



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 1st Meeting ABP-305271-19

Case Reference / Description	ABP-305271-19 400kV Cross-Shannon Cable Project between Moneypoint 400kV substation, Co. Clare and Kilpaddoge 220kV station, Co. Kerry.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	25/10/19	Start Time	11 a.m.
Location	Parnell Room	End Time	11.50 a.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		
Ellen Morrin, Senior Administrative Officer		
Kieran Somers, Executive Officer		

Representing the Prospective Applicant		
Tomas Bradley, Senior Planner		
Des Cox, Team Lead		
Jason Kenna, Project Manager		
Donna Hassett, Senior Environmental Scientist		

The meeting commenced at 11 a.m.

Introduction:

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 set out the context for the proposed development in terms of the development need. The Cross-Shannon Cable Project involves the laying of a new 400kV cable across the Shannon Estuary between the existing electricity substations at Moneypoint, County Clare and Kilpaddoge, County Kerry. It is required in order to direct a surplus of energy (particularly renewable energy) generated in the south-west region onto the 400kV network and onto the demand centres in the east ensuring that such excess power is dispatched around the country as efficiently as possible. The proposal forms part of a series of upgrades which are proposed instead of the previously proposed large-scale Gridlink project.
- The prospective applicant referred to the location for the proposed development (across the Shannon Estuary) and also referred to the various route options which are being considered; Route Option 2 is emerging as the best performing option. The prospective applicant said that extensive marine studies have been conducted over the last number of years. It added that numerous constraints in the study area, including submerged ancient woodlands, have informed the emerging preferred route. The prospective applicant confirmed that the existing Kilpaddoge substation received planning approval from the Board under case reference number VA0011. Upgrades to

the Moneypoint substation were deemed to not constitute strategic infrastructure by the Board under a previous pre-app case.

- The prospective applicant expanded upon the development description for the proposed development; this includes constituent elements such as the 400kV underground cable connection, two underground transition joint bays, a 400kV Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) Bay adjoining the existing Kilpaddoge substation and associated and ancillary development. The prospective applicant said that the bulk of the proposed development will take place on the County Kerry side (only minor works are required at Moneypoint); the electrical equipment within the Kilpaddoge substation will be up to 10 metres in height with lightning protection masts up to 25 metres in height.
- Typical landfall transition joint bays were also referred to and the Submarine Cable Marine Survey was also referenced. The prospective applicant added that extensive work will be required in the submarine area of the proposed development which varies in depth.
- The prospective applicant stated its opinion that the proposed development would comprise strategic infrastructure given that it is for the purposes of electricity transmission, will form part of the 400kV transmission network, will contribute substantially to the fulfilment of objectives in the National Planning Framework, will be of strategic economic or social importance to the State and will occur across the functional area of more than one planning authority.
- As regards EIA, the prospective applicant stated its current opinion is that the proposed development is not a type of development which falls within Annex I and Annex II of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive and relevant Irish legislation; it added that a screening report in this regard would form part of the intended planning application. The prospective applicant noted that the Shannon Estuary has a Natura 2000 designation and that a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will be submitted as part of the planning application.

- With respect to next steps, the prospective applicant said that geotechnical investigations and design are on-going as are engagements/consultations with stakeholders and the local community. The prospective applicant said that it has met with representatives from both local authorities as well as with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). There has also been engagement with the marine division of the Department with respect to the required Foreshore Licence.
- With regard to the planning application, the prospective applicant stated its intention to lodge this circa Quarter 1 2020.

Discussion:

With regard to the methodology for the proposed crossing of the Shannon Estuary (a Special Area of Conservation), the prospective applicant noted that there are two existing cables (220kV) which traverse the submarine area. These were completed circa 2006. The prospective applicant said that it has been liaising extensively with the NPWS and noted that the key constraint emerging is dolphins which are a qualifying interest in the SAC. It added that it will be seeking to ensure that noise will not have an adverse impact on this particular species. The Irish Whale and Dolphin Group is in liaison with the prospective applicant on this issue.

In response to the Board's query on the matter, the prospective applicant said it is satisfied that the other qualifying interest for the SAC in question (reefs) occurs outside the subject area for the proposed cable. It also clarified that trenching will be employed for the laying of the proposed cable and that dredging would not now be required. The Board's representatives indicated that the application should be clear in relation to the process and methodology proposed for laying of the cable.

With respect to the ancient woodlands, the prospective applicant clarified that this is an archaeological feature which is submerged. The prospective applicant added that it is engaging with the relevant body in relation to this.

The prospective applicant said that it has engaged with Inland Fisheries Ireland and reported that it is satisfied with the proposed cable route (which, effectively, comprises the shortest route across the Shannon Estuary).

The Board enquired as to whether any discussions with the Foreshore Section within the Department have identified a need for the preparation of an EIAR for the proposed development. The prospective applicant said that it was confident this will not be required given that dredging will not take place. The Board suggested that clarity on this point be established with the Department.

With respect to visual impact, the prospective applicant said that it is not expecting any major issues in this regard; it pointed out that the two relevant substations (at Moneypoint and Kilpaddoge) are already in existence.

The Board stated its opinion that Appropriate Assessment would probably be the critical factor with regard to the planning assessment of the proposed development and considered a robust NIS is required. It was also emphasised that the planning application should clearly set out the rationale for the project. Noting this, the prospective applicant stated that an Outline Construction Management Plan will form part of the planning application as well as an extensive suite of plans and particulars.

The Board enquired as to whether there is a Special Protection Area (SPA) in the vicinity of the proposed development. The prospective applicant replied that there is one proximate to the subject site, adding that it does not anticipate any impacts on bird species.

Finally, the Board stated its preliminary opinion that the proposed development would likely comprise strategic infrastructure.

Conclusion:

The prospective applicant said that it felt a further meeting would be required prior to the closing of the pre-app process; it will revert to the Board for such a meeting in early 2020.

The record of the instant meeting will issue in the meantime and the prospective applicant may submit any comments it has on this in writing.

The meeting concluded at 11.50 a.m.

Brendan Wyse

Assistant Director of Planning