



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of Meeting ABP-306662-20 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting

<b>Case Reference/ Description</b>	ABP-306662-20 Onshore transmission connection infrastructure related to the Arklow Bank Wind Park offshore wind energy project.		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-application Consultation		
<b>Meeting</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Meeting		
<b>Date:</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> June, 2020		
<b>Chairperson</b>	Ciara Kellett		
<b>Date</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> June, 2020	<b>Time</b>	2.30pm – 3.40pm

### Representing An Bord Pleanála

Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)

Stephen Kay, Senior Planning Inspector

Nichola Meehan, Executive Officer

### Representing Prospective Applicant

Eimear Lenehan – SSE Head of Consents

James O'Hara – SSE ABWP Project Manager

Kaj Christiansen - SSE ABWP Development Manager

Marc Walshe - SSE ABWP Consent Manager

Cathal Martin – SSE Senior Engineer (Grid Services)

Clodagh O'Donovan – Arup Project Director

Deirdre Nagle – Mason Hayes & Curran Solicitors Legal Advisor

### Introduction:

Following introductions, the representatives of the Board referred to the request received from the prospective applicant to enter into pre-application consultations.

The Board advised the prospective applicant that the instant meeting essentially constituted an information-gathering exercise for the Board to determine whether the proposed development was strategic infrastructure development or not and, if so, what the key considerations may be. 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 in writing 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 SID. 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.

### **Presentation by the prospective applicant:**

The proposed development is for the onshore transmission connection infrastructure related to the Arklow Bank Wind Park offshore wind energy project. The prospective applicant gave an overview of the project under the following headings:

- **Overview of SSE** – SSE is a leading producer of renewable energy in Ireland, owner and operator of 29 windfarms in Ireland producing 720MW of renewable generation.
- **Arklow Bank Wind Park** - has a 99-year foreshore lease which issued in January 2002 and which is for a minimum of 520 MW (MEC) with up to 200 turbines permitted. The site is 27km long and 2.5km wide and is situated 13km offshore in water depths of 2m-45m. Phase 1 of 7 turbines were constructed in 2003/2004 and is owned and operated by GE Energy.
- **Timeline:** In accordance with the Climate Action Plan, grid offers are to be issued to legacy projects. It is anticipated that construction will begin in 2023 and the handover of all turbines in 2025.

- **Offshore Infrastructure:** - The construction of 57-100 turbines (depending on turbine choice). Each turbine unit would have an output of 5.5MW -10MW. RPS have been appointed to prepare an Appropriate Assessment Screening / NIS and EIAR to be submitted to DHPLG.
- **Operations and Maintenance Facility:** - Consists of offices, stores, mess facilities, warehousing, parking and ancillary infrastructure. It is planned to submit an application to the Planning Authority in Q4 2020. The preferred location is Arklow Harbour – South Dock.

**Onshore Grid Infrastructure:** - Comprises the infrastructure required to connect the offshore export cables from the chosen landing point to the high voltage transmission grid via underground 220kV High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) cables, a new onshore 220kV substation and a connection from the new onshore substation to the existing 220kV transmission network. This element is the subject of the pre-application consultations.

- **Details of the onshore element:**
- **Existing Transmission Network:** There are existing 220kV overhead lines from Arklow to Carrickmines and 110kV overhead line from Carrickmines-Ballybeg-Arklow with a 110kV substation at Ballybeg.
- **Alternatives Considered:** - Two cable landing sites and four substation sites were shortlisted for detailed assessment with two ‘tail fed’ connection and two ‘loop-in’ connection options depending on connection location.
- **Substation Location:** - Shelton Abbey is the preferred site. It is a level brownfield site, has a loop-in connection, has suitable existing access, the land is zoned for employment, it is adjacent to a data centre and landowner negotiations are at an advanced stage.
- **Substation Layout:** - Two options – AIS and GIS. The GIS substation is the preferred option.
- **Cable Routes - Alternatives Considered:** - Cross country cable routing is the preferred option. Four shortlisted cable routes are being considered. The southern route option, which is the shortest route, is the emerging preferred option and landowner engagement on this route is ongoing.
- **OGI Cable Routes:** - The proposed onshore cable route will consist of two circuits (4-5m separation) in trefoil arrangement in the same trench. The cables will primarily be routed through agricultural fields but may in places go along sections of road. The cables will be laid in an open trench but at some river crossings and at M11 Motorway, trenchless crossings (HDD) may be required.
- **OGI Preferred Landfall:** - The preferred landfall is Johnstown North. The HDD (horizontal directional drilling) methodology will be used to connect the onshore and subsea cables. There will be no above ground protrusion and the site will be clear after construction works have been completed.
- **Grid Upgrade Works:** - Eirgrid East Coast Generation Opportunity Assessment Report (2019) identified 800MW of capacity at Arklow with specific grid upgrades. The report outlined grid upgrades required to facilitate 500MW of capacity at the Arklow node including works at the existing Eirgrid Arklow 220kV substation, a new 220kV substation at Ballybeg and minor works at the Carrickmines substation. The upgrade works will not form part of the proposed development but will be considered in terms of cumulative

assessment and will be the subject of a separate consent application by Eirgrid.

