



# Ballynahone Energy Storage

Community Engagement Summary

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# Introduction

The proposed Ballynahone Energy Storage project is a development by FuturEnergy Ireland (previously Coillte Renewable Energy), a joint venture company owned on a 50:50 basis by Coillte and ESB with a target of generating 1GW of renewable electricity by 2030 with supportive battery energy storage facilities.

The company FuturEnergy Ireland Development DAC is seeking planning permission from Donegal County Council to construct and operate a commercially viable battery energy storage facility adjacent to Trillick substation, Gransha Road, southwest of Buncrana town, in Co. Donegal.

The project team began engaging with the local community as soon as the project was launched in January 2024.

Our objective was to:

- Introduce and communicate key project information, through direct and indirect community engagement, meetings and events with the proposed Ballynahone Energy Storage neighbours political representatives.
- Ensure that the views and concerns of all members of the local community, including business owners and political representatives, are considered as part of the project design and the Planning and Environmental report.

Active engagement with communities prior to submitting a renewable energy project planning application is highly recommended in national guidance and in line with industry best practice.

This report outlines the community engagement programme undertaken by the Ballynahone Energy Storage team prior to this planning application. It also highlights the main issues raised during this process and how community feedback informed the final proposal, alongside the steps taken to ensure the proposed development will be of long-term economic benefit to the local and wider community and region as a whole.



# Background

FuturEnergy Ireland is a leading Irish renewable energy developer established in 2021 as a stand-alone joint venture between Coillte and ESB. The company was formed to maximise the potential of Ireland’s unique wind and land resources and to accelerate Ireland’s transformation to a low carbon energy economy. FuturEnergy Ireland is targeting the delivery of 1GW of onshore wind energy, along with supportive energy storage facilities, by 2030.

These projects would power an estimated 730,000 homes annually, make a significant contribution to Ireland’s commitment to produce 80% of electricity from renewable sources by the end of this decade, and deliver material emissions reductions.

Further details on FuturEnergy Ireland and its advanced development stage portfolio are available via the company website [futureenergyireland.ie](http://futureenergyireland.ie).

FuturEnergy Ireland seeks to work with the communities surrounding its renewable energy sites and wishes to build projects that are good for the company as a commercial entity and good for its neighbours, and that contribute to national and global climate change objectives.

FuturEnergy Ireland has a long history of working with communities around the country, having developed renewable energy projects in Ireland over the past decade. During this time the company has learnt many valuable lessons in relation to working with local communities.

**Our ambition is to develop more than 1GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030**



**1GW**

Clean, green electricity generated



**730,000**

Homes powered annually



**1,122,156**

Tonnes of carbon emissions saved annually



**The key elements of the FuturEnergy Ireland Development DAC community engagement programme are:**

- Proactive engagement**  
We take a proactive approach to engagement, with dedicated Community Engagement Manager assigned to each project, which makes us accessible and easy to contact. This means that local community members and other stakeholders can make an informed decision about the proposed energy storage project.
- User-friendly, up-to-date information**  
We ensure that the local community is kept updated, informed and have access to project information, as soon as it is available, in a user-friendly format.
- Constructive conversation**  
Open, honest engagement is key to our approach. We listen to feedback, seek to understand any concerns raised and address these to the extent possible during the pre-planning process and to inform the final application.
- Building relationships**  
FuturEnergy Ballynahone DAC is committed to strengthening partnerships with local communities now and into the future.

# BALLYNAHONE Project Team

In order to implement the community engagement programme, FuturEnergy Ireland resourced this project with dedicated staff from the outset. The following key personnel have been involved in community engagement on Ballynahone Energy Storage:



**Fionn Mc Donagh**  
Project manager

Civil engineer Fionn worked in infrastructure design before completing a master's degree in energy engineering and joining the FuturEnergy Ireland team. He finds renewables a fast-paced and exciting sector, and he enjoys helping to make a difference and improve Ireland's energy system.



