

Water and Power – Basic Human Rights Being Denied



Lónra Rannpháirtíochta Phoiblí **Liatroim**
Public Participation Network **Leitrim**

Report:- Public Meeting, organised by [Leitrim Public Participation Network](#),
PPN,

*an independent network of community, voluntary, social inclusion and
environmental organisations, working to build a better county for the
community of Leitrim*

Thurs 23 Jan 2025 Ballinamore, Co. Leitrim



Meeting Aim: To collectively Identify the impact on services as a result of storm
and look at how this can be prevented in the future.

Compiled by Independent Chair:- Maeve McCormack

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1. Overview

The frequency and duration of power and water outages (from hours to weeks), in Leitrim in recent years, is unacceptable both after storms and all year round. Basic human rights are being denied to the residents of the County.

The level and regularity of power and water cuts and shortages has eaten into the resilience of Leitrim residents as they deal with a life and livelihood threatening problems that keep returning, with worsening impacts each time.

A multi-agency approach at local, regional and national levels is required to address this. Agencies responsible directly and indirectly for this lack of basic services, must be compelled to actively address the situation immediately. We call for a taskforce to be set up.

This document is a record of the discussion and recommended actions from a public meeting attended by almost 140 people, called by Leitrim PPN on Thursday 23 January 2025 to:

1. Collectively Identify the impact on Leitrim services as a result of storm damage in recent years
2. Look at how this can be prevented in the future

Note: Comments from the night are summarised in *italics* in this report.

2. Impacts Outlined:

1) Physical, Health & Mental Impacts

Breaks in water/electricity supplies for prolonged periods and at sporadic times throughout the year, not just after storms, have created 'unbearable' living conditions. Some of the examples outlined included two weeks without power (and therefore no water or heat), to weekly breaks in supply, in homes with family that have significant health issue, to an elderly man living in an isolated area with a candle and no phone coverage (landline or mobile) or media source (TV or radio) to receive updates on weather and safety reports.

Elderly people living alone in isolated areas who have alarm buttons and if they fall have no way of communicating with the world.

- *The sheer cold of no power or water for 2 weeks. Unbearable.*
- *One week with no electricity after last storm, trees planted in early 1990, now 30 metres high, power lines everywhere – no TV signal because of trees, contents of freezer lost*
- *Was 8 days without power and have health issues*
- *Everyone in Leitrim is paying too much for this problem.*

2) Economic Impacts

Power and water cuts and shortages have had severe economic consequences for households, businesses and farmers. Households and business lose chilled food and frozen supplies, and while they may cope the first time, they cannot afford to buy the food again when it keeps happening. Services cannot deliver without water or power and those who can, have no payment systems with card payment systems and ATMs out of service. Those on group water schemes face the option of paying €20,000 for a generator. The impossibility of working and communicating with no broadband service and no phone service was referenced throughout the night.

- *Lose water 1 day per week*
- *We are losing services even when there is no storm.*
- *This is not just a human issue; it is an animal welfare issue also.*
- *Generator in Carrick not hooked up.*
- *A group water scheme should not have to get a generator to operate.*
- *Group Water Scheme – 11 days with no water – can't do this for people and for livestock runs a bar and B & B, huge loss of business, food wastage, solar panels don't work either*
- *Water pumps – gone with no power Customer - Stock – Cost of frozen food*
- *Lower water levels mean no water, because of reservoir structure*
- *No water/ power for work or guests or employees*
- *Costs 20k for a generator for a group water scheme*
- *It will take a long time to fix things. Hitting working class families, the most*
- *How can we be compensated for something that is not our fault?*

Main Causes

Forestry was identified as the main issue causing the outages which are long term and which are repeated or occurring regularly. Many speakers identified regular outages over recent years and for extended periods of more than 2 days and related it directly to local forestry areas where power lines run through it.

The impact of forestry on disruption of services (electricity and Water) was identified. A range of planning issues were outlined, where trees and roots interfered with power lines and water pipes. The lack of power for extended periods mean that water services such as treatment, pumping etc cannot operate and then take quite a long time to reinstate when the power does come back.

Various examples were given around inappropriate planting that causes this, lack of access to forested land to address issues, lack of consultation with locals and lack of co-operation between ESB, Uisce Éireann (Irish Water), forest owners and managing bodies.