- **EIAR:**

**EIA Requirement:** An EIAR will be prepared and is proposed to accompany the onshore grid infrastructure application.

- **Cumulative Assessment:** - A robust cumulative/in-combination assessment is critical for EIA and AA. The whole project assessment will assess cumulative aspects of the offshore project and the operation and maintenance facility (OMF) as well as other projects in the vicinity). It is proposed that the EIAR for offshore works will be appended to the onshore EIAR if application is submitted to An Bord Pleanála.
- **Surveys:** The baseline environmental surveys e.g. winter bird surveys are ongoing since 2019 and will be completed in 4-6 weeks subject to the confirmed route. A virtual public consultation is due to commence in July with stakeholders.
- **Key Milestones:** The EIAR and NIS is to be completed by mid-October and the application to be submitted at the end of October.
- **Ongoing Consultation:** A draft list of prescribed bodies is provided. It is intended to meet with Wicklow County Council in the coming weeks. Contact was made with the National Parks and Wildlife Service last month.
- **Wider Project Update:** Development activity on the project recommenced in 2017. Stakeholder engagement with government and statutory stakeholders e.g. DHPLG, DTTAS and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. Other stakeholders include local community groups and harbour user groups e.g. Irish Coastguard, Inland Fisheries, Sea Scouts. The geophysical survey campaign was completed in 2019, a lidar was installed in Q3 2019 and 5 metocean buoys were deployed in Q3 2019.
- **Planned Project Activities:** - A foreshore licence is currently with Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to allow the completion of intrusive geotechnical surveys and the deployment of two floating lidar devices. This information will inform the completion of concept designs to allow for tendering ahead of the scheduled RESS auction in early 2021.

## **Discussion:**

Following the presentation, the following matters were discussed:

- The prospective applicant clarified to the Board's representatives that the onshore and offshore developments will use different consenting processes with only the onshore element being submitted to the Board. In response, the Board's representatives emphasised that, given this approach, it will be key that the prospective applicant ensures that the two projects are cross

referenced and that the submitted information includes a full assessment of the cumulative impacts (EIAR) and in combination effects (AA) which would enable the Board to complete EIA and AA of the development.

- The prospective applicant clarified to the Board that the preferred cable route is the southern most option indicated on Page 16 of the presentation.
- The Board's representatives enquired as to the advantage in proceeding with the current foreshore lease rather than waiting on the new legislation (Marine Planning and Development Management legislation). The prospective applicant stated that the proposed route was considered to be quicker and would help the project to contribute towards the 3.5GW of installed ORE by 2030 identified in the Climate Action Plan.
- The prospective applicant stated that two years of survey data for the offshore project has been completed. A 2019 onshore winter survey is expected to be completed in 4-6 weeks and summer breeding bird surveys are ongoing.
- The Board's representatives informed the prospective applicant that the Board would be guided by the submissions received from the National Parks and Wildlife Service. It was advised that the prospective applicant obtain as much clarity from NPWS as possible prior to the submission of the application and in particular regarding the requirements around ecological surveys and the scope and duration of same.
- The Board's representatives indicated that an initial review of the list of consultees provided appears comprehensive. The Board representatives stated that they will review this further and revert as necessary in a subsequent meeting.
- The prospective applicant informed the Board that the announcements in relation to the re activation of the project has resulted in generally positive feedback from the public and stakeholders.
- The Board's representatives noted the relative proximity of the favoured cable landing site to the Brittas Bay SAC. The prospective applicant stated that the works at this location would involve HDD which is not anticipated to result in significant effects on this SAC, however a Screening Assessment and NIS if required will be prepared and submitted with the application.
- The Board's representatives enquired about negotiations with landowners and to what extent the preferred route would be on the public road. The prospective applicant informed the Board that use of public roads was limited as they are narrow and already carry a significant amount of services. A largely cross country route is therefore proposed and negotiations with approximately 13 landowners along the preferred route are ongoing. Also stated that a crossing of the N11 is required and that there is no existing underpass.
- The Board's representatives queried the status of the grid reinforcement works proposed by Eirgrid. The prospective applicant has advised that funding has been requested from the CRU for these works. Clarified by the prospective applicant that a Grid Stability Study undertaken by Eirgrid indicates that the system would remain stable even with an additional 800MW and that these reinforcement works are not a requirement for the proposed development. Also clarified that the grid re inforcement works would be included as part of cumulative assessment of impacts under EIA.
- In advance of the second meeting, the Board representatives committed to reviewing the submitted list of prescribed bodies for consultation as submitted by the prospective applicant.

## **Conclusion:**

The record of the meeting will issue to the prospective applicant and it will 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 in writing. If closure to the pre-application is requested, the reporting inspector will complete the report and recommendation which will be forwarded to the Board for determination. A copy of the procedures will be attached, and the decision will then issue to the prospective applicant.

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**Ciara Kellett**

**Assistant Director of Planning**