



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of Meeting ABP-303105-18 1<sup>st</sup> meeting

<b>Case Reference / Description</b>	ABP-303105-18  Proposed wind farm of between 20 and 25 turbines with an approximate yield of 90 MW at Carrownagowan, Co. Clare.		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-application consultation		
<b>1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>		
<b>Date</b>	11/02/19	<b>Start Time</b>	11 a.m.
<b>Location</b>	Parnell Room	<b>End Time</b>	12 p.m.
<b>Chairperson</b>	Anne Marie O'Connor	<b>Executive Officer</b>	Kieran Somers

<b>Attendees</b>		
<b>Representing An Bord Pleanála</b>		
<b>Staff Member</b>	<b>Email Address</b>	<b>Phone</b>
Anne Marie O'Connor, Assistant Director of Planning		
Gillian Kane, Senior Planning Inspector		
Josephine Hayes, Senior Executive Officer		
Kieran Somers, Executive Officer		

<b>Representing the Prospective Applicant</b>		
Ger Hynes, Project Manager, Coillte		
Sinead O'Malley, Planning Manager, Coillte		
Helen Burman Roy, Project Manager, Malachy Walsh and Partners		
Ken Fitzgerald, Planning and Stakeholder Manager, Malachy Walsh and Partners		

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.

**Presentation by the prospective applicant:**

The prospective applicant provided an overview of its involvement in the renewable energy sector and how it intends to be a market leader as regards onshore wind farm development. In a general context, it said that it has a target to be producing in the region of 1,000 megawatts of wind energy by the year 2030.

With respect to the instant project, the prospective applicant said that the proposed development would be carried out predominantly on its own lands. The subject site is located on the north-western slopes of Slieve Bernagh in south-east Clare within the strategic wind farm development area. The site in question is located approximately 7 kilometres north-west of Killaloe. The current land use on the subject site is commercial forestry plantation. The prospective applicant also noted the proximity of the subject site to Slieve Bernagh Bog SAC.

The prospective applicant said that the Clare Wind Energy Strategy (2017 – 2023) identifies the subject site as a strategic area and one which is capable of accommodating medium – large wind farms on the north-west slopes of Slieve

Bernagh. The strategic area is in a settled landscape where the uses envisaged in the current Clare County Development Plan include agriculture, energy, forestry, extraction, transportation, industry and commerce, tourism, recreation and leisure, education, healthcare and social infrastructure. The prospective applicant said that the subject site is located on elevated ground between 130 and 450 metres OD on the northern slopes of Slieve Bernagh. The subject site is located within Coillte forestry with additional private lands. Doon Lough is located to the south-west; Lough Derg is located to the east and north-east.

In relation to emerging constraints for the subject site, the prospective applicant said that two turbines of the original proposal (located on the eastern side) have been excluded. It also noted that a 750-metre buffer has been applied as regards local residents. In terms of biodiversity, a 500-metre buffer will be applied apropos the hen harrier zone. Preliminary surveys indicate that bat activity in the area in question is relatively low. The prospective applicant also noted for the record that it is currently in year 3 of its bird surveys.

With respect to project design, the prospective applicant said that a LiDAR model of the entire subject site had been provided which enabled a slope analysis. The slope assessment was completed to identify areas of the subject site where excessive slope should be avoided. The prospective applicant also noted that the review and iteration of the site layout is an on-going process.

The prospective applicant reiterated its opinion that the proposed development would constitute strategic infrastructure as it would exceed 50 megawatts in terms of total output and would be of strategic importance. In relation to community approach, it reported that it is engaging with the local community on an on-going basis and is encouraging a collaborative approach in this regard.

#### **Matters discussed:**

The following matters were discussed:

- Grid connection: The grid connection will comprise approximately 21 kilometres of underground cabling mainly along public roads. The prospective

applicant added that this element of the project will likely form part of the wind farm planning application. Consultation has been carried out with Eirgrid.

- A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will accompany the planning application. The prospective applicant referenced the recently published Scottish Natural Heritage Guidelines on bats. Noting that the subject site is not a designated site for bats, it was stated that bat surveys are currently on-going. There has been engagement with representatives from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The Board's representatives underlined the importance of consultation with NPWS having regard to the sensitivity of the location. A peer review of the NIS should also be considered.
- The proposed turbine tip height is 168m (4.2 to 4.8 mw output). Assessment of visual impact should be robust and should include views from Lough Derg, local communities, and other sensitive locations. All turbines should be individually numbered in photomontages, and any existing or permitted turbines (included for the purpose of cumulative assessment) should also be clearly identified and referenced in the photomontages.
- Two meetings have been held with the local planning authority. The issues raised largely relate to visual impact.
- Consultation with the local community is on-going. Concerns being raised focus mainly on the issues of health, noise, visual impact and impacts of construction traffic. The prospective applicant noted that a dwelling within the Coillte forest was in the ownership of a private individual and that consultation was on-going. The Board stressed the important of public consultation at all stages of the project design and delivery.
- In relation to construction traffic, it is expected that turbines would be transported via Galway Harbour / M18. The proposed delivery routes were outlined in brief. The Board said that the accompanying EIAR should address the matter of access routes. The Board added that the construction management plan should contain as much detail as possible including potential effects on haul routes.

- EIA: The Board recommended that a Schedule of Mitigation Monitoring Measures should be set out in a discrete section of the EIA. It also reminded the prospective applicant of its obligation to register the planning application on the Department's EIA Portal. The Board advised that all approaches and methodologies should be set out as clearly as possible, including an explanation of the rationale for turbine layout/ locations.
- It is intended to lodge a planning application circa mid-August 2019.

### **Conclusion:**

The prospective applicant set out the next steps in the process which it intends to follow prior to lodging the planning application. Noting this, the Board said that its preliminary view would be that the proposed development would constitute strategic infrastructure. It said that a further meeting would be advisable and invited the prospective applicant to request this prior to closure. The application procedures will be given at this further meeting. In the meantime, the record of the instant meeting will issue and the prospective applicant may forward any comments it has on this which will form part of the file.

The meeting concluded at 12 p.m.

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**Anne Marie O'Connor**  
**Assistant Director of Planning**