- *National Context – over planted too much commercial forestry*
- *Need for planned planting using local knowledge – to this need to talk to all forestry stakeholders – Farmers, Dep Agriculture, Forestry, Coillte, ESB*
- *Need legislation to compel ESB Forestry and Companies to address this*
- *Water Pipe issues – We need to stand up to Forestry Uisce Eireann and Dep Environment and make it a national issue*
- *The cost of fixing power and water noted*

- *Sitka Spruce is the problem*
- *10m from the ESB lines – this legislation needs to be changed to extend the distance*

3. Issues Identified:

The atmosphere at this meeting was one of frustration and despair at the continuing breaks in basic services. This is confounded by a complete lack of communication and engagement with bodies and services that have the power to address this. Despite every effort by residents and local organisations and elected representatives to bring the relevant stakeholders together (water, power, forestry, local authority) nobody seems willing to engage. Nobody from the ESB, Uisce Éireann, Coillte, DAFM Forest Service, Irish Forest Owners IFO, Forest Industries Ireland (FIL), Leitrim County Council Executive attended the meeting. This was noted by all those present who were willing to engage and suggest solutions.

- *Irish Water won't answer calls*
- *What can be done short term when you have a water/power cut?*
- *THE DAFM staff based in an office in Wexford decides where the trees in Leitrim are planted.*
- *All the power lines need to be mapped*
- *It was said several times on the night Coillte have a responsibility even though they say they don't.*
- *Speaking with ESB they had no access to certain forestry.*
- *Reservoir covered, 11 days without water. Difficulty going across the mountain until reservoir is full. Solution: raise the reservoir. Huge issue with this scheme that need attention immediately – one member spoke on national radio.*
- *Need to make formal complaints en masse to suppliers*
- *ESB need access to land*
- *Questions must be asked of Coillte and other forestry owners*
- *Managed Forestry? New rules for forestry/Planting are needed to*
- *Animal Welfare Issues*
- *Department say it's landowners' responsibility – forest owners including Coillte also need to be told that it's their responsibility.*
- *ESB and Uisce Éireann need to be invited to the council chamber to explain.*
- *Huge dismay that the agencies invited didn't attend, despite reminders etc.*
- *Department has all data – they may say they don't but they do.*
- *Legislation can be changed right now. i.e. plant trees to only grow a certain height.*
- *Irish Water will not talk to anyone. Bring to national government.*

4. Solutions

Throughout this meeting a range of solutions were offered by those present. The Chair noted that despite what residents are enduring, they are willing to focus on a solution. The infrastructure issues causing these outages, need to be addressed by local, regional and national task forces to address the issue identified on the night and be answerable to the residents of Leitrim. A multi-agency approach at local, regional and national levels is required to address this. Agencies responsible directly and indirectly for this lack of basic services, must be compelled to actively address the situation immediately.

A workable interagency structure must be put in place to monitor power and water services in Leitrim that has the power to address current issues and future issues as they arise to ensure that the residents of Leitrim are no longer denied their basic human right to water and power. A task force should be put in place to achieve this. It needs to include high level representation from:

- Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine (DAFM) Forest Service
- Minister for Forestry
- Coillte
- ESB
- Forest Industries Irl / other forest representative groups
- Irish Farmers Association
- Leitrim County Council Executive
- Uisce Éireann
- Leitrim PPN Reps (community voices are vital)

The meeting was clear that a strong Community voice representing the community must be a part of the solution or any structure / committee set up to address the issues. The PPNs nationally and locally are recognised by Government as the voice of community.

The various stakeholders must be compelled (by Government) to work together with the local residents, businesses and landowners to:

- Identify issues and who is responsible for each and who can help solve each
- Identify a structured collaborative way forward among the stakeholders to address each issue
- Put a structure in place to ensure this does not happen again
- Give ESB access to lands to fix power outages
- Penalties for power and water suppliers for each hour they do not provide services
- Map the power lines, water pipes in forested and proposed areas and identify where they are threatened by the forestry.
- Remove all tress in all forested powerline corridors back sufficiently from the lines so that no trees can reach the line or poles if they fall. This must start immediately
- Examine and enforce current forest planting standards
- Examine setbacks / regulations for planting – if distance needs to be extended and enforced
- People must be paid / compensated for the cost and losses that they incur by the forestry owners.
- Generators must be supplied and available for all water treatment and pumping facilities to ensure power does not remain out for extended periods
- Build up practical resilience in the community, by providing community training around areas such as:
 - ✓ How to back up/generate power at home
 - ✓ Home based water supplies
 - ✓ Reading electricity bills to save power

- *Bodies/agencies need to be answerable to communities– e.g., compensation*
- *Legislation for ESB to cut trees*
- *Legislation needs to be changed at a national level and implemented at a local level. Electricity and Water needs to take precedent in Government.*
- *Mapping of the area/issues – Compel agencies to act*
- *What can we do to compel bodies to act? • We need to see action happen.*