**Shane Lowry**  
Community Engagement Manager

Shane leads the community engagement programme for the proposed Ballynahone Energy Storage project. As a former FuturEnergy Ireland Community Liaison Officer, Shane understands the importance of working with the community to a project's success.



**Janine Thomas**  
Communications and Media Manager

Janine looks after communications and media relations for FuturEnergy Ireland. She worked as a journalist for various national newspapers for over 15 years before joining the team. Janine brings her extensive media and communications experience to this project.



## Fehily Timoney and Company

Fehily Timoney and Company is an Irish civil and environmental engineering, scientific and planning consultancy. The practice was established in 1990 by Eamon Timoney and Brendan Fehily. Today, Fehily Timoney and Company has circa 105 staff, including engineers, scientists, town planners, geotechnicians and technical support staff across offices in Cork, Dublin and Carlow.

Fehily Timoney and Company delivers projects in Ireland and internationally, in core competency areas of Planning, Waste Management, Environment and Energy, GIS and Data Management, Geotechnics and Civils Infrastructure.



# Summary of Community Engagement

In January 2024, the project appointed a Community Engagement Manager (CEM), Shane Lowry. The role of a CEM is to introduce and communicate key project information, timelines, updates, activities, benefits and proposals through direct and indirect community engagement, meetings and events about the proposed Ballynahone Energy Storage facility with near neighbours and the wider community.

On 29th January, the Ballynahone community engagement programme launched and a dedicated website went live.

At the end of January the CEM's direct engagement focused on calling to houses adjacent to the proposed project area with the distribution of an introductory newsletter and letter with an invitation to attend an Information Hub the following week. The purpose of the Information Hub was to introduce the project and CEM Shane as the main point of contact at the earliest stage possible, share all information available thus far and answer initial queries.

Local elected representatives in the Municipal district of Inishowen were either emailed/delivered/posted the newsletter and an invitation to keep them informed and up-to-date on the proposed project.

The Information Hub was held on 8th February 2024 in the Inishowen Hotel, Railway Road, Buncrana, F93 PPH9. There was a strong turnout of approximately 40 people and a good level of engagement.

On 14th February, the CEM posted thank-you and acknowledgement letters to stakeholders who attended and provided their names and addresses at the Information Hub.

At the Information Hub, a list of questions and information requests were collated. In March 2024, the project team compiled a Q&A document answering these specific queries. The CEM hand-delivered this Q&A document with an accompanying letter to houses adjacent to the proposed project. Local elected representatives who requested to be kept informed were emailed this document.

In April 2024, the CEM delivered Newsletter 2 with an invitation letter to a community engagement clinic to houses adjacent to the project area. This was emailed/delivered/posted to local elected representatives who requested to be kept informed. In tandem, the FuturEnergy Ireland communications manager sent a media release to local journalists and organised placements of advertisements to promote the clinic in local newspapers.

The community engagement clinic was held on 25th April 2024 at the Inishowen Hotel, Railway Road, Buncrana, F93 PPH9, which gave the public and local elected representatives the opportunity to meet the wider project team (including the consultant, project manager and portfolio director), discuss the project and ask any questions they may have.



Again, the turnout was good, and many conversations were held on numerous topics listed later in this report.

During early May, an update letter was distributed locally informing near neighbours of an on-site hydrology survey that is expected to take place in the coming weeks. This provided an opportunity to discuss the proposed project further with local residents who were available at the time of calling.

Our intention during August/September 2024 is to distribute a "notice to submit into planning" letter to the near neighbours. In tandem, advertisements giving notice of the planning submission will be placed in local and national newspapers. Site notices will also be erected around the proposed project.

The CEM was on hand to discuss any queries and take any feedback, comments or concerns from residents and local elected representatives, back to the project team to respond. Some information requests were logged so that when the information became available it would be provided.

At all stages of the project's engagement cycle during 2024, our communications material included a contact number, project email, postal address and dedicated project website address [ballynahoneenergystorage.ie](http://ballynahoneenergystorage.ie).

