



An
Bord
Pleanála

Board Order ABP-306303-20

Planning and Development Acts, 2000 to 2020

Planning Authority: Donegal County Council

Application for permission under section 37E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in accordance with plans and particulars, including an Environmental Impact Assessment Report and Natura impact statement, lodged with An Bord Pleanála on the 24th day of December, 2019 by Scottish Power Renewables (UK) Limited care of Jennings O'Donovan and Partners Limited of Finisklin Business Park, Sligo.

Proposed Development: 10-year permission for development comprising the re-powering of the existing operational Barnesmore Windfarm and related works as follows:

Proposed development at the existing Barnesmore Windfarm site, Keadew Upper and Cullionboy, County Donegal:

- (i) Decommissioning and removal of 25 number existing wind turbines and reinstatement of the redundant site infrastructure, including site roads of 600 metres in length.
- (ii) Construction and erection of up to 13 number wind turbines each with maximum overall ground to blade tip heights of up to 180 metres and associated crane hardstandings and wind turbine foundations.

- (iii) Upgrade of the existing site access roads and provision of 188 metres of new site access road.
- (iv) Upgrade of the existing Golagh 110kV electrical substation and compound to include for an expansion of the footprint to accommodate an Eirgrid control building, a new IPP control building, car parking, grid transformer, 110kV cable chair, outdoor electrical plant and equipment, security boundary and perimeter fencing, wastewater holding tanks, groundwater well and the removal of the existing overhead line connection and demolition of the existing IPP control building.
- (v) Upgrade works associated with the existing 110kV grid connection including the undergrounding of a 1.15-kilometre section of the existing 110kV overhead power line, the construction of a new cable interface tower on the existing Golagh Tee 110kV overhead line, underground cable connection in the existing site access track from the new cable interface tower to the upgraded Golagh substation and removal of the existing angle mast and end mast towers.
- (vi) One number permanent meteorological mast up to 30 metres in height, including a foundation, underground power and communication cabling and security fencing.
- (vii) Temporary contractor's construction compound.
- (viii) Site drainage network.
- (ix) Internal wind farm underground power and communications cabling.
- (x) A 15-megawatt energy storage facility and associated electrical plant, equipment and security fencing.
- (xi) All associated site development and ancillary works.

Proposed development at the existing Golagh Tee Grid Connection, Clogher, County Donegal:

- (i) Upgrade works associated with the existing 110kV grid connection, including the construction of a new cable interface tower under the existing Golagh Tee 110kV overhead line, underground cable connection from the new interface tower to Clogher 110kV GIS substation, removal of the hard-tee connection between Cathaleen's Fall-Letterkenny 110kV overhead line and Cathaleen's Fall-Golagh Tee 110kV overhead line, removal of the existing end mast tower and termination of the existing conductor to the new proposed cable interface tower.
- (ii) All associated site development and ancillary works.

Proposed development on the L-2095-6/L-2015-1 Junction and the L-2015-1 Local Road, County Donegal:

- (i) Widening of the L-2095-6/L-2015-1 Junction to accommodate the delivery of turbine components along with the relocation of an existing electricity/telecommunications pole.
- (ii) Widening of the L-2015-1 Road to accommodate the delivery of turbine components.
- (iii) All associated site development and ancillary works.

All in the Townlands of Keadew Upper, Cullionboy and Clogher, County Donegal.

This application is seeking a ten-year permission and an operational period that is not time limited, or no less than 40 years.

Decision

Grant permission under section 37G of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, for the above proposed development in accordance with the said plans and particulars based on the reasons and considerations under and subject to the conditions set out below.

Determine under section 37H(2)(c) the sum to be paid by the applicant in respect of costs associated with the application as set out in the Schedule of Costs below.

Matters Considered

In making its decision, the Board had regard to those matters to which, by virtue of the Planning and Development Acts and Regulations made thereunder, it was required to have regard. Such matters included any submissions and observations received by it in accordance with statutory provisions.

