



PRESS RELEASE

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Celebrating 150 years of communication history

Before the 1850s the only way of communicating between Europe and the new world was by sending letters by ship. This could take at least 2-3 weeks. Cyrus Field, an American entrepreneur and visionary could see a solution to this problem by laying an underwater cable across the Atlantic. The cable would run for 2,500 miles across the ocean that was 2 miles deep in places. After many years of failed attempts and huge levels of financial investment on the 13 July 1866 The Great Eastern, the largest ship in the world at the time, set sail from Valentia Island and arrived without a hitch in Newfoundland two weeks later on 27 July.

To celebrate this hugely significant global event in modern history the [Transatlantic Telegraph Cable Festival](#) will be held from 13-17 July 2016 on Valentia Island celebrating 150 years of communication history. “150 years ago this week the introduction of the Cable changed for the better life on Valentia and the region for the next 100 years. We hope the events of this week will have a similar impact”, says Anthony O’Connell, Board member of the Valentia Island Development Company and Festival lead.

The festival has something for all the family including a fireworks display on Wednesday 13 July, robotic workshops, a cable swim, walking and cycling tours of historical points and a Celebration Dinner on Thursday, 14th July (tickets available to buy via festival website). Professor Donard De Cogan, distinguished historian of the Transatlantic Cable will present his research and launch his book ‘They talk along the deep – 100 years of cable history’ on Wednesday, 13 July. A special exhibition including prints of the famous Dudley paintings will be on display in the Cable Station and a full cable exhibition is available throughout the summer months at the Valentia Island Heritage Centre.

The Celebration Dinner will be attended by 200 guests including direct descendants of notable figures connected with the original cable including the family of Cyrus Field, the great entrepreneur responsible for turning a vision to reality and the Graves family, descendants of James Grave, the



first superintendent of the Cable Station as well as Sir Adrian Fitzgerald, 24th Knight of Kerry. The dinner will also be attended by a host of local and national politicians, technology leaders and the last remaining staff of the Cable Station when it closed in 1966 including Mick O'Connell, legendary Kerry footballer. The Celebration Dinner takes place on Thursday, 14 July and is kindly supported by BT Ireland. "As a global company with almost 600 employees in Ireland, BT is proud to support the Telegraph Cable Festival, and to celebrate this significant moment in Irish and global history. Ireland's part in connecting Europe to the Americas placed the country at the forefront of a technological revolution, a role that we continue to play today as a global hub for innovation," said Shay Walsh, Managing Director of BT Ireland. "For BT, the Atlantic Cable marked a major milestone in the company's 170 year heritage, connecting into our inland telegraph network - the world's first national network - to create a platform which profoundly impacted communication, technology and society."

The festival is organised by a committee of local volunteers, led by the Valentia Island Development Committee and supported by Kerry County Council and the Institute of Technology Tralee. The festival is funded by voluntary donations, Failte Ireland, Kerry County Council, BT Ireland and Intel.

Further information can be found at

www.telegraphcablefestival.ie

<https://www.facebook.com/transatlantictelegraphcablefestival/>

@valentiaisland #cable

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Notes to editors

Interviews can be arranged with:

- Anthony O'Connell, VIDC Ltd. and Festival Lead
- Professor Donard de Cogan, Cable Historian
- Professor Al Gillespie, UNESCO bid
- Leonard Hobbs, Chairman of UNESCO Bid Foundation Board
- Michael Lyne, local historian and VIDC Ltd.
- Marie Williams, Valentia Island Heritage Society

Sub-note on UNESCO BID - The VIDC Ltd. with the support of Professor Al Gillespie, a former Rapporteur of the World Heritage Committee at UNESCO, Stefanie Buffum, the wife of Cyrus Field IV, the Institute of Technology, Tralee and Kerry County Council are currently investigating the potential for Valentia Island to be recognised as a UNESCO World Heritage site for its important role in communications technology and the Transatlantic Cable Story. To be accepted by UNESCO as a World Heritage site is a long and onerous process. Two papers outlining the historical significance of the area together with a Technical Evaluation and Management Plan will be presented to the Department of Arts, Heritage & The Gaeltacht who can then consider including the project on the



Irish Tentative List, which reopens for new submissions in 2018. A project must be on the Irish Tentative List for one year before a decision to apply to UNESCO for World Heritage status.

Professor Al Gillespie was appointed to undertake the research and has already completed the first paper which was launched in New York in 2014. The paper concluded that the project was indeed factual and authentic. The costs for developing the first paper was kindly financed by the Institute of Technology, Tralee and Kerry County Council. The second paper which has now being completed will demonstrate the Outstanding Universal Value of the Transatlantic Cable. This report will be launched at a public meeting during the festival in July.

Central to the UNESCO application is the restoration of the Cable Station building, which the current owner Mrs Pollmeier is willing to donate back to the community for a nominal fee. The restored building will house a cable museum and the enterprise centre will be located on the upper floor. The VIDC Ltd is currently investigating funding to support this initiative and a Foundation Board under the chairmanship of Leonard Hobbs, previously Director of Global Public Affairs at Intel Ireland, has been established. The Board includes Martin Shanahan, CEO, IDA; Moira Morrell, CEO, Kerry County Council; Denis Jennings, Knous Consultancy Service Ltd; and Anthony O'Connell and Micheal Lyne, VIDC Ltd.

Valentia Island Development Committee – VIDC Ltd. The VIDC Ltd. was formed in 2012 to promote the economic, social and cultural development of Valentia Island; to create and support the right environmental factors for increasing sustainable, long-term employment opportunities; and to stall the downward population trend. It is run as a not for profit organisation and managed by a board of local business owners and others with an interest in the positive develop of the island and island life.