe Residents Association
Ballaghaderreen Sports Complex	IRD North Mayo West Sligo CLG, t/a Moy Valley Resources
Ballaghaderreen Tennis Club	Kilbeagh Community Alert Group
Ballaghaderreen Town Team	Kilmoeve Ladies Football
Ballaghaderreen Women's Shed	Local Authority Waters Programme
Ballaghaderreen Men's Shed	Mary Robinson Centre
Ballina Arts Centre	Mayo Community Transport CLG
Ballina Autism Friendly Town	Mayo County Council
Ballina Chamber of Commerce	Mayo North East Local Development Company
Ballina Convent Regeneration CLG	Mayo North Tourism
Ballina Family Resource Centre CLG	Mayo Volunteer Centre
Ballina St Vincent De Paul Resource Centre	North Mayo West Sligo Heritage Group
Bonniconlon Community Centre	Northwest Roscommon CLG
Bonniconlon Youth Hub	Roscommon County Council
Bonnifinglas Graveyard Committee	Roscommon PPN
Brusna Community Development Association	Sarsfield Men's GAA club, Ardnaree
Brusna Community Park	St. Attracta's National School, Ballaghaderreen
Brusna Defibrillator Group	St. Colman's National School, Derrinabroc
Brusna National School	St. Mary's Secondary School
Brusna Voluntary Development	St. Michael's National School
BVC Development Association	Sustainable Energy Authority Ireland (SEAI)
Carracastle Boxing Club	Swinford Agricultural Show
Charlestown Arts Group	Swinford Amenity Park
Charlestown Boxing Club	Swinford Athletics Club
Charlestown CE Scheme	Swinford Bridge Club
Charlestown Cubs Basketball Club	Swinford Comhaltas
Charlestown Development Association	Swinford Community Development
Charlestown Drama Group	Swinford GAA
Charlestown Sarsfields GAA Club	Swinford Golf Club
Charlestown Swimming Pool	Swinford Killasser LGFA
Climate Office, Mayo County Council	Swinford Siamsa Sraide Street Festival
Climate Office, Roscommon County Council	Swinford Tidy Towns
Conn Rangers FC	The Admiral Brown Society
Craoibhin, Ballina	Western Care Association, Ballina
Culmore Community Group	Western Development Commission

## Appendix 3 – Area SWOT analysis

A SWOT analysis was conducted across the three streams of the Community Benefit Fund. This was informed by a range of information sources and processes including objective evidence and analysis from the socio-economic profile of the North East Mayo/North West Roscommon area, the needs analysis, the consultation findings, national and County specific policy documents.