The dedicated project website was continually updated with all project newsletters. The initial list of FAQs uploaded was expanded upon with further detailed FAQs based on Info Hub feedback provided and ongoing engagement.



The Ballynahone Community Clinic took place in April 2024

# Community Engagement Timeline

Infographic summary of community engagement carried out for the proposed Ballynahone Battery Storage

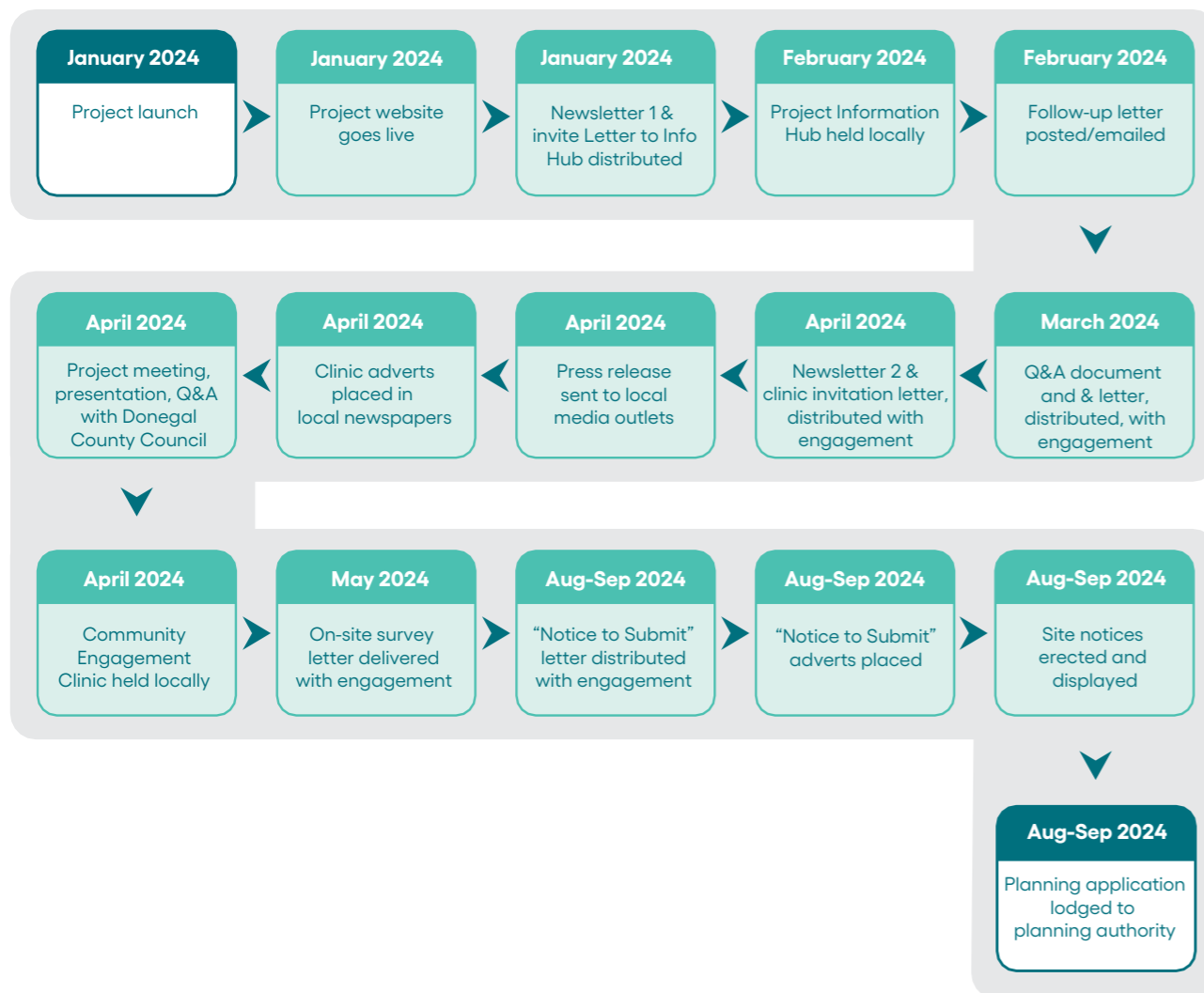


Table 1 - Detailed summary of community engagement 2024

Date	Community Engagement
29th January	Dedicated project website goes live.
29th/30th January	Newsletter 1 and introduction letter with an invitation to an Information Hub was distributed locally with direct engagement by CEM.
8th February	Info Hub evening held, 40+ people attended. Letters with questions were handed in.
14th February	Thank-you and acknowledgement letters posted to stakeholders that attended and provided their names and addresses at the Information Hub.
27th/28th March	Replies to questions received at Information Hub and an accompanying letter were distributed locally with direct engagement by CEM.
17th/18th April	Newsletter 2 and accompanying letter with an invitation to a community engagement clinic were hand-delivered with direct engagement by CEM.
25th April	Meeting, presentation and Q&A with Donegal County Council.
25th April	Community Engagement Clinic held. 28+ adults and 1 Councillor attended.
W/c 6th May	Project update letter with notice of an on-site hydrology survey taking place during May/June was distributed locally with direct engagement by CEM.
May/June	Ongoing engagement and availability continued.
August/September	Project "Notice to submit into planning" letter were hand-delivered with direct engagement by CEM.
August/September	Project "Notice to Submit into planning" advertorials placed in local papers.
August/September	Project site notices erected and displayed.
August/September	Project planning application lodged to planning authority. Planning documents uploaded onto project website.

## Engagement with local elected representatives

At the project launch, the Community Engagement Manager emailed/posted all nine local elected representatives in the municipal district of Inishowen, Co. Donegal, and the sitting Deputy representing the area, to inform them about the project. From that time onwards, local elected representatives who requested to be kept informed were emailed/posted all project correspondence. This commitment will continue.

