



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of Meeting ABP-306662-20 2<sup>nd</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>1st / 2nd / 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup>		
<b>Date</b>	02/09/20	<b>Start Time</b>	9 a.m.
<b>Location</b>	N/A	<b>End Time</b>	10 a.m.

<b>Representing An Bord Pleanála</b>
<b>Staff Members</b>
Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Stephen Kay, Senior Planning Inspector
Kieran Somers, Executive Officer
<b>Representing the Prospective Applicant</b>
Marc Walshe, SSE
Kaj Christiansen, SSE
Clodagh O' Donovan, ARUP
Moira Walsh, ARUP
Deirdre Nagle, Mason Hayes and Curran Solicitors
Gary Nolan, SSE

The meeting commenced at 9 a.m.

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

#### **General:**

With respect to the previous meeting held with the Board on the 17<sup>th</sup> June, 2020, the prospective applicant said that it had no comments to make on the record of this meeting. With regard to advice sought on statutory consultees to be contacted with regard to EIAR Scoping, the prospective applicant acknowledged the written correspondence received from the Board. The prospective applicant said that the intention of the current consultation meeting was to provide the Board's representatives with an update on the project regarding elements such as the landfall site, the proposed cable route, substation location and design and the connection to the transmission network.

The prospective applicant made a presentation, a copy of which is on file, and the following sections summarise the content under the main headings presented.

#### **Landfall element:**

The prospective applicant noted that the foreshore consent provides for two potential offshore cable routes and that the northern landfall site at Johnstown North is emerging as the preferred option following feasibility studies. The prospective applicant noted the proximity of the nearby SAC and the topography of the general area. The site in the vicinity of the preferred landfall location is undulating in nature with the result that some minor earthworks will be required in order to level the site. Post construction, it is proposed that the site would be returned to its current agricultural use.

#### **Proposed substation:**

The prospective applicant reported that, following the detailed assessment of the four identified alternative substation locations, the emerging preferred option is located at Shelton Abbey, just west of Arklow. This is a brownfield site, is zoned for employment and is located adjacent to a permitted data centre. The prospective

applicant noted that the area is at some risk of flooding from the nearby Avoca River and that studies on this issue are ongoing. There is also a contamination risk owing to previous landfill use and it was stated that work is ongoing on this issue to inform a remediation plan for the site.

**Substation design:**

The overall site area for the proposed substation is four hectares and the prospective applicant confirmed that a loop-in connection is proposed with a Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) design largely on account of the reduced space requirement. The prospective applicant also added that the proposed substation will be designed to accommodate equipment for both SSE and Eirgrid. Photomontages have been prepared with regard to the view from the M11 and the prospective applicant said that the overall design would conform with neighbouring buildings. Copies of the photomontages are included in the hard copy of the presentation on file.

**Cable route options:**

With respect to all cable route options considered, the prospective applicant said that it had considered constraints such as nearby sensitive receptors, ecology, topography, flood risk and ground conditions. It reported that of the 4 no. route options examined in detail, the emerging preferred route is the southern option to the south of the M11 between Johnstown North and Shelton Abbey. Two variations of this route are the subject of ongoing examination (to provide different options for the crossing of the R.772) with 100 metre wide corridors along both options walked and the subject of detailed study over the last few months. This southern route is favoured for a number of reasons including shortest length (c.5km), minimisation of road crossings and detailed engineering and environmental constraints. The prospective applicant said that a 50-metre planning corridor is intended. The prospective applicant also noted that the preferred cable route option mainly traverses agricultural land and would thus minimise the effects on traffic and residential dwellings. It added that detailed studies are now being undertaken with respect to the preferred route. Some construction compounds will also be required, but these will be temporary in nature.

**Connection to transmission network:**

The prospective applicant confirmed that the intended connection will be via the Lodgewood-Arklow-Carrickmines overhead transmission line which runs east of the proposed substation. A loop-in connection will be used and an existing OHL tower will be replaced by an angle tower. To the east of the substation site there is an existing pylon which is proposed to be decommissioned and a new pylon erected to the north. It was highlighted by the prospective applicant that the pylon proposed for removal is located within the area licenced by the EPA on account of its former landfill use, and that the loop-in connection will also cross licenced areas. The substation site itself is located outside of any licenced area.

**EIA Scoping:**

The prospective applicant reported that a detailed EIAR Scoping document is being prepared in order to best inform key stakeholders. This will include a detailed outline description of the project and the proposed structure of the EIAR. The prospective applicant said that it intends to issue the scoping document to relevant stakeholders in the coming weeks.