- Acknowledge the impact of afforestation regionally on power
 - Examine the regulations around: Forestry planting in the context of impact on power lines and water pipes when the forests have matured
 - 10 metre setback for planting (Landowner can apply for 10-meter compensation – 10-meter way leave
 - Up to government to introduce a way leave f: 10 meter set back.
 - ESB already do a lot of work.
 - Water and power for Leitrim Residents
 - Relationships between Irish Water/ESB/Forestry/ Planting?
 - Some work done together – need more
 - All need to come together
 - Regional Problems
 - Noted that TD Marian Harkin said it was discussed in the programme for government and 4 Cllrs had motions in. Final wording: Forestry companies need to sort this problem out.
 - It is a regional problem. Include West Cavan in the fight back. Prior to the public meeting organised by Leitrim PPN, 16 people from LEN met to discuss issues surrounding water supply, power cuts from Storm Darragh, community energy grants, and what steps our community could take for more resilience. The group talked about how there are limits on what the council can fix, so we as a group (and as a community and individuals) may need to learn more about supplying our own power and water needs.
 - What can County Council do? They need to put a push on their government colleagues or we could be talking about this forever.
 - Government needs to be confronted. Up to government to look after us. Cllrs need to contact government.
 - Power outages as well as water as the water is pumped and needs electricity - Solution: back-up generator for pump.
-
- ESB cannot go into properties.
Solution: put in complaints, make our voice heard, make them engage.
-
- Water/Power are a Human Right. Task Force has to be put in place
 - Identify issues and who is responsible for each
 - Who is responsible for water? Uisce Éireann, County Council? Who is responsible for which elements?

5. Further Detail

1) How information was gathered on the night:

1. Representative Stories were heard from people regarding the impact of the storm on them, giving examples referencing Water / Electricity / Forestry /Roads /Business impact/ Personal Impact/Trees near the roadside with ash die back/Vulnerable people
2. Submissions were read out by those who could not attend.
3. Contributions from Leitrim County Councillors present, all from Ballinamore MD area present.
4. Open Mike contributions from those present on the night.
5. Short presentations from [Save Leitrim](#) and [Leitrim Environmental Network](#).
6. A table was available for written comments and suggestions on the night.

The information was collated by the Independent Chair who took her own notes and supplemented these with notes taken by PPN staff on the night.

The report will be sent to:

- The forest service DAFM
- ESB
- Coillte
- Forest Industries Irl and other forest owner rep groups
- Leitrim County Councillors and Executive
- Forestry Minister Michael Healy Rea
- TD Marian Harkin, TD Martin Kenny, TD Frank Feighan, TD Eamon Scanlon will talk to Minister Dara Calleary as Minister for Rural Affairs and we can get politicians to follow up on same.
- Minister for Agriculture Food and the Marine

2) Organisations/Individuals that spoke:

- Leitrim PPN Secretariat /Leitrim PPN SPC Rep
- Bar B & B Owner
- Local Residents
- Leitrim Environmental Network)- (Leitrim PPN SPC Rep)
- Save Leitrim
- PPN Reps
- IFA Regional Executive
- Group Water Scheme
- Leitrim Environmental Network & (PPN Facilitator of a Linkage Group)
- Hedgerows Ireland
- Ballinamore Scouts
- Chairman of Lahard Residents Association
- County Councillors (Leitrim and Cavan)
- Cathaoirleach of Leitrim County Council

3) Submissions read out at the Meeting

a) Summary submission

We lost our power on the Friday evening of Storm Darragh (6th December 2024)

Initially when we checked the ESB outages web page it was showing that we were due to be restored on Tuesday the 10th December, this was then pushed back to Wednesday the 11th December and then pushed back to the evening of Friday 13th December. It actually came back on Friday 13th just before lunchtime; a total of six and a half days after the storm.

Although candlelight is initially romantic it is not overly practical when you're trying to cook a meal.

We live approximately 4km outside Drumshanbo and our neighbours the other side of the wood and all the houses along our road into Drumshanbo had their power restored on Sunday 8th, but our house and all our neighbours towards the Roscommon border (away from Drumshanbo) were without until Friday 13th.

Very annoying and frustrated

b) Ballinamore Resident

Profile of our household

I am a lone parent in my early 50's and I am also a carer to my 13-year-old child who has a diagnosis of severe autism and a moderate intellectual disability. I work as a Self-Employed Occupational Health and Safety Advisor, Auditor and Trainer. I work from home. I have an office in my home and require light, heat, electric power and broadband in order to run my business on a day-to-day basis.