Date	CE & Comms with local elected representatives
<b>30th January</b>	Emailed 9 councillors introducing the proposed project, with Newsletter (see Appendix), and posted hard copy of introduction letter and Newsletter 1.
<b>31st January</b>	Email reply from Cllr Nicholas Crossan, who will attend Info Hub on 8th February. Email reply from Cllr Martin Mc Dermott, unable to attend.
<b>7th February</b>	Called Cllr Jack Murray, followed by a Q & A session.
<b>8th February</b>	3 councillors attended Info Hub. • Cllr Nicholas Crossan • Cllr Rena Donaghey • Cllr Jack Murray
<b>14th February</b>	Councillors sent followup email after the Info Hub.
<b>16th February</b>	Email reply from Cllr Jack Murray.
<b>21st February</b>	Emailed Deputy McConalogue to introduce the proposed project.
<b>27th March</b>	Emailed 4 councillors and Deputy McConalogue with Q & A document and update letter.
<b>17th/18th April</b>	Emailed 4 councillors and Deputy McConalogue with Newsletter 2 and invitation to the community engagement clinic.
<b>25th April</b>	Cllr Jack Murray attended the community engagement clinic.
<b>August/September</b>	Emailed councillors and Deputy McConalogue, to notify them of a notice to submit the planning application shortly.

**Table 2 - Website visits, local on-site clinic attendance**

CE Stats	
Website unique users Feb to May	84
February 2024: Info Hub attendees	40
April 2024: Community clinic attendees	30

**Table 3 - Media Report**

Date	MEDIA
<b>W/C 6th of Feb</b>	Article about Ballynahone in the Inishowen Independent
<b>W/C 8th of Feb</b>	Media interview at Info Hub with Inishowen Independent reporter
<b>W/C 13th of Feb</b>	Article about Ballynahone in the Inishowen Independent
<b>W/C 9th of April</b>	Article in the Inishowen Independent
<b>W/C 22nd of April</b>	Media release sent and adverts placed in the Inishowen Independent and Inishowen Times to promote the clinic
<b>W/C 22nd of April</b>	Highland Radio report
<b>W/C 23rd of April</b>	Article in the Inishowen Independent
<b>W/C 25th of April</b>	Media interview at clinic with reporter for Inishowen Independent
<b>W/C 14th of May</b>	Article in the Inishowen Independent
<b>August/September</b>	Notice to submit planning application advert placed in local papers



## Community engagement feedback

The engagement process undertaken on the proposed Ballynahone Energy Storage has given the project team a detailed appreciation of the issues and reservations of the near neighbours.