### Community

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active, well-established community organisations operating in most towns &amp; villages.</li> <li>• Good quality of life with access to diverse community services and amenities</li> <li>• Close proximity to outdoor amenities and the natural environment to improve wellbeing</li> <li>• Strong collaborative and network approach to delivering projects of impact.</li> <li>• Strong community spirit, pride and voluntary contribution across the area.</li> <li>• Proven capacity of towns and villages to secure and invest public funding in successful local development</li> <li>• Sporting and community facilities have been developed in all of the towns/villages.</li> <li>• Strong, active Local Development Companies providing local services and supports.</li> <li>• Increasingly diverse communities</li> <li>• Greater levels of partnership between state supports, local government and local development companies in planning and providing services.</li> <li>• Active and participative PPN structure.</li> <li>• Good cultural, arts, heritage &amp; tourism potential</li> <li>• Strong affinity to local landscape, culture and heritage</li> <li>• Proximity to Ireland West (Knock) airport and rail network (Ballina)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited youth development space, particularly non-sporting related.</li> <li>• Rurality of area resulting in limited access to essential services like healthcare, education, and public transportation for some members of population.</li> <li>• Limited industry or employment opportunities within area, many commuting to larger towns and cities.</li> <li>• Limited services or social opportunities for older people.</li> <li>• Limited childcare facilities in some areas.</li> <li>• Lack of investment in public services in line with population growth putting pressure on local services.</li> <li>• Some community facilities do not have capacity to meet population increases.</li> <li>• Growing demands on volunteers and volunteer-based services, with low levels of volunteer rotation.</li> <li>• Growing ethnic mix and most communities are not resourced to meet the challenges this brings.</li> <li>• Rural area with social isolation affecting some residents, particularly older people living alone and those without access to own transport.</li> <li>• Rural transport provision is under-resourced and this negatively affects quality of life, particularly in very rural communities.</li> <li>• Emerging communication and digital divide, some areas still without adequate broadband.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High potential for inter-community/cross-community collaborations to strengthen rural communities.</li> <li>• Co-funding of community benefit funds with other funding can have significant local impact.</li> <li>• Opportunity to create improved and new infrastructure to provide space and supports for communities and young people.</li> <li>• Community-led tourism, childcare and heritage opportunities</li> <li>• Investments in communities which focus on integration, social inclusion and service provision.</li> <li>• Development of mental health and wellbeing initiatives</li> <li>• Opportunities for social enterprise to meet with gaps in service provision.</li> <li>• Potential to explore development of derelict community facilities or derelict residential / business sites for community use</li> <li>• Support for the enhancement of the quality of life in rural communities.</li> <li>• Services to improve quality of life for the elderly.</li> <li>• To engage with individuals across generations and communities to participate in community actions</li> <li>• Development of strong community network to encourage integrated and local area-based development.</li> <li>• Potential to explore remote working/remote education facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ageing population</li> <li>• Outward migration of skilled workforce and young people</li> <li>• Dereliction in town and village centres</li> <li>• Climate change and severe weather events</li> <li>• Inflationary costs of materials, food, energy etc.</li> <li>• Imbalanced development across the area</li> <li>• High dependency on volunteerism, with succession issues threatening long-term sustainability</li> <li>• Lack of investment to support volunteers in terms of capacity building, lack of investments in staffing of volunteer services (e.g. CSP) and lack of incentives to develop social and community enterprises and services.</li> <li>• Under-representation of young people in civil society bodies and decision-making structures.</li> <li>• Housing crisis and affordability in towns and villages poses a potential issue for out migration of younger people.</li> <li>• Lack of investment in facilities to ensure integration of new communities</li> <li>• Growing concern in relation to crime and anti-social behaviour.</li> </ul>

