**New pilot lighting scheme with zero running costs**

Zero-cost electricity sounds too good to be true, but that’s exactly what one local village has achieved with the installation of new public lighting along a central walkway.

The first of its kind in Westmeath, a new solar-powered, pedestrian-activated LED lighting system has been installed in Ballinahown. The pilot project for the region saw seven new lights installed along the Slí na hAbhainn walkway in the village, which links the community hall with the national school and Ballinahown Sports Park.

The lights were installed by Electric Skyline, with support from Westmeath County Council.

Most street lights are fully energised from dusk until dawn, but these lights will operate on a dim setting and then move to full lighting once activated by pedestrians.

Acting District Manager of the Athlone-Moate Municipal District, Willie Ryan, explained: “The lights move from being dimly lit to appropriately lit as pedestrians walk underneath them and stay at that level for approximately 20 seconds. It is the most innovative lighting solution employed in the county.”

“With these lights, we anticipate the lighting emission time will be reduced by 95% compared to regular public lighting operating on a traditional dusk-to-dawn setting,” he added.

“There are big savings using this technology. The capital cost of installing the system was reduced to about 30% of standard infrastructure costs as it was not necessary to install ducting and we did not need to apply for connection to the ESB network.”

“The comparable costs of running seven traditional streetlights over a 20-year period would be in the region of €15,000. With this innovative technology, this will be reduced to nil,” explained Mr Ryan.

It is envisaged that the lifetime of the lights will also be extended.

“We expect these will far outlast conventional LEDs. It’s hard to say precisely because it is new technology, but given the reduced burning hours, the LED lights should last significantly longer than typical comparable arrangements,” added Mr Ryan.

The lighting has been installed along a central walkway in Ballinahown, which runs at the back of the community hall, linking the village carpark with Woodland Avenue, Ballinahown NS and Ballinahown Sports Park, allowing complimentary use of the village car parks during times of high demand. During the winter the sport park is in high demand after dark and the new lighting will allow for greater use of the walkway after hours, whereby people can park at the village car park and walk safely to the sports park to use the walking track and AstroTurf facility.

“The community car park is now readily accessible when the sports facilities are in high demand during the winter and Ballinahown Sports Park car park is at capacity,” concluded Mr Ryan.

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