There was a good turnout at both the Information Hub (40 attendees) and the Community Clinic (30 attendees) to discuss the project with us. The CEM had many conversations on doorsteps when delivering newsletters and letters by hand, and feedback provided informed the final project design submitted to planning at this time.

Feedback and open communication have facilitated the evolution of the project design and helped the project team to understand and alleviate the reservations expressed as far as possible.

### Feedback that informed project design

After initial site surveys and investigations had taken place, the project team presented a map in Newsletter 1 with highlighted areas that had the potential to be developed. After sharing the map and listening to feedback, there were a number of requests from the community to omit the northwest area of the project site for development to reduce potential visual impact, proximity to adjacent dwellings and the wider area.

Although this area had the potential to be included in the overall planning application, parts were not as coherently connected as the rest of the project site. The decision was made based on feedback not to develop this area, as a goodwill gesture and for practicality, and the project team provided a commitment not to include it in the planning application.

The decision was very well received by those who had placed the request.

### Key feedback points

The main reservations expressed from local residents include impacts relating to traffic management and disruption relating to construction, noise, visual impacts, health and safety, hydrology, effects on future planning and land use, damage to roads after construction and roads not being properly reinstated and repaired.

These themes were discussed throughout the engagement process and were answered in a transparent and open manner. Ultimately not all themes could be or were addressed to the satisfaction of all, but the project team remains open in trying to find fair and equitable solutions, including sharing information sources at our disposal.

Our responses to the main reservations are included as part of the Q&A replies distributed locally (see Appendix). Further discussions were had, and clarity provided by the project team, at the community engagement clinic held on 25th April.

All of the above themes are also clearly addressed in the Planning and Environmental Report.

The planning application will include full details of all assessments carried out to include findings from site investigations and an assessment of any potential impacts and mitigations. The public will be able to view the planning application and Planning and Environmental Report when it has been submitted.

It is to be noted that our Community Engagement Manager Shane Lowry was treated with respect in the vast majority of cases. While some neighbouring households were not pleased with what they were hearing, we were thanked at times for bringing the information to them. The engagement allowed people to digest the information, discuss it among themselves and reach out to the project team on any items that they felt needed further clarification.

## Enduring Project Benefits

From on-the-ground conversations we were asked how a battery energy storage would be of benefit.

County Donegal is a powerhouse of home-grown renewable energy production in this country and unfortunately as we all know, too much of this is going to waste because there is not enough grid capacity in the area to take the energy when it is being produced. This project has the potential to save this valuable energy and to store it until it is needed and then supply homes, businesses, schools and hospitals in the region with locally generated green energy.

Battery energy storage systems are a positive step towards a more sustainable resilient and prosperous energy future. Benefiting our environment economy and us all by:

### Maximising renewable energy

The ability to store excess clean renewable energy generated, not waste it and to use that energy when we need it.

### Financial savings

Lower electricity costs by reducing reliance on burning expensive imported fossil fuels for energy generation.

### Energy security

Increases Ireland's energy independence and economic resilience.

### Grid reliability

A move towards a more consistent reliable power supply.

### Safety

Iron-air battery technology is inherently safe.

### Environmental responsibility

Reduces greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the need to burn fossil fuels to generate energy.

## A Community Benefit Fund

If the project receives a positive planning outcome and is constructed, there will be a community benefit fund put in place for those who live adjacent to the project. During pre-construction, we will re-connect with those living close to the project and provide details of the fund, how it works and how they can avail of it.

## Employment opportunities

Ballynahone Energy Storage would create sustainable local employment during the construction period, availing of qualified and vetted local supplier services, and for servicing and maintenance work thereafter.

