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FUNDING FOR FLOODLIGHTS TO LOCAL FOOTBALL CLUBS THROUGHOUT IRELAND

500 soccer clubs throughout Ireland have applied to join in the Shared Access Funding for Floodlights Scheme since the project was announced jointly by the FAI and Shared Access last September. Shared Access is a leading telecoms infrastructure provider company, committed to providing floodlights to FAI football clubs in return for the ability to erect combined lighting and telecoms structures. Under the scheme, Shared Access will invest over €30 million in the provision of floodlights to Irish soccer clubs. The floodlight structures will house state-of-the-art wireless antennas and fibre connections, enabling significantly enhanced broadband penetration and mobile phone coverage in each locality.

Since the announcement of the scheme in September, 500 clubs have completed the Enquiry Forms that are needed to get the ball rolling, and Shared Access have been surveying many of the sites, with a number of them already on stream at the moment – Rock Celtic FC, Cobh Ramblers FC, Glebe North FC, Oscar Traynor Development Centre, Tramore Association FC, and Aisling Annacotty FC.

Aisling Annacotty FC in Limerick is the first full floodlighting scheme completed, with national team sponsor Three Ireland becoming the first operator to support the scheme. The other clubs above received a capital sum. The club has a membership of over 600, fielding 23 competitive teams in Ladies, Junior, Minor and Schoolboy/Schoolgirl grades, as well as fielding 12 teams in the Under 7 to Under 10 non-competitive leagues. Michael Brennan, Chairman of Aisling Annacotty FC speaking about the installation of the floodlights, said “This is a fantastic move for Aisling Annacotty FC. We will be able to extend training during the winter months and bring our players up to an increased level of fitness and skills. We would never have been able to do this without funding from Shared Access. Like every other club, there are simply too many other demands on our resources. We would highly recommend the

Shared Access Floodlights Scheme to other clubs. It will help raise the standard of the game of soccer throughout Ireland.”

Republic of Ireland captain Robbie Keane sees the Shared Access scheme as a huge opportunity for clubs such as his own in Fettercairn, Tallaght, Co. Dublin, saying “Clubs will benefit from lights and improved training facilities and better facilities means greater opportunities for players to go much further in football. I also hope that the mobile operators will get behind the scheme and back their customers at the clubs by making use of the Shared Access infrastructure.

By providing local football clubs throughout Ireland with new floodlight facilities, Shared Access will close the telecommunications gap in broadband penetration and mobile phone coverage through state-of-the-art wireless antennas housed in the floodlights. The new partnership between the shared telecommunications infrastructure expert and local football clubs will see the development of a world class shared telecoms network located in urban and rural areas throughout Ireland.

Chris Jackman, CEO of Shared Access, the company at the centre of this huge investment explains: “This will bring immense benefits to telecoms providers in Ireland and to local football clubs. We will be investing over €30 million in providing world-class shared telecommunications infrastructure and are also extending the scheme to other sporting organisations in Ireland, including the Dublin GAA, Tennis Ireland and Munster Rugby. We are making these sites available, including the provision of fibre ready ducting, to all telecoms operators in Ireland to enable the provision of advanced mobile and broadband services. The mutually beneficial initiative will provide a new excellence in the enhancement of Ireland’s broadband penetration and mobile phone coverage, while at the same time, upgrading the facilities of local football clubs nationwide.”

The business model of Shared Access optimises benefits for customers by

providing greater and faster access to more telecommunications facilities at a lower cost. “We believe the Shared Access partnership model represents the best of collaborations. It will bring better broadband and mobile coverage to many communities while at the same time lighting up their sporting facilities and fixtures. This is shared infrastructure at its best. Ireland and Irish sporting clubs will benefit from this excellent scheme. Shared Access’ unique intervention also means better broadband access for communities throughout the country.

Robert Finnegan, CEO of Three Ireland commented: “We’re delighted to be the first mobile operator to support this scheme – it’s not only enhancing our phone and broadband coverage but also helps support Irish football. It’s a win win situation. It’s the perfect complement to Three’s “Dare to dream” affinity programme that allows clubs to raise much-needed funds when they switch to Three. Three is Ireland’s biggest supporter of football and Funds for Floodlights is another example of ways we are helping grassroots soccer.”

John Delaney, CEO, Football Association of Ireland said: “This represents a step change in facilities for participating local clubs, enabling them to train and play under lights in the dark winter months, providing significant investment for the football clubs at the heart of local communities. We are delighted to be working with Shared Access on this unique scheme.”

The scheme remains open to any club that wishes to join. Enquiry Forms for participation in the Shared Access Floodlighting scheme can be accessed at www.fai.ie/sharedaccess.

Due to the success of the Shared Access and Football Association of Ireland partnership, Shared Access has entered similar schemes with other sporting organisations including Dublin GAA, Tennis Ireland, Munster Rugby and Leinster Rugby. This has expanded Shared Access’ portfolio to 2000 sites. Any club who does not fall under membership of the above organisations can apply to participate privately.

For more information on the project, contact: Office: +353 1 642 9888 Email: info@sharedaccess.com



Limerick club, Aisling Annacotty FC, has become the first club in Ireland to benefit from the Shared Access/FAI ‘Funding for Floodlights’ deal, with national team sponsor Three Ireland becoming the first operator to support the scheme. The new floodlights, funded by Shared Access, were officially switched on by FAI Chief Executive John Delaney and Shared Access Chief Executive Chris Jackman at a special ceremony at the club on Friday 16 April, attended by the members and their families. Our Picture shows Michael Brennan, Chairman, Aisling Annacotty FC, John Delaney, Chief Executive, FAI, Chris Jackman, Chief Executive, Shared Access with Aisling Annacotty club members Harry Doyle, age 8, and Aoife Neville, age 7.