Our house is registered as a "Vulnerable Customer". We come under category "B: particularly vulnerable to disconnection during winter months for reasons of advanced age or physical, sensory, intellectual or mental health.

History of Power outages 2024

| Number | Date Reported | Duration of outage |
|---------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | 21st January | 2 hours |
| 2. | 22nd February | 5.5 hours |
| 3. | 1 st March | 12 hours |
| 4. | 8 th April | 2.5 hours |
| 5. | 15th April | 4.5 hours |
| 6. | 21st April | 2 hours |
| 7. | 19 th August | 2 hours |
| 8. | 19 th September | 4 hours |

| | | |
|-----|---------------------------|------------|
| 9. | 22nd October | 30 minutes |
| 10. | 7 th December | 5 days |
| 11. | 30 th December | 2 hours |

Source of power outages

A forest less than 0.5 miles down the road from my home appears to be the source of the outages. Our power always returns after the ESB Network crews leave that area with their plant and equipment.

Impact of the power outages on our household

Increased stress and strain

My child's school was closed for three days (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday) as a result of pressure on the ESB Network services to restore power to so many customers after the damage caused by Storm Darragh. Simultaneously, we had no power in the home from midnight Friday until Wednesday evening. We also experienced water loss and low water supply during this period.

My child has eating difficulties (only able to eat certain foods cooked in a certain way), as well as sensory processing and transition challenges that can lead to high anxiety. It isn't possible for me to bring him to a Public House or Restaurant, and have a sit-down meal.

Our home is my child's "safe place". Routine and structure are vital to his wellbeing.

I also act as an Occupational Therapist (OT), a Speech & Language Therapist (SLT), a psychologist, a behaviour analyst as well as mother, carer and advocate.

The disruption to home and school life caused by the frequent and prolonged power outages is a definite barrier to my child's developmental progress.

Financial strain

The vast bulk of my self-employment is carried out online. Frequent outages are having an impact on my earning potential. Travelling to a hot desk/co-work area when an unplanned outage occurs is not a viable option. Also, if the child is not at school due to the school having to close, then I do not have the necessary help and support to care for him in my absence.

Storage of food and milk is extremely difficult during times of power cuts. As we all know the cost of food is increasing all the time. Food spoilage is a financial strain.

The future

If the root cause of the power outages is not tackled and an acceptable solution for everyone is not reached, then I do not see how my family can continue to live long-term in the Ballinamore Municipal District.

Frustrated Individual

He had no power, heat, internet for 8 days during last storm, I'm in a townland where in 2023 we were without power at least once every single month. It happened because trees, that are too tall, have been grown so close to lines and roads that they fall on both in their thousands. I'd suggest three things. Active legislation that allows the ESB to cut trees that are within striking distance of roads and power lines. The ESB know there are problem trees. They can't cut them because they are within regs and privately owned. Secondly legislation and guidelines that has planting distances that will prevent this from happening with new plantings. we don't have this at the moment. Thirdly the forestry, water and owners need to talk to one another. Legislation and guidelines that has planting distances that will prevent this from happening with new plantings.

4) Written Submissions Received on the night

Qu. What was the impact of the storm on you?

- Who are Uisce Éireann accountable to? They must be held to task.
- Loss of power & work for 4 days
- I am often affected by outages because we live on the hill, we also lose water when the power goes out. I work remotely and I require broadband to do my job. As the company I work for is based in Sligo an outage in Leitrim affects the business in Sligo as well.
- Contingency planning in the short term.
- LCC response outdoor teams, first responders, fire service, Cllrs etc
- Elderly people living in rural isolation who have alarm buttons if they fall have no protection and no way of communicating with the world

Qu. How could this be prevented in the future?

- Ombudsman
- Get Leitrim, Roscommon & Cavan CoCo to work together on solution Better power line management and move local power lines UNDERGROUND
- I am from the Netherlands and I have been living in Ireland for 6 years
- I have experienced more outages in Ballinamore in the last year, than I have in my whole life in The Netherlands. We have experienced heavier storms than Ireland but never an outage. We don't have underground local powerlines.
- Personal contingency planning generators water conservation when reservoirs are running low people need to be responsible for consumption
- Whatever approach we adopt, we frame it under the banner of "Basic human rights being denied." No water, no power, no heat – difficulty of access to food and no communication.