## Local authority rates payments

It would also contribute annual rates to the local authority. This will have a positive impact on local infrastructure and amenities such as roads, public lighting and libraries.



# Ongoing Liaison and Contact

Project phases are detailed below with differing levels of engagement anticipated depending on the level of activity. A dedicated Community Liaison Officer, who is contactable by email and phone, will underpin the engagement.

These contact details will remain on the project website, which will be in place for the duration of the project. As the proposed Ballynahone Energy Storage project progresses, regular updates will be posted to this website.

## Post-planning submission until six months pre-construction

If the proposed project receives a favourable planning decision and progresses through the next development stages, we are committed to keeping the local community updated about project activities.

## Pre-construction and construction phase

Prior to construction, the project team will arrange to meet with local residents to develop plans to monitor activity during construction and communicate effectively with residents directly impacted by construction activity and deliveries, especially traffic planning to minimise disruption.

The project will also engage with local suppliers to outline its future needs and promote the use of local suppliers and service providers wherever possible. This may take the form of a “meet the buyer” event.

## Operational phase

A Community Liaison Officer will be available throughout this period to directly address any issues raised by local residents. The project website will also be maintained as a means of providing regular, up-to-date information.

## Decommissioning phase

A year before decommissioning, the project team will engage with residents adjacent to the project to outline the decommissioning plan and address any issues.

# Conclusion / Commitment

As outlined throughout this report, there has been very active community engagement in the vicinity of the proposed Ballynahone Energy Storage project during the planning/design phase. Many of our neighbours are supportive, while others do not wish to see the project proceed.

We have achieved much in terms of making the proposed development a better project for all through our engagement.

We fully recognise, however, that the development of an energy storage project is a long, complex process and that there is ample time to work with near neighbours and other stakeholders.

We are committed to making ourselves available and keeping the local community updated as the project progresses now and into the future.



Ballynahone project team in attendance at the Community Clinic in April.