Reasons and Considerations

In coming to its decision, the Board had regard to the following:

- (a) The provisions of the National Planning Framework – Ireland 2040,
- (b) the provisions of the Climate Action Plan, 2019,
- (c) the Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Northern & Western Region 2019,
- (d) the “Wind Energy Development Guidelines - Guidelines for Planning Authorities”, issued by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in June 2006 and the Draft Wind Energy Guidelines published by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage in December 2019,

- (e) the relevant policies of the planning authority as set out in the Donegal County Development Plan, 2018-2024,
- (f) the distance to dwellings or other sensitive receptors,
- (g) the submissions made in connection with the planning application,
- (h) the likely consequences for the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area in which it is proposed to carry out the proposed development, and the likely significant effects of the proposed development on European Sites, and
- (i) the reports of the Inspector.

Appropriate Assessment Stage 1:

The Board agreed with the screening assessment and conclusion carried out in the Inspector's reports that the Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 000163), the River Foyle and Tributaries Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: UK0030320), the River Finn Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002301), the Pettigo Plateau Nature Reserve Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004099) and the Lough Derg (Donegal) Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004057) are the European Sites for which there is a possibility of significant effects and which must, therefore, be subject to Appropriate Assessment.

Appropriate Assessment Stage 2:

The Board considered the Natura impact statement and all other relevant submissions and carried out an Appropriate Assessment of the implications of the proposed development for the European Sites in view of the Sites' Conservation Objectives (namely, the Lough Eske and Ardnamona Wood Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 000163), the River Foyle and Tributaries Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: UK0030320), the River Finn Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002301), the Pettigo Plateau Nature Reserve Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004099) and the Lough Derg (Donegal) Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004057)). The Board considered that the information before it was sufficient

to undertake a complete assessment of all aspects of the proposed development in relation to the Sites' Conservation Objectives using the best available scientific knowledge in the field.

In completing the Appropriate Assessment, the Board considered, in particular, the following:

- (a) the site-specific Conservation Objectives for these European Sites,
- (b) the current conservation status, threats and pressures of the qualifying interest features,
- (c) the likely direct and indirect impacts arising from the proposed development, both individually or in combination with other plans or projects,
- (d) the views contained in submissions received from the planning authority, prescribed bodies and transboundary bodies and other observers, and
- (e) the mitigation measures which are included as part of the current proposal.

In completing the Appropriate Assessment, the Board accepted and adopted the Appropriate Assessment carried out in the Inspector's reports in respect of the implications of the proposed development on the integrity of the aforementioned European Sites, having regard to the Sites' Conservation Objectives.

In overall conclusion, the Board was satisfied that the proposed development, by itself or in combination with other plans or projects, would not adversely affect the integrity of the European Sites, in view of the Sites' Conservation Objectives and that there is no reasonable scientific doubt as to the absence of such effects.

Environmental Impact Assessment:

The Board completed an Environmental Impact Assessment of the proposed development taking account of:

- (a) the nature, scale, location and extent of the proposed development,
- (b) the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and associated documentation submitted in support of the planning application,

- (c) the submissions received from the planning authority, prescribed bodies and transboundary bodies, and other observers, and
- (d) the Inspector's report.

The Board considered that the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, supported by the documentation submitted by the applicant, adequately considers alternatives to the proposed development and identifies and describes adequately the direct, indirect, secondary and cumulative effects of the proposed development on the environment. The Board agreed with the examination, set out in the Inspector's report, of the information contained in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and associated documentation submitted by the applicant and submissions made in the course of the planning application.

Reasoned Conclusions on the Significant Effects:

The Board considered that the main significant direct and indirect effects of the proposed development on the environment are, and would be mitigated, as follows:

- Noise, vibration, dust and shadow flicker during the construction and/or the operational phases would be avoided by the implementation of the measures set out in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and the outline Construction and Environment Management Plan which include specific provisions relating to the control of dust, noise and shadow flicker.
- The risk of peat instability and peat erosion during the construction and operational phases which would be mitigated by the implementation of measures set out in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and the outline Construction and Environment Management Plan which include specific provisions relating to peat and spoil management.
- The risk of pollution of ground and surface waters during the construction phase which would be mitigated by the implementation of measures set out in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report and the outline Construction

and Environment Management Plan which include specific provisions relating to groundwater, surface water and peat erosion.