5) Running Order on the night

| Time | Item |
|---------------|--|
| 7.00pm | Call to Order and Introduction |
| 7.05pm | Intro & Overview of the how the evening and how the time will be structured |
| 7.10pm | Representative Stories from people regarding impact of the storm on them give examples referencing Water / Electricity / Forestry /Roads /Business impact/ Personal Impact (3 mins each max) |
| 7.30pm | Sum up and invitation to identify other issues/impacts not raised (with support from note takers) |
| 7.40pm | Brief outline from representative bodies (3 mins each max) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service responsible for • How did storm impact their service • What measures were in place to address this • What needs to be improved |
| 8.00pm | Recap on issued identified under each service/ area from Chair Attendees invited to propose solutions: (who, where form, problem & solution) Open discussion to collectively identify ways to prevent the same happening again in the event of another storm/windy period - short, medium long term) |
| 8.25pm | Recap on the evening List proposed actions/recommendations Outline steps from here. |
| 8.30pmMeeting | Meeting Concludes |

6) Responses and Apologies in advance of the Event

Apologies

From six individuals/community groups and four County Councillors.

- Apologies, **ESB Networks** are not in a position to attend
- **Forestry Inspector** for this area – phoned to say nobody from the Dept would attend
- Response from **Coillte**:- unfortunately, we are not in a position to attend the public meeting. Coillte adheres to forestry regulations and guidelines, which outline appropriate set-backs from infrastructure such as powerlines. The power companies have responsibility to ensure that the wayleave areas beneath and next to powerlines in forested areas are kept clear of large trees and scrub that could pose a threat to the power supply. Coillte endeavours to clear any of our storm damaged trees from infrastructure such as roads and trails as soon as it safe for our forestry teams to do so, after the storm has subsided. If you would like to send us a summary of the key points raised at the meeting, we will certainly review and consider in line with the forestry regulations and guidelines.
- No reply from Irish Forest Owners, Forest Industries Ireland or Uisce Éireann, despite repeated invites.
- Response from **Leitrim County Council**:- Leitrim County Council transferred direction and control for water services to Uisce Éireann in September 2023. Therefore, Leitrim County Council no longer have any role in public water production or distribution and all such matters should be addressed to Uisce Éireann. In this context Leitrim County Council will not be attending. Contacted secondly to say it wasn't just a water issue.
- TD Marian Harkin will be unable to attend the meeting as the Dail will be sitting and she may have speaking time, Marian is aware of this matter and made representation on this matter previously and will be happy to do again following the meeting.
- TD Eamon Scanlon replied he's in Dublin but let him know if there are any issues he can help with after this meeting.
- Martin Kenny TD.
- Letter from Charlie Mc Conalogue TD Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine to Frank Feighan TD on forestry management and ESB infrastructure (points in letter read out)

6. Promotion and Coverage of the Event:

- Mass bulletins
- Local notes in Leitrim Observer
- Press Release & Advert in Leitrim Observer
- All PPN social media platforms
- Posters in towns
- PPN e bulletin to over 800 subscribers
- Advert on Shannonside radio
- Claire Byrne Radio Show interview
- Interview on Shannonside radio from Patrick Mc Greevy, PPN Secretariat
- Interview on Ocean FM from Mary Mc Keon PPN Co-Ordinator

Pre and Post Event Publicity

Leitrim Live report by Eóin Gallagher 25 Jan 2025 - **Outrage as government agencies skip meeting on Leitrim power outages**

<https://www.leitrimobserver.ie/news/home/1712011/outrage-as-government-agencies-skip-meeting-on-leitrim-power-outages.html>

Irish Independent report by Emma Ryan- Thu 16 Jan 2025- **Public meeting being held in Leitrim to discuss ‘serious issues’ arising from Storm Darragh**

<https://www.independent.ie/regionals/leitrim/news/public-meeting-being-held-in-leitrim-to-discuss-serious-issues-arising-from-storm-darragh/a89117239.html>

Leitrim Observer, Stella Gordon, 17 Jan 2025- **Change needed to protect power lines in Leitrim following major outages**

<https://www.leitrimobserver.ie/news/carrick-on-shannon/1705031/change-needed-to-protect-power-lines-in-leitrim-following-major-outages.html>

Jan 21, 2025 By Shannonside News Patrick Mc Greevy Secretariat - **Leitrim meeting to discuss concerns over future power and water outages**

<https://www.shannonside.ie/news/leitrim-meeting-to-discuss-concerns-over-future-power-and-water-outages-256962>

Jan 23, 2025 By Shannonside News - **Public meeting in Ballinamore tonight to discuss recent power outages Cllr Gary Prior speaking**