# Project Literature: newsletters, letters, brochures and other information:

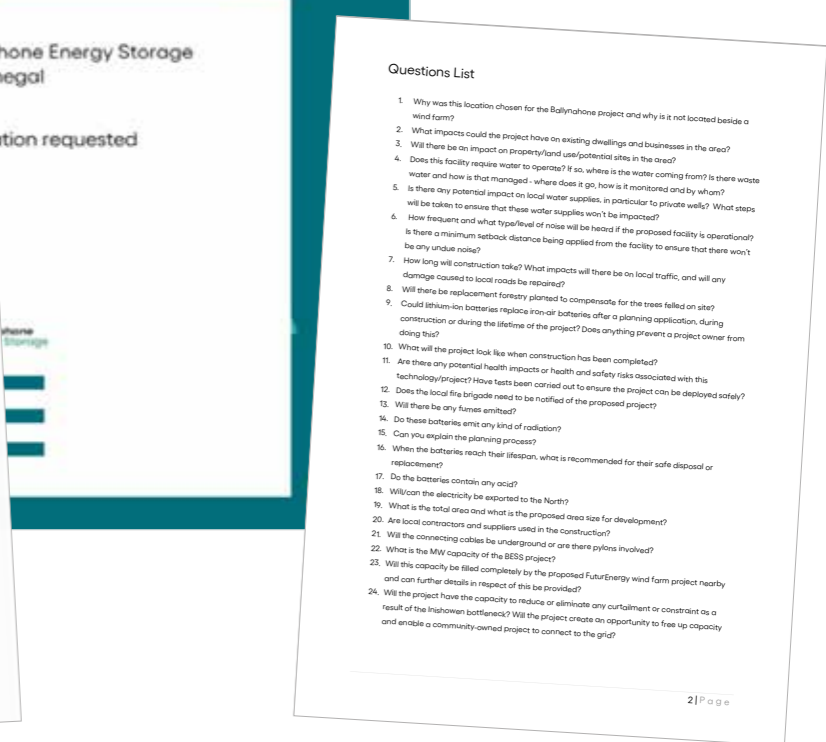
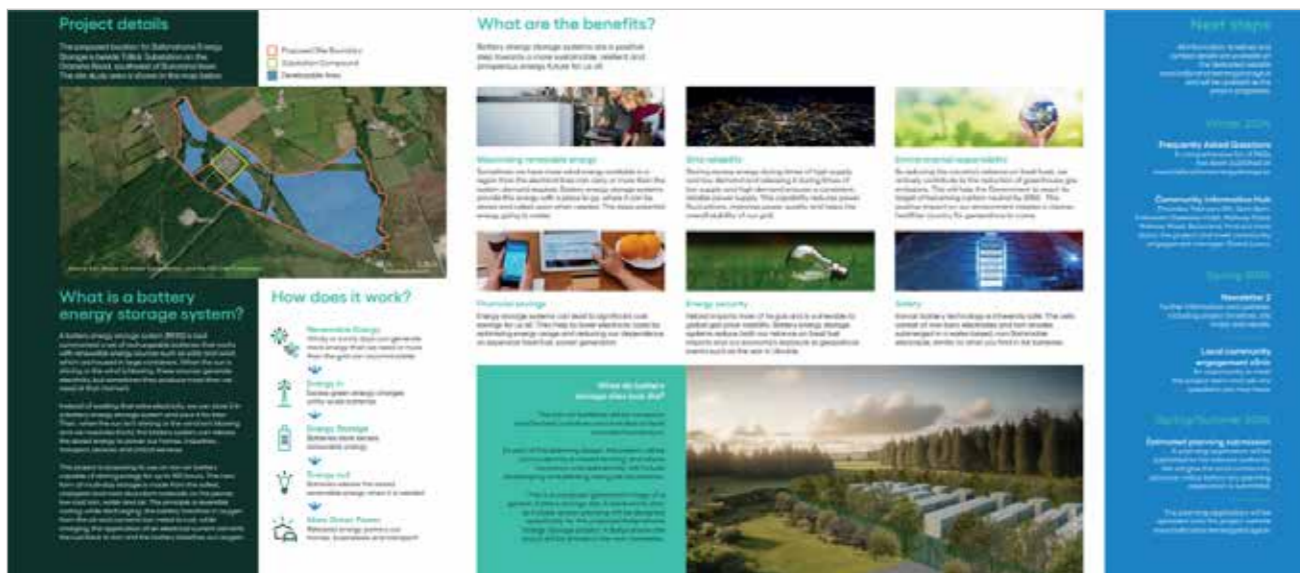
Newsletter 1 and accompanying Letter distributed:



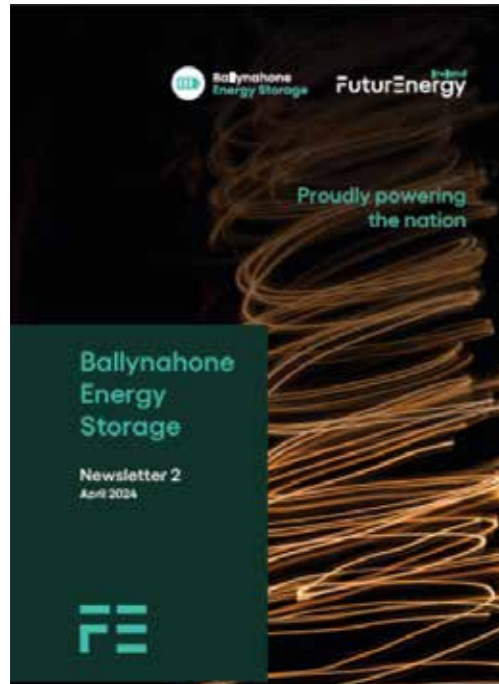
Follow-up letter after Info Hub



Q&A report and accompanying letter distributed



Newsletter 2 and accompanying letter with invitation to clinic



Copy of Advertorials:

