



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-302725-18 5th meeting

Case Reference / Description	ABP-302725-18 Proposed Celtic Interconnector to facilitate an electrical link between Ireland and France.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	5 th		
Date	03/11/20	Start Time	11 a.m.
Location	N/A	End Time	12.50 p.m.

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Staff Members
Brendan Wyse, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Una Crosse, Senior Planning Inspector
Kieran Somers, Executive Officer
Representing the Prospective Applicant
Tomas Bradley, Eirgrid
Des Cox, Eirgrid
Eoghan Tuite, Eirgrid
Valerie Brennan, Eirgrid
Donna Hassett, Mott MacDonald

The Board enquired as to whether the prospective applicant had any comments to make on the record of the previous pre-application consultation meeting (held on the 8th September 2020). The prospective applicant replied that it had two comments to make as follows:

(1) Page 4, final paragraph, clarified that the Concept of Public Participation (CPP) has been compiled at this stage and accepted.

(2) Page 5, first paragraph reference to a draft EIAR and NIS, requested that this should read that the draft EIAR and NIS will be prepared on the basis of the emerging preferred option.

Presentation by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant recapped on the nature and extent of the proposed development generally which is for a direct electrical link between Ireland and France; the proposed Celtic Interconnector will have a capacity of 700 megawatts. The proposed development will be approximately 575 kilometres in length with approximately 500 kilometres of it submarine.

The proposed landfall point is now confirmed at Claycastle Beach, Youghal, County Cork. A transition bay is proposed north of the beach providing the transition between the subsea cable and the onshore cable.

The route for the HVDC cable is still being assessed for the villages of Killeagh and Castlemartyr and around Middleton Town and the route for the HVAC cable is being assessed from Ballyadam to Knockraha. The prospective applicant said that a number of options are still being considered with regard to Killeagh and Castlemartyr and it is proposed to apply for 2 options for both these settlements. With respect to on-going consultations with TII representatives (Cork RDO), the prospective applicant referred to recently announced proposals for the upgrade of the N25, the timing of which is informing its proposal to utilise the local road network north of Middleton.

The preferred location for the proposed converter station is at Ballyadam (located on zoned lands owned by the IDA) and the grid connection point is proposed at the existing Knockraha 220kV substation.

With regard to the Ballyadam site, the prospective applicant said that the previous proposal to use a combination of underground cable and the existing overhead transmission lines is no longer being considered due to local constraints. The preferred option now is a tail-fed connection with underground cables serving the interconnector only. It is not proposed to use the existing overhead transmission network and no transmission infrastructure is required on the Ballyadam site. The prospective applicant outlined that consultations are on-going with the IDA in relation to the Ballyadam site with the IDA proposing to develop a masterplan for the overall site. The proposed converter station site is proposed on part of the lands to the northeast (previously noted as site B).

The prospective applicant further elaborated on the landfall point at Claycastle Beach and the proposed subsea HVDC cable landing point. From the beach, the cable is proposed to traverse the N25 road and the typical trench width for such a cable is circa 800mm. Consultations with local landowners in the villages of Killeagh and Castlemartyr are on-going with the preferred approach for the planning application is to present two options (one through the villages and the other cross-country).

In relation to the HVAC cable from the Converter station to Knockraha, the requirement to carry 826 megabars, the use of 220kV and 400kV options are being considered with the differences between same outlined noting the trench width for the 220kV option is circa 2 metres and the trench width for the 400kV option is circa 1 metre. It is proposed to use the local road network with options for off-road elements in a number of locations being considered. The new infrastructure at Knockraha is proposed to be located within the existing site within an unused area of the complex.

Key site issues emerging include the management of surface water on the converter station site at Ballyadam with significant groundworks required. A detailed flood risk assessment has determined that the proposed converter station site on IDA lands (Ballyadam) is not at risk from fluvial or tidal sources and is located in Flood Zone C. Previous development on the lands has resulted in the formation of two large depressions which will require the provision of compensatory rainwater storage.

In terms of biodiversity at the proposed converter station site, the prospective applicant noted that the translocation of bee orchid and greater knapweed is being considered. It clarified to the Board that any such translocation would occur prior to the commencement of development works. The Board noted this and said that any consents required from the Department should be sought and clearly documented. The prospective applicant undertook to do so in addition to any derogation licences which might be required.

With respect to the consideration of cumulative effects, the prospective applicant said that it would seek to be cognisant of any future developments such as the N25 upgrade options and developments on IDA lands with regard to the proposed converter station. The prospective applicant added that the intended EIAR to accompany the planning application would reflect the possibility of such future developments in the vicinity even though the final design of these projects may not be known at the time of lodgement of the planning application.

The prospective applicant referenced the legal advice it had forwarded in September 2020 and said that it was seeking advice from the Board as to whether the forthcoming planning application can include an EIAR. The Board's representatives stated, given the circumstances in the present case as outlined in the correspondence received, and noting that EIA is mandatory for the project within the French jurisdiction, that if it was proposed to prepare and submit an EIAR it would be accepted by the Board.

The prospective applicant also signalled its intention to lodge a whole project EIAR with the forthcoming planning application to the Board. The Board's representatives indicated that this would seem to be a prudent and robust approach.

The prospective applicant set out the intended scope of the planning application to the Board; this will include a multi-volume EIAR, a multi-section NIS and a Joint Environmental Report (JER).

The prospective applicant signalled its intention to complete the JER and to submit this to the French competent authority circa November 2020. Geotechnical investigations and landowner and community consultations are due to conclude shortly and the publication of the decision on the emerging preferred option is due in December 2020. The prospective applicant stated its current intention to submit the

SID application to the Board in March 2021. The foreshore licence application will be made at the same time to the Department.

Board's comments/queries:

The Board's representatives outlined the need to provide more clarity regarding the proposed route for the cable north of Midleton given the location of the N25 to the south of the town. The Board noted the prospective applicant's proposal of two options for the villages of Killeagh and Castlemartyr and enquired as to whether such an approach might not be also considered for Midleton. The prospective applicant undertook to consider this matter further and noted its on-going consultations with TII.

With regard to proposed upgrade of the N25, the prospective applicant noted that public consultations are still on-going with four options in the public domain and the final design is unlikely to emerge in the short term. From its perspective, it noted the element of uncertainty as to future plans for the road and how such proposed works/interventions might impact on any cable laid along the existing route. The prospective applicant referred again to its upcoming meeting with TII and undertook to provide the Board with a Technical Note outlining the most up to date position on the issue following that meeting. The Board also queried if any security issues might arise from locating the proposed cable route within the local road network with respect to any future interventions in the road. The prospective applicant replied that the placing of a cable in a road is a relatively secure option and that the roads in question are not overburdened with services. The prospective applicant added that monitoring of the cable route would be on-going.

The Board's representatives confirmed that presenting two alignment options for the villages of Killeagh and Castlemartyr in the forthcoming planning application would be acceptable.

Conclusion:

It was agreed that – following its meeting with TII – the prospective applicant will provide the Board with a Technical Note outlining the most up to date position on the upgrade of the N25 south of Midleton and implications for the route of the proposed development.

The prospective applicant stated its preference for a final meeting with the Board in early 2021. The matter of transboundary effects arising from the proposed development could be further discussed at this meeting.

The meeting concluded at 12.50 p.m.

Brendan Wyse**Assistant Director of Planning**