- Biodiversity impacts, including on habitats, otters, birds, bats, fisheries and aquatic invertebrates, would be mitigated by the implementation of specific mitigation to protect otters, birds, bats, fisheries and aquatic invertebrates, during the construction and/or operational phases and the implementation of a draft Habitat Management Plan.
- The increase in vehicle movements and resulting traffic during the construction phase would be mitigated by the upgraded site access and the preparation of a Construction Traffic Management Plan.
- Landscape and visual impacts would arise during the operational phase from the insertion of the turbines and met mast into the upland setting, the location and siting of which would assist in assimilating the works into the landscape.
- The impact on cultural heritage would be mitigated by archaeological monitoring with provision made for resolution of any archaeological features or deposits that may be identified.
- Positive environmental impacts would arise during the operational phase from the generation of renewable energy.

The Board completed an Environmental Impact Assessment in relation to the proposed development and concluded that, subject to the implementation of the mitigation measures proposed, as set out in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, and the implementation of the measures proposed in the draft Habitat Management Plan, and subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the effects of the proposed development on the environment, by itself and in combination with other plans and projects in the vicinity, would be acceptable. In doing so, the Board adopted the report and conclusions of the Inspector, save with regard to proposed turbine numbers 3 and 13. Having considered the totality of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, associated documentation submitted with the application and the report of the Inspector, the Board concluded that any likely significant effects on water from the construction of turbine numbers 3 and 13 would

be mitigated by reference to the specific mitigation measures proposed by the applicant and that the development of these turbines would be acceptable.

Proper planning and sustainable development:

It is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out below, the proposed development would accord with European, national, regional and local planning and related policy, would not have an unacceptable impact on the landscape or ecology, would not seriously injure the visual or residential amenities of the area or of property in the vicinity, and would be acceptable in terms of traffic safety and convenience. The proposed development would, therefore, be in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

CONDITIONS

1. The proposed development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the plans and particulars lodged with the application, and the further plans and particulars received by the Board on the 9th day of October, 2020, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. Where such conditions require details to be agreed with the planning authority, the developer shall agree such details in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development and the proposed development shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the agreed particulars.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

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2. The period during which the proposed development hereby permitted may be constructed shall be 10 years from the date of this Order.

Reason: In the interest of clarity.

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3. This permission shall be for a period of 30 years from the date of the first commissioning of the wind farm.

Reason: To enable the planning authority to review the operation of the wind farm in the light of the circumstances then prevailing.

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4. The developer shall ensure that all construction methods and environmental mitigation measures, set out in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, the Natura impact statement and associated documentation, are implemented in full, save as may be required by the conditions set out below.

Reason: In the interest of the protection of the environment.

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5. The developer shall ensure that all peat related mitigation measures are implemented in full and monitored throughout the life cycle of the construction works and monitored throughout the operational phase.

Reason: In the interest of the protection of the environment.

6. The developer shall ensure that all measures set out in the draft Habitat Management Plan and associated documentation are implemented in full, save as may be required by the conditions set out below.

Reason: In the interest of the protection of the environment and to ensure the protection, restoration and enhancement of peatland habitats within the Barnesmore Bog Natural Heritage Area.

7. Decommissioning and construction works shall be limited to between 0800 hours and 1800 hours Monday to Saturday and shall not be allowed on public holidays.

Reason: To protect the amenities of nearby residential properties.