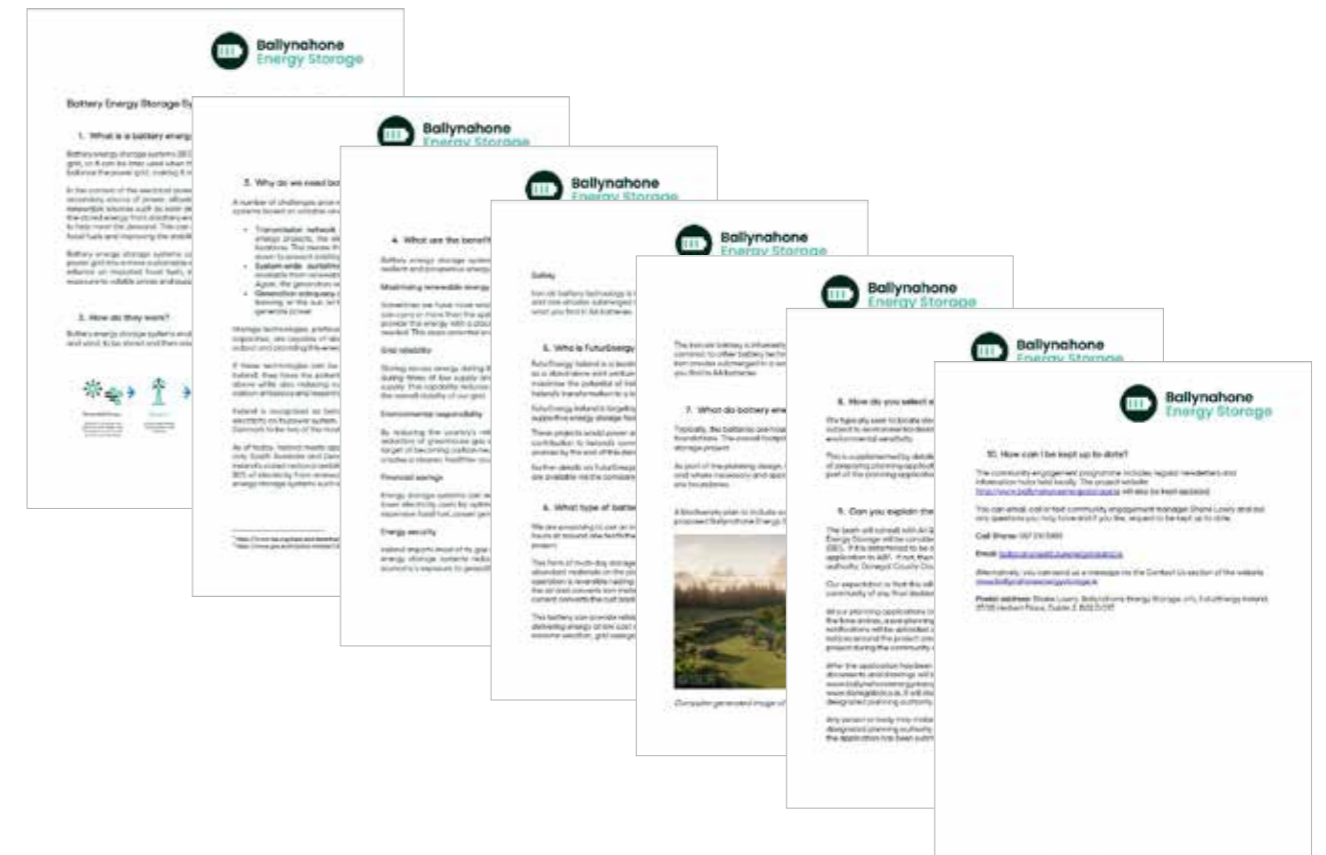


Inishowen Independent



Inishowen Times

Battery Energy Storage Systems: 6 pages of Frequently Asked Questions uploaded to Project website and available at Info Hub and Engagement Clinic.



The background features several large, overlapping teal-colored rectangular shapes of varying sizes and orientations, creating a modern, abstract design.

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