## Biodiversity

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong biodiversity organisations and initiatives already active in communities across the area.</li> <li>Existing appetite to support biodiversity protection within communities.</li> <li>Strong affinity to the local landscape</li> <li>Strong, rural, bio-diverse landscape of mountains, peatlands, rivers, lakes and farmland</li> <li>Landscape which supports a range of protected birds, flora and fauna</li> <li>Killala Bay/Moy Estuary designated as SAC and SPA &amp; River Moy designated SAC, reflecting the international importance for nature conservation</li> <li>Active and engaged local public representatives e.g. biodiversity officers, LAWPRO</li> <li>Rurality of the area – all communities are located near/within open countryside.</li> <li>Increase in investment by government departments, agencies and other stakeholders.</li> <li>Strong policy context on a global, EU, and national level for protection of biodiversity.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited number of local biodiversity action plans being implemented in the area</li> <li>Limited access to expertise on biodiversity issues, impacts and responses.</li> <li>Lack of knowledge and awareness of best practice.</li> <li>Loss of natural habitats and biodiversity.</li> <li>Increasing issues related to invasive flora/fauna.</li> <li>Water runoff and impact on waterbodies</li> <li>Limited native woodland in area</li> <li>Lack of awareness and motivation to address environmental issues.</li> <li>Negative impact of 'intensive farming' techniques (loss of hedgerows and habitats).</li> <li>Lack of availability of land for biodiversity use.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wide range of conservation and preservation opportunities.</li> <li>Opportunity for inter-community and cross-community collaboration to develop 'landscape' based approaches for greater impact</li> <li>Technical assistance to support research and develop biodiversity action plans, habitat mapping, habitat management plans, data collections, monitoring etc.</li> <li>Support new and existing biodiversity protection initiatives which are active in the area, particularly implementation of biodiversity action plans</li> <li>Mental health and wellbeing in nature</li> <li>Education, learning and awareness building</li> <li>Links with schools and young people</li> <li>Development of community gardens, orchards and woodlands</li> <li>Natural heritage walking trails</li> <li>Tidy Towns – habitat / biodiversity initiatives</li> <li>Develop &amp; implement river catchment management plans.</li> <li>Initiatives to promote bird and bat activity &amp; enhance bird/bat habitats</li> <li>Opportunities to connect people with nature through Citizen Science initiatives.</li> <li>Identify good practice and create shared learning opportunities.</li> <li>To improve biodiversity through conservation of pollinators.</li> <li>Water conservation measures.</li> <li>Working with farmers / farming organisations / anglers / angling organisations</li> <li>Biodiversity for tourism</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biodiversity decline</li> <li>Habitat loss</li> <li>Lack of general appreciation and understanding of importance of biodiversity</li> <li>Protecting the natural environment, whilst meeting the growth in demand for development and outdoor experiences.</li> <li>Climate change</li> <li>Peatlands at risk from drainage, over grazing, peat extraction and spread of invasive plant species</li> <li>Loss of ecosystem services (for example, flood control, pollination, natural pest regulation).</li> <li>Lack of knowledge of best practice could cause 'more harm than good'.</li> <li>Flooding.</li> <li>Intensive agriculture practices.</li> <li>Invasive species</li> <li>Light pollution</li> <li>Littering &amp; Illegal dumping</li> <li>Danger of extinction of natural pollinators.</li> <li>Poor and inconsistent communication on biodiversity issues and opportunities.</li> </ul>

## Sustainability

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clean, green local environment</li> <li>Growing appetite to support sustainable actions within communities.</li> <li>Resilient, cohesive communities</li> <li>Strong existing presence of renewable energy projects in the region</li> <li>Good local awareness of renewable energy potential</li> <li>A small number of local sustainability/climate action groups and networks already established in the area.</li> <li>Several rural transport and active travel plans already underway in some areas.</li> <li>Strong network of Civic Amenity Sites ('bring' bank centres).</li> <li>Increased policy focus and support.</li> <li>Increase in investment by government departments, agencies and other stakeholders.</li> <li>Many communities have engaged with SEAI and indicated an interest in establishing Sustainable Energy Communities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of community level understanding of sustainability issues, impacts and responses.</li> <li>Limited number of established Sustainable Energy Communities.</li> <li>Lack of public transport for those living in rural areas.</li> <li>Lack of community-based responses to energy issues and challenges.</li> <li>Dereliction in rural towns.</li> <li>High reliance on personal vehicles for transport</li> <li>Too much waste going to land fill sites.</li> <li>Inconsistent practices by stakeholders to planning, developing, maintaining and promoting initiatives to address sustainability.</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore innovative solutions through pilot projects.</li> <li>Social dialogue, education and skills building to support Just Transition</li> <li>Access to technical expertise to develop projects and ensure best practice</li> <li>Youth Climate Action initiatives</li> <li>Establishment of new Sustainable Energy Communities in conjunction with SEAI.</li> <li>Circular economy initiatives</li> <li>Opportunity to create Local Networks and collaborations.</li> <li>Renewable energy and micro-generation opportunities.</li> <li>Developing Active Travel infrastructure - cycling and walking network.</li> <li>Smart, Shared and Integrated Transport</li> <li>Developing alternatives for scarce natural resources at a local level.</li> <li>Development of Social Enterprises to address specific local needs.</li> <li>Opportunities for sustainable food initiatives, Community Gardens and 'Grow your own' initiatives.</li> <li>Community building retrofits and energy upgrades</li> <li>Reduce waste through campaigns such as eliminating single use plastics or disposable cups from village/town/campus.</li> <li>Micro generation using waste, wood, water and solar and community-based approaches.</li> <li>Address fuel poverty through improved insulation measures.</li> <li>Tidy Towns – Sustainability category</li> <li>To improve Planning, Transport and Development approaches and decisions to ensure integrated land uses and infrastructure to support sustainable towns and villages.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mixed messaging causing confusion and misinformation amongst consumers</li> <li>Poor and inconsistent communication and engagement in sustainability issues and actions</li> <li>Citizens may be unequally affected by transition to net-zero</li> <li>Negative impact of climate change due to increasing carbon emissions.</li> <li>Global warming.</li> <li>Increased levels of run-off and potential water quality issues.</li> <li>Rising costs of energy.</li> <li>Inefficient community facilities unable to meet rising energy costs.</li> <li>Unstable energy supplies impacting service delivery.</li> <li>Flooding.</li> <li>Food availability, impacts of production.</li> <li>Inflationary costs of materials, food, energy etc.</li> <li>Increases in the intensity of windstorms</li> <li>Damage to transport, structures, damage to the built environment</li> </ul>