8. The operation of the proposed development, by itself or in combination with any other permitted wind energy development, shall not result in noise levels, when measured externally at nearby noise sensitive locations, which exceed:

(a) Between the hours of 0700 and 2300:

- i. the greater of 5 dB(A) $L_{90,10min}$ above background noise levels, or 45 dB(A) $L_{90,10min}$, at standardised 10-metre height above ground level wind speeds of 6m/s or greater.
- ii. 40 dB(A) $L_{90,10min}$ at all other standardised 10-metre height above ground level wind speeds.

(b) 43 dB(A) $L_{90,10min}$ at all other times.

Prior to commencement of development, the developer shall submit to and agree in writing with the planning authority, a noise compliance monitoring programme for the proposed development, including any mitigation measures such as the de-rating of particular turbines. All noise measurements shall be carried out in accordance with ISO Recommendation R 1996 “Assessment of Noise with Respect to Community Response,” as amended by ISO Recommendations R 1996-1. The results of the initial noise compliance monitoring shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the planning authority within six months of the commissioning of the wind farm.

Reason: In the interest of residential amenity.

9. The developer shall comply with the following shadow flicker requirements:
 - (a) Cumulative shadow flicker arising from the proposed development shall not exceed 30 minutes in any day or 30 hours in any year at any dwelling.
 - (b) The proposed turbines shall be fitted with appropriate equipment and software to control shadow flicker at dwellings.
 - (c) Prior to commencement of development, a wind farm shadow flicker monitoring programme shall be prepared by a consultant with experience of similar monitoring work, in accordance with details to be submitted to the planning authority for written agreement. Details of the monitoring programme shall include the proposed monitoring equipment and methodology to be used, and the reporting schedule.

Reason: In the interest of residential amenity.

10. The developer shall comply with the following design requirements:

- (a) The wind turbines, including masts and blades, and the wind monitoring mast, shall be finished externally in a light-grey colour.
- (b) Cables within the proposed development site shall be laid underground.
- (c) The wind turbines shall be geared to ensure that the blades rotate in the same direction.
- (d) No advertising material shall be placed on or otherwise be affixed to any structure on the site without a prior grant of planning permission.

Reason: In the interest of visual amenity.

11. In the event that the proposed development causes interference with telecommunications signals, effective measures shall be introduced to minimise interference with telecommunications signals in the area. Details of these measures, which shall be at the developer's expense, shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commissioning of the turbines and following consultation with the relevant authorities.

Reason: In the interests of the protection of telecommunications signals and of residential amenity.

12. Details of aeronautical requirements shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. Prior to the commissioning of the turbines, the developer shall inform the planning authority and the Irish Aviation Authority of the as-constructed tip heights and co-ordinates of the turbines and wind monitoring masts.

Reason: In the interest of air traffic safety.

13. Prior to commencement of development, a traffic management plan for the construction stage shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority. The traffic management plan shall incorporate details of the road network to be used by construction traffic, including over-sized loads, and detailed arrangements for the protection of bridges, culverts or other structures to be traversed, as may be required. The plan shall also contain details of how the developer intends to engage with and notify the local community in advance of the delivery of oversized loads. All works to the public road network shall be at the developer's expense.

Reason: In the interest of traffic safety.

14. The developer shall retain the services of a suitably qualified and experienced Ecological Clerk of Works for the duration of the construction works who shall be subject to the terms and conditions specified in the submission received from the applicant by An Bord Pleanála on the 9th day of October, 2020. In addition to these terms and conditions, the Ecological Clerk of Works shall have the authority to cease construction works as considered necessary so as to prevent damage to the environment.

Reason: In the interest of the protection of ecology and wildlife in the area.

15. The developer shall retain the services of a suitably qualified and experienced Ecologist to undertake pre-construction surveys at the various project elements, including any river crossings, immediately prior to the commencement of works in order to check for the presence of protected species in the vicinity (including nesting birds, Otter, Common lizard and Fir club moss). A 500 metre buffer shall be placed around any protected species nest sites and maintained free from construction works until the nest is vacated. Any specimens of Common lizard or Fir club moss shall be removed and relocated to a similar, suitable, undisturbed nearby habitat under the direct supervision of the Ecologist and subject to a Derogation Licence where required.

