



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-302725-18 1st meeting

Case Reference / Description	ABP-302725-18		
	Proposed Celtic Interconnector to facilitate an electrical link enabling the movement of electricity between Ireland and France via a connection point from East Cork at Knockraha, Cork.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	07/03/19	Start Time	11 a.m.
Location	Parnell Room	End Time	12.35 p.m.
Chairperson	Brendan Wyse	Executive Officer	Kieran Somers

Attendees		
Representing An Bord Pleanála		
Staff Member	Email Address	Phone
Brendan Wyse, Assistant Director of Planning		
Una Crosse, Senior Planning Inspector		
Josephine Hayes, Senior Executive Officer		
Kieran Somers, Executive Officer		

Representing the Prospective Applicant		
Des Cox, Head of Programme Delivery and Senior Planner		
Gary Nolan, Project Manager		
Eoghan Tuite, Senior Project Engineer		
Eoin Brady, Solicitor		

The meeting commenced at 11 a.m.

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant requesting pre-application consultations and advised the prospective applicant that the instant meeting essentially constituted an information-gathering exercise for the Board; it also invited the prospective applicant to outline the nature of the proposed development and to highlight any matters it wished to receive advice on from the Board.

The Board mentioned general procedures in relation to the pre-application consultation process as follows:

- The Board will keep a record of this meeting and any other meetings, if held. Such records will form part of the file which will be made available publicly at the conclusion of the process. The record of the meeting will not be amended by the Board once finalised, but the prospective applicant may submit comments on the record which will form part of the case file.
- The Board will serve notice at the conclusion of the process as to the strategic infrastructure status of the proposed development. It may form a preliminary view at an early stage in the process on the matter.

- A further meeting or meetings may be held in respect of the proposed development.
- Further information may be requested by the Board and public consultations may also be directed by the Board.
- The Board may hold consultations in respect of the proposed development with other bodies.
- The holding of consultations does not prejudice the Board in any way and cannot be relied upon in the formal planning process or any legal proceedings.

The prospective applicant provided the Board with an overview of the proposed development which comprises an electrical link between Ireland and France. The proposed development will have a 700-megawatt capacity and will be approximately 575 kilometres in length (500 kilometres of which will be submarine). The core elements of the proposed development onshore will comprise a landfall point for the submarine circuit, an underground cable route and a converter station. The proposed development will be effectively underground with the exception of the converter station which will house electrical components. The underground cable route from the landfall point to the proposed converter station will be approximately 40 kilometres in length and is proposed to run along a public road network.

The prospective applicant set out the roadmap for the project which it said is currently at Step 3 of a 6-step design-build process. Preliminary feasibility studies were carried out between 2011 and 2014. Further feasibility studies were carried out between 2014 and 2016, which included a marine survey, project parameters and economic and financial analysis. The prospective applicant informed the Board that a decision from the Regulators in both Ireland and France as to the matter of financial investment in the project is expected in April 2019. If the project receives this go-ahead, then a detailed design stage will proceed. A final investment decision is scheduled to be made by the end of 2021.

The prospective applicant said that it is currently approaching the conclusion of Step 3 (namely the best option for the project and the area which may be affected). The prospective applicant said that it had examined options in counties Wexford and Cork. The East Cork location at Knockraha substation was confirmed as the best performing connection point in February 2018. The prospective applicant indicated that the submarine cable route to the 12-nautical mile limit is now fixed. There is an emerging best performing landing zone at the Claycastle/Redbarn beach, south of Youghal, within a two-kilometre stretch of coastline, and an emerging best performing converter station zone in close proximity to the Knockraha substation. The prospective applicant is now in a position to commence its next round of consultations on the project.

The prospective applicant said that the key objective of the next stage in the process will be to identify the best performing option for each element of the project. It is expected that this will be completed by the end of 2019. The prospective applicant stated its current intention to lodge the formal planning application circa mid-2020

With respect to the proposed underground cable route from the landfall point to the converter station, the prospective applicant noted that the public road network, which generally runs in an east-west direction, is likely to be used.

In relation to the eventual location for the proposed converter station, the prospective applicant said that screening would be an important factor from a visual amenity point of view and noted the presence of areas of forestry in the general area. The prospective applicant said that the existing Knockraha substation is located in an elevated position and added that the proposed converter station is unlikely to be positioned adjacent to this. It added that the emerging best performing converter station sites are located between two to five kilometres from the existing substation.

In a general context, the prospective applicant said that baseline investigations and other assessments will continue over the next few months and will assist in determining the specific locations for the landfall point and the converter station.

With respect to the receiving environment, the prospective applicant said its intention is to minimise impact as much as possible. It also noted the importance of engaging with stakeholders and members of the public in this regard.

The Board requested that the prospective applicant provide it with a full list of the various consents which will be required to carry out the proposed development. The prospective applicant agreed to forward this when available.

In relation to environmental impact assessment (EIA), the prospective applicant said that an environmental report may accompany the planning application when lodged. The prospective applicant noted that an EIAR is required on the landside part of the proposed development in France owing to the way in which the EIA Directive has been transposed into French legislation.

Responding to the prospective applicant's query on the matter, the Board said that it would be a matter for the prospective applicant to decide if it were to prepare an EIAR for the part of the project within the Irish State. The prospective applicant said that it would seek further advice on this matter.

With regard to Appropriate Assessment, the prospective applicant said that its intention was to carry out its own screening process in-house. In relation to the onshore part of the project, the prospective applicant said that this will consist of standard construction practice. It said there are no indications at present that an EPA licence will be required. With respect to the foreshore, the prospective applicant reported on-going engagement with the Department and said that the preparation of an EIAR does not appear to be necessary.

In relation to plans and particulars to accompany the planning application, the prospective applicant said that its intention is to produce a full and comprehensive suite of documents. With regard to the respective consenting authorities in Ireland and France, it is currently proposed to provide a joint environmental report.

Conclusion:

Noting the prospective applicant's current intention to lodge a formal planning application circa mid-2020, the Board said that at least one further meeting would be required in this particular pre-application consultation process. It will be a matter for the prospective applicant to revert to the Board when it wishes to request this. The record of the instant meeting will issue in the meantime and the prospective applicant may submit any comments on this for the public record.

The meeting concluded at 12.35 p.m.

Brendan Wyse**Assistant Director of Planning**