**Progress on EIAR and NIS:**

The prospective applicant advised the Board's representatives that a grouped format structure is proposed to be used which will comply with legislation and best practice guidance. Specialist topics will be grouped into physical environment, biological environment, human environment and major accidents and disasters. The prospective applicant also reported substantial progress on baseline surveys (such as winter bird counts and summer breeding birds), many of which have now been completed. The design freeze is almost complete and the prospective applicant said that it has identified the key matters to be addressed in the EIAR (including flood risk, potential for contamination, noise and traffic impacts, construction effects and visual impact). With respect to the issue of cumulative impact assessment, the prospective applicant reported that a two-tier approach will be undertaken with Tier 1 of the assessment focussing on the other elements of the overall Arklow bank Phase 2 Project including offshore infrastructure, offshore grid, the proposed operations and maintenance facility and Eirgrid upgrade works. Tier 2 of the cumulative assessment

will focus on other projects including the existing Phase 1 of the Arklow Bank Wind Project. The prospective applicant stated that it was intended that the EIAR for the offshore elements of the project would be included with any application as a separate volume.

**Project co-ordination:**

With respect to the other elements of the overall project, the prospective applicant said there are on-going co-ordination meetings and workshops in relation to the cumulative assessment of impacts. This primarily relates to co ordination with the project team for the offshore part of the project (overseen by RPS).

**Update on consultations:**

The prospective applicant reported that, since the time of its previous meeting with the Board, further meetings have taken place with stakeholders such as Transport Infrastructure Ireland and Wicklow County Council; there are also further meetings planned with the National Parks and Wildlife Service. Public consultations will be commencing shortly; these will be mainly virtual in nature owing to the on-going Covid19 pandemic.

**Programme update:**

The prospective applicant said that baseline surveys will continue until the end of September 2020 and a design freeze will be implemented at that stage. It stated its overall intention to lodge a SID application with the Board (for the onshore element of the project) prior to the end of 2020. A GANT chart showing the key project dates is included in the presentation.

**Arklow Bank Wind Park update:**

The prospective applicant provided the Board's representatives with a brief update on the project as a whole. With respect to proposed offshore infrastructure, the prospective applicant noted that a foreshore lease has previously been obtained and that an extension of Long Stop Dates will be required. With respect to the proposed Operation and Maintenance Facility, the prospective applicant noted that a statutory consent application is required from Wicklow County Council.

**Board comments/queries:**

- Noting that a design freeze is intended by the end of September 2020, the Board's representatives enquired as to whether all options for the proposed cable route are still being considered. The prospective applicant replied that such is the case.
- In response to the Board's query on the matter, the prospective confirmed that it will be engaging in further meetings with representatives from the NPWS with respect to surveys and intended methodologies. The timeline indicates that one year of winter bird surveys will be complete by the time of submission and the prospective applicant added that no major issues have arisen with respect to surveys on winter bird counts and summer breeding birds. The Board representatives restated the importance of consultation with the NPWS to determine as far as possible their exact requirements in terms of survey data. The prospective applicant stated that it was in discussions with the NPWS regarding the onshore elements of the project.
- Following from the presentation and the discussion at the first meeting, the Board's representatives stressed that the structure of the EIAR will be very important and should be set out so as to ensure that the issue of cumulative impacts is as comprehensive as possible. The Board representatives also emphasised that cumulative impact assessment will be critical given that there are four constituent elements to the project and stated that the information presented with any application will have to clearly identify the impacts arising from the works which are the subject of the application to the Board and then the cumulative impacts from other parts of the Arklow Bank Wind Park project and other relevant projects. It will not be appropriate or acceptable to the Board that one overall project EIAR would be prepared and submitted to the Board (onshore elements) and the Department (offshore elements). The prospective applicant noted this point and confirmed that each chapter of the EIAR will have a section addressing the matter of cumulative impact assessment.

- In response to the Board's query on the matter, the prospective applicant said that it was aware of a previous industrial activity on the Shelton Abbey site and of the possibility of contamination in this location. The pylon to be removed is located in the area where the licenced activity took place and the prospective applicant said that it has to consider any potential for contamination in the works required to remove the pylon.
- With respect to the Arklow Flood Relief Scheme, the prospective applicant acknowledged that it has to be cognisant of this project, but that it does not extend as far as the substation site.
- In response to the Board's query, the prospective applicant confirmed that the consented data centre is located to the south of the subject site. The prospective applicant added that the subject site is located on a parcel of land which was previously intended to form part of the consented data centre. The original permission for the data centre proposed a lower voltage connection to the grid (likely 38kV) and so was not the subject of a SID application to the Board. The prospective applicant stated that the intention now is that the developer for the data centre may connect into the grid via the Arklow Wind Park 220kV substation, however they are also proposing a 'back up' 110kv connection which will likely be the subject of pre-application consultations with the Board under the Strategic Infrastructure Development provisions of