Reason: In the interest of the protection of ecology and wildlife in the area.

16. The developer shall retain the services of a suitably qualified and experienced bird specialist to undertake appropriate annual bird surveys of the development site. Details of the surveys to be undertaken, and associated reporting requirements, shall be developed following consultation with, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. These reports shall be submitted on an agreed date annually for five years, with the prior written agreement of the planning authority. Copies of the reports shall be sent to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (National Parks and Wildlife Service).

Reason: To ensure the appropriate monitoring of the impact of the proposed development on the avifauna of the area.

17. The developer shall retain the services of a suitably qualified and experienced bird specialist with respect to Hen Harriers to undertake appropriate monthly surveys of the development site. Details of the surveys to be undertaken, and associated reporting requirements, shall be developed following consultation and agreement in writing with the planning authority prior to commencement of development. These reports shall be submitted on an agreed date annually for the full duration of the windfarm project, with the prior written agreement of the planning authority. Copies of the reports shall be sent to the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (National Parks and Wildlife Service).

Reason: To ensure the appropriate monitoring of the impact of the proposed development on Hen Harriers.

18. The developer shall prepare an Invasive Species Management Plan for the written agreement of the planning authority. All plant and machinery used during the works shall be thoroughly cleaned and washed before delivery to the site to prevent the spread of hazardous invasive species and pathogens.

Reason: In the interest of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

19. The developer shall facilitate the preservation, recording and protection of archaeological materials or features that may exist within the site. In this regard, the developer shall:

(a) notify the planning authority in writing at least four weeks prior to the commencement of any site operations (including hydrological and geotechnical investigations) relating to the proposed development,

- (b) employ a suitably-qualified archaeologist who shall monitor all site investigations and other excavation works, and
- (c) provide arrangements, acceptable to the planning authority, for the recording and for the removal of any archaeological materials which the planning authority considers appropriate to remove.

In default of agreement on any of these requirements, the matter shall be referred to An Bord Pleanála for determination.

Reason: In order to conserve the archaeological heritage of the site and to secure the preservation and protection of any remains that may exist within the site.

- 20. Prior to commencement of development, the community gain proposals shall be submitted to the planning authority for its written agreement.

Reason: In the interest of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

- 21. On full or partial decommissioning of the wind farm, or if the wind farm ceases operation for a period of more than one year, the wind monitoring mast, the turbines and all decommissioned structures shall be removed, and foundations covered with soil to facilitate re-vegetation, all to be completed to the written satisfaction of the planning authority within three months of decommissioning or cessation of operations.

Reason: To ensure the satisfactory reinstatement of the site upon full or partial cessation of the wind farm.

22. Prior to commencement of development, the developer shall lodge with the planning authority a cash deposit, a bond of an insurance company, or such other security as may be acceptable to the planning authority, to secure the satisfactory reinstatement of the site and delivery route upon cessation of the wind farm, coupled with an agreement empowering the planning authority to apply such security or part thereof to such reinstatement. The form and amount of the security shall be as agreed between the planning authority and the developer or, in default of agreement, shall be referred to An Bord Pleanála for determination.

Reason: To ensure the satisfactory reinstatement of the site.

23. The developer shall pay to the planning authority a financial contribution in respect of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the area of the planning authority that is provided or intended to be provided by or on behalf of the authority in accordance with the terms of the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The contribution shall be paid prior to the commencement of development or in such phased payments as the planning authority may facilitate and shall be subject to any applicable indexation provisions of the Scheme at the time of payment. Details of the application of the terms of the Scheme shall be agreed between the planning authority and the developer or, in default of such agreement, the matter shall be referred to the Board to determine the proper application of the terms of the Scheme.

Reason: It is a requirement of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, that a condition requiring a contribution in accordance with the Development Contribution Scheme made under section 48 of the Act be applied to the permission.

