



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-303157-18 1st meeting

Case Reference / Description	ABP-303157-18 Wind Farm. Derrinlough, Co. Offaly.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	12/3/2018	Start Time	11 a.m.
Location	Parnell Room	End Time	1:15 p.m.
Chairperson	Anne Marie O'Connor	Executive Officer	Fergal Kilmurray

Attendees
Representing An Bord Pleanála
Anne Marie O'Connor, Assistant Director of Planning
Patricia Calleary, Senior Planning Inspector
Josephine Hayes, Senior Executive Officer
Fergal Kilmurray, Executive Officer
Representing the Prospective Applicant
Seán Creedon – Bord Na Móna Powergen Ltd
Caitriona Carter – Bord Na Móna Powergen Ltd
Michael Watson – MKO
Jimmy Green – MKO

Introduction:

This meeting is being held following the request received from the prospective applicant on 3rd December 2019 to enter into pre-application consultations. The Board's representatives noted the view of the prospective applicant that the development does constitute strategic infrastructure, and that the prospective applicant requested that only one meeting be held in relation to the pre-application consultation request.

The Board referred to 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 formal notice at the conclusion of the process as to whether or not the proposed development is Strategic Infrastructure Development. It may form a preliminary view at an early stage in the process as to whether the proposed development would likely constitute strategic infrastructure.
- 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 Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant that the pre-application consultation is not a formal scoping process for an Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

The prospective applicant was invited to outline the nature of the proposed development and to highlight any matters it wished to receive advice on from the Board.

Presentation by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant stated that they are a subsidiary of Bord na Móna plc, who develop and manage some of Ireland's extensive peat resources on an industrial scale. Bord na Móna have operated for over 80 years and lands within their ownership extend to approximately 80,000 hectares. The prospective applicant said they have a commitment to transition to peat-free electricity generation and the company strategy can be defined in 4 elements comprising Energy, Fuels, Biomass and Horticulture. Wind power will be a key part of that strategy and a number of wind projects are proposed on Bord Na Mona lands.

The prospective applicant gave an overview of the proposed development as follows:

- The site is located within the Boora Bog Group in West Offaly comprising two bogs, namely Clongawny and Drinagh in Derrinlough, Co. Offaly.
- Proposal is for a windfarm of 28 turbines, 15 in Clongawny bog and 13 in Drinagh bog, with an overall tip height of 185 metres. A minimum separation distance of 750m (4 times the tip height) from the nearest sensitive receptors is proposed.
- Two substation options are being considered and are shown on map submitted entitled Derrinlough Wind Farm Drawing no. BNM-PG-NB-04-09. Both options involve a 110kV loop in and out connection to an existing 110kv overhead line within the red line boundary. Only one of the substation options will be developed.
- The site is accessed via the N62 National Secondary Road which bisects the site. Delivery route would be the N52 National Road and then onwards to the N62 National Secondary Road.
- A briquette factory is located within the bog complex. Some level of peat extraction in the form of milled peat harvesting will continue on part of the site and the briquette factory will continue in operation.
- The proposed wind farm development will avoid the wetland area on the north side of Drinagh bog.
- Amenity works such as cycle paths and connections to the existing Lough Boora parklands and Grand Canal will form part of the application/ EIA/ AA.
- The construction period is estimated to be 24 months.
- All environmental constraints were mapped out and taken into account in determining the number and location of proposed turbines and associated works.

- It is currently intended to lodge a planning application in November 2019.

The following consultations have been carried out as follows:

- The 1st Public Consultation was held in April 2018, for 3 evenings at 3 local venues, 80-90 attendees recorded. The 2nd Public Consultation was held in November 2018 over 3 evenings at 3 local venues. 100 attendees were recorded. Door to door house calls and information newsletters have been issued to landowners in the vicinity. Discussions have also been held with residents and community groups. No further public consultations are envisaged/planned.
- Feedback/main issues: Community gain, Number of turbines, height and the proximity to residential properties, noise impacts.
- Two meetings have been held with Offaly County Council. The access/ haul routes and the nature and management of the amenity traffic were discussed. Some minor works to the existing road network were considered to be required to facilitate turbine delivery.

Discussion:

The following matters were discussed:

- Development Plan Policy: The prospective applicant said that the proposed site is partially located within the Wind Energy Strategy (WES) in the County Development Plan 2014-2020 for Offaly County Council and that the while some of the site lies outside of the area shown on this WES map, the external area shares the same characteristics as that contained within the boundary of the WES map. It was pointed out that the designation of land within the WES was carried out at a high level and was not site specific – for example the more sensitive area of wetland to on the north side of Drinagh bog was within the area designated under the WES but was not proposed for development as part of the wind farm development. The Board's representatives stressed that a robust justification must be provided for areas which fall outside of the WES.
- Residential amenity: In addition to the normal planning considerations in respect of residential amenity, careful consideration should be given to the impact on houses along the N62 which could be affected by turbines on either side of the road – particularly in relation to noise and shadow flicker. This should be addressed in detail in the planning application. The prospective applicant stated that shadow flicker is not an issue as the turbines can be

programmed / remotely controlled in relation to this and that they deployed 8 noise monitors out on site.

- Visual impact/ landscape: viewpoints should take account of any issues raised in consultations with the public and the planning authority, in addition to sensitive views in the vicinity including, but not exclusive to, Lough Derg, Grand Canal, Lough Boora parklands, N53 and Cloghan village and other settlements.
- Access: The prospective applicant is currently waiting for a response from the Transport Infrastructure Ireland and such response will inform the road design for operational traffic. Traffic and road crossings over the national primary road network will require consideration and consultation with TII will be important in this regard.
- Appropriate Assessment: The prospective applicant stated that the 2 year Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) Bird survey will be completed this month. The site is not on a migratory route for birds. A peer review of the NIS will be considered.
- Environmental Impact Assessment: An EIAR will be submitted with the application. The following matters were raised:
 - Preliminary investigations revealed no archaeological finds on site.
 - A full bat survey was completed in 2018 which indicated low activity levels and no roost sites. A gap analysis in accordance with the SNH Guidelines will be carried out.
 - Peat depths on the site vary from 2.5-4m. Treatment of peat on site will be examined in the EIAR and side casting of excavated peat will be employed with peat storage to be no higher than a metre.
 - The potential impact on the adjacent pNHA wetland should be examined in detail in the EIAR, particularly hydrogeological connectivity between the site and the groundwater dependant terrestrial ecosystem.
 - A schedule of mitigation, monitoring including construction mitigation and any monitoring measures should be included with the application/EIAR.
- Consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Development Applications Unit, Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht was recommended prior to lodging a planning application.
- Wind Energy Guidelines: The proposed development should comply with the forthcoming Guidelines if they are published in advance of the application being submitted.

Conclusion:

The record of the meeting will issue to the prospective applicant and it will then be a matter for the prospective applicant to submit any comments on this if it wishes to do so. Following this, the prospective applicant should seek a second meeting with the Board or request closure to the pre-application process.

If closure to the pre-application process is requested, the reporting inspector will complete the report and recommendation which will be forwarded to the Board for determination. A decision will then issue to the prospective applicant.

The meeting concluded at 1.15 p.m.

Anne Marie O'Connor

Assistant Director of Planning