<https://www.shannonside.ie/news/public-meeting-in-ballinamore-tonight-to-discuss-recent-power-outages-257133>

Claire Byrne Show – Reporter Maura Fay visited Leitrim – report from 1.07:22 below

<https://www.rte.ie/radio/radio1/today-with-claire-byrne/2025/0123/1492487-today-with-claire-byrne-thursday-23-january-2025/>

Ocean FM Those impacted by recent storms to meet in Leitrim Interview by Mary Mc Keon Jan 22nd 2025

<https://www.oceanfm.ie/2025/01/22/those-impacted-by-recent-storms-to-meet-in-leitrim/>

Ocean FM interview with Cllr Mary Bohan & Cllr Pdraig Fallon Mon 27th Jan 2025 – **Cllr Bohan thanked the PPN for organising the public meeting.**

RTE 1 Claire Byrne Show **Leitrim Forestry & Power 30th Jan 2025** – thanks to Cllr Enda Mc Gloin for mentioning Public meeting organised by Leitrim PPN.

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jihDDpD7FIOi-jNwLCr5i5LndzKc3hKx/view?usp=sharing&fbclid=IwY2xjawlIRaNleHRuA2FlbQlxMQABHTevxIJnIKavDJ4pDa3Zrr2Qj3ZFNlY7WZZWdwo6PyGPJ3CgLeF2UKg_aem_aqq_1x1UjPlku2hAkjNX-Q

PPN member group Carrigallen Healthy Clubs appeared on The Tonight Show on 29th Jan 2025- Reporter Paul Quinn- <https://play.virginmediatelevision.ie/watch/replay/19182925/the-tonight-show-wed-29-jan>

The Irish Farmers Journal spoke to an affected suckler farmer in Corraleehan Enda Mc Niffe who was at the Leitrim PPN Public Meeting:

<https://www.farmersjournal.ie/more/forestry/leitrim-farmers-criticise-forestry-as-main-cause-for-power-outages-854521>

A Leitrim family have been living in a caravan to keep warm as their home remains without power. Virgin Media News Fri 3rd Feb: [Virgin Media News on X: ""I've been referring to myself as a forestry refugee." A Leitrim family have been living in a caravan to keep warm as their home remains without power. Relying on a generator to cook and stay warm, she feels rural areas have been left behind. #VMNews https://t.co/sPuqZU7RiL" / X](https://www.virginmedia.com/news/19182925/the-tonight-show-wed-29-jan)

<https://www.tiktok.com/@virginmedianews/video/7465319751753927968> Rural Ireland Left Behind After Storm Éowyn broadcast from Carrigallen Virgin Media News Jan 29th 2025

Ballinamore residents spoke on RTE 6 o'clock news on Mon 27th Jan 2025 – Lahard Residents Association/Corraleehan Cultural & Heritage group

RTE News 6.00 Fri 31st Jan:- Broadcast from Drumshanbo Childcare



Press Release

Public Meeting following the recent

Electricity & Water Outages Thurs 23rd Jan 7pm, Ballinamore



Leitrim Public Participation Network, PPN is organising a public meeting on Thurs 23rd Jan at 7pm in the Den, Swanlinbar Rd., Ballinamore to bring many stakeholders together to discuss the various and serious issues that occurred recently during and after Storm Darragh. The impact was nationwide but some of the most affected areas was in the North West.

Many households, farms and businesses were without power and water for extended periods following extremely strong and gusty winds associated with Storm Darragh which caused widespread and extensive damage to the electricity network across the country.

This has been an ongoing issue in Leitrim and surrounding counties with any storms and windy periods. Many community groups and community representatives feel that their experiences of this and the impacts of it are not being listened to. They are also concerned that very little or nothing is being done to prevent the breakdown in these services from happening again.

The storm's destructive trail has exposed hundreds of ash trees infected with the harmful Ash Dieback disease; additional financial supports should be allocated for the safe removal of trees which are weakened from the disease. In many areas fallen trees accounted for road closures.

Leitrim PPN are inviting senior representatives of the ESB, Coillte, The Forest Service (Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine) Leitrim County Council and representatives of forestry owners and landowners to come along to the public meeting on Jan 23rd to provide information on what their responsibilities and actions are and also to listen to people and the communities affected by this. We are asking everyone attending to make suggestions so that there can be some recommendations on solutions to the problem and on taking actions to solve the issue surrounding this breakdown in electricity and water services which are happening far too often and having a detrimental effect on individuals and businesses.