## Appendix 4 - Other Relevant Funds and Programmes

Below is a list of potential funding supports which might be considered by applicants. Please note that is an indicative list of the types of funding programmes which may be relative to community projects and the list is not exhaustive.

LEADER Programme 2023 – 2027:  
[www.gov.ie/en/department-of-rural-and-community-development/campaigns/leader](http://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-rural-and-community-development/campaigns/leader)  
Mayo Local Authority Grant Schemes:  
[www.mayo.ie/en-ie/your-council/services/community-and-integrated-development/funding-grants](http://www.mayo.ie/en-ie/your-council/services/community-and-integrated-development/funding-grants)

Roscommon Local Authority Grant Schemes:  
[www.roscommoncoco.ie/en/services/community/community-grant-schemes](http://www.roscommoncoco.ie/en/services/community/community-grant-schemes)

Town and Village Renewal Scheme:  
[www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/01125e-town-and-village-renewal-scheme](http://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/01125e-town-and-village-renewal-scheme)  
Clár - www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/91ba52-clar

Sports Capital Programme:  
[www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie/](http://www.sportscapitalprogramme.ie/)

Rural Regeneration Development Fund:  
[www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/c77144-rural-regeneration-and-development-fund/](http://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/c77144-rural-regeneration-and-development-fund/)

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland:  
[www.seai.ie/grants/community-grants/](http://www.seai.ie/grants/community-grants/)

Outdoor Recreation Infrastructure Scheme:  
[www.gov.ie/en/service/d14e1-outdoor-recreation-infrastructure-scheme/](http://www.gov.ie/en/service/d14e1-outdoor-recreation-infrastructure-scheme/)

Community Water Development Fund (LAWPRO):  
[www.lawters.ie/funding/](http://www.lawters.ie/funding/)

Community Climate Action Programme under the Climate Action Fund (CAF):  
[www.gov.ie/en/publication/de5d3-climate-action-fund/#community-climate-action-programme](http://www.gov.ie/en/publication/de5d3-climate-action-fund/#community-climate-action-programme)

Community Centres Investment Fund:  
[www.gov.ie/en/service/fec91-community-centres-investment-fund/#community-centres-investment-fund-2024-refurbishment-grant](http://www.gov.ie/en/service/fec91-community-centres-investment-fund/#community-centres-investment-fund-2024-refurbishment-grant)

Community Recognition Fund:  
[www.gov.ie/en/service/e626a-community-recognition-fund-2023/](http://www.gov.ie/en/service/e626a-community-recognition-fund-2023/)





The Oval, 160 Shelbourne Rd,  
Dublin 4, D04 FW28  
**01 627 1700 | EirGrid.ie**