Leitrim PPN are also inviting members of the public who have been affected, local Councillors, Community groups and our local TDs to attend.

It is important that all the stakeholders from forest owners including Coillte, the Forest Service Dept of Agriculture, ESB, Uisce Éireann and Leitrim County Council attend to give a short input from their perspective and listen to what people and the communities have to say and the solutions that they propose.

The meeting will be chaired by an independent chair.

We look forward to seeing you there. All welcome to come along to listen and have your say so we can come up with recommendations and solutions going forward.

Ends.....

Community Event following the electricity outages & water shortages

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

THURSDAY, JANUARY 23
 The Den,
 Ballinamore
 N41 R522
 7pm

Come, Share, Listen, Think...

In light of the recent storm with power and water outages and fallen trees, Leitrim PPN invites individuals, County Councillors, community groups and all interested parties to attend this community meeting to come up with some solutions/suggestions for going forward....
This event will have invited guests to speak also

Community Event following the Electricity outages & Water shortages

THURSDAY, JANUARY 23
 The Den,
 Swanlinbar Rd.,
 Ballinamore
 N41 R522
 7pm

ALL WELCOME PUBLIC MEETING

Were you affected by the recent electricity and water outages following the storm?

If so come along to a public meeting and have your say and hear what others have to say.

This meeting is organised by Leitrim PPN and will have an independent facilitator.

All community groups and individuals invited to attend

Post Event Publicity in Local Paper – Leitrim Observer Wed 29th Jan 2025

(re Public meeting in Ballinamore organised by Leitrim PPN)

LEITRIM OBSERVER
29 January 2025

NEWS 5

Leitrim Cathaoirleach to demand meeting with minister over forestry

Eóin Gallagher
e.gallagher@leitrimobserver.com

Paddy O'Rourke, Cathaoirleach of Leitrim county council has said he will "demand" that the new minister responsible for forestry meet Leitrim county council to discuss the situation of damage from falling trees in Leitrim.

The comments came at a meeting in Ballinamore on Thursday night, organised by the Leitrim Public Participation Network (PPN), which was aimed at bringing agencies and trade together to discuss solutions to the frequent power and water outages in Leitrim.

A view of the meeting prior to the Leitrim County Council of this Sunday meeting were related to this issue after hundreds of people in Leitrim were left without power for days as a result of Storm Darragh storm Darragh. The issue was also raised at the Ballinamore municipal district meeting on Monday.

"This is the second storm in recent months to leave Leitrim without power in many areas



Cathaoirleach of Leitrim County Council Paddy O'Rourke speaking at the forestry meeting in Ballinamore last Thursday night before Storm Eowyn landed in Ireland leaving thousands without power over night.

we get a meeting with this person and for a strategy in front of him and the department as there is no other county as indicated to the same extent."

Forestry is an issue that has received much attention in the county with environmental groups, like Save Leitrim, having campaigned for greater restrictions to be put on forestry owners for many years. They feel that too little a distance is left between forestry and power lines which is a major cause of power outages in the county.

"I was down in the south of Ireland recently and I found people complaining because of the storm. The storm is an act of god, these trees are an act of man because they were planted in the wrong place and with slow growth for the people who might use them," Cllr O'Rourke said.

Earlier this week, there were still around 20,000 people without power in Leitrim as the country called on farmers to provide more help to repair the damage which homesteads have been set up in less affected parts across the country.

possible moment."

Minister for Rural, Michael Healy has expressed his concern for the forestry sector in Leitrim in his capacity as Cathaoirleach of Leitrim county council. It will be interesting that we have a meeting with the incoming minister at the earliest possible moment."

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LEITRIM OBSERVER
29 January 2025

NEWS

Outrage as government agencies skip meeting on power outages

Eóin Gallagher
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On Thursday night at Storm Eowyn, the atmosphere in the Leitrim community centre was one of tired resignation as over 500 people gathered at a public meeting about Leitrim's consistent power outages - knowing that in just a few hours they would be back in that situation again.

Following the massive disruptions Storm Darragh caused, the meeting called for water outages in the county for the power and frequency of the power and water outages in the county for many years with many attendees of the meeting describing them as regularly occurring in their area.

A majority of the outage area is a result of the rampant afforestation in the county which has seen nearly 20% of woodland in Leitrim covered in forest, according to Brian Smyth of Save Leitrim, an environmental group that campaigns for better forestry management standards.

"Everyone is paying too much in Leitrim for this problem," said Smyth. "What most change most importantly is that ESB, Colli and the forest service must say we are at fault, we are part of the problem, we are going to be part of the solution. They didn't come here tonight which is a shame, even just to sit in the



ESB Networks crews and partner contractors pictured on site near Dummaway in West Cork during restoration works in the aftermath of Storm Eowyn. PICTURE: MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN, GSM PHOTO

has the power to change this, has turned up tonight. Not Colli, not forestry overseer regulators," said Keith Brennan, a Roscommon farmer, to a round of applause.

"We are in a position, where people who profit from this have no interest or stake in changing things," added Mr Brennan, who was out of power for eight days after Storm Darragh.

Storm Darragh left thousands of households in Ireland without power and water as a result of trees and branches falling on powerlines though the impact was significantly worse in Leitrim with almost one of the last counties to have power restored.

The consistent power outages have been a significant problem in the county for many years with many attendees of the meeting describing them as regularly occurring in their area.

Colli and the forest service must say we are at fault, we are part of the problem, we are going to be part of the solution. They didn't come here tonight which is a shame, even just to sit in the

back and listen and it is a bonus."

ESB, Colli, and the forestry inspector said that they were not in a position to attend the meeting, while Forest Industries Ireland, The Irish Forest Owners Association or Lisa Egan, did not provide any response to the invitation, according to organisers.

Cavan councillor calls for cross-county solution to frequent outages

Cavan Councillor, John Paul Feeley, has suggested the need for a cross-county approach to dealing with forestry-related water and power outages that are frequently affecting Cavan and Leitrim.

The call came at a public meeting, organised by Leitrim Public Participation Network (PPN), in Ballinamore last Tuesday night aimed at addressing the outages issue just hours before Storm Eowyn hit the country and plunged the area back into darkness.

"This has become a regional problem not just in Leitrim, not just west Cavan," said Cllr Feeley. "I have heard colleagues from around the country complaining about how they have been affected by the more regular and severe storms."

"I think if we can get all those people going in the same direction then we will be able to make some progress on this hugely important issue."

The meeting was marked by outrage that the forestry and power agencies who were invited to attend the meeting and contribute to solution building declined the chance to come.

"In west Cavan we are affected by this problem just as much as county Leitrim... I was looking at my phone and we had been out six times in the previous twelve months - all but one of those were for two plus days and all of it was down to and wreckless afforestation."

"January I think we had to take dramatic water and we had to divert water and get into trouble with Irish water for putting untreated water into the system to make sure at least people had some supply"

He highlighted the negative affect that these outages have not only on the public who are left without water but also on live stock they are caring for.

"I would hope that you would include west Cavan in your campaign and we can ensure that something is done for all of us and all of our communities."

LEITRIM OBSERVER
29 January 2025

NEWS 3

Report from Leitrim outages meeting to be sent to Minister

Eóin Gallagher
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A report will be written and submitted to the Oireachtas following a meeting on the frequent outages in Leitrim last Thursday.

The report will be compiled by Marie McCormack, who acted as an independent chair of the event and will feature stories from impacted people and propose solutions to the frequent blackouts.

The meeting, which was hosted by the Leitrim Public Participation Network (PPN), was aimed at bringing locals and different agencies together to discuss the power and water outages in Leitrim, the report will give to the relevant agencies, Michael Healy, the local TD for the forestry minister in charge of forestry, minister in charge of forestry, minister in charge of forestry, minister in charge of forestry.

The intention that the report might be made available to the public and the ESB were not present, however, a variety of solutions provided by residents of Leitrim, Roscommon, and Cavan gather to discuss solutions to the frequent power outages in the area.

Residents of Leitrim, Roscommon, and Cavan gather to discuss solutions to the frequent power outages in the area.

legislation that times planned need to be further away from powerlines, not power financial accountability for forest owners when their trees cause damage or disruption to the public.

"Other jurisdictions like the UK for example, have a mechanism where if trees take out your power or water you get paid and that's it."

"I would like legislation and regulations that create a mechanism for people like us to have the profits of those computers and it is by forcing them to pay the damages their people reap in our communities... if we make them pay, then you will be sure that they will turn up to meetings like this."

There were also solutions proposed that would see the removal of powerlines and forestry taken, as well as better water infrastructure put in place as well as active background government to be put in place in every water station.

There were also calls for the government to step in and apply greater restrictions on forestry owners and greater accountability on those who are responsible for providing these services.

"Something has to be done and it has to be done at a national level because legislation is made at a national level... Governance is the one who makes the legislation and if they can bring in legislation to lock us all in our houses during COVID and things like that then they can make legislation overnight to change things," said Cllr Feeley, a resident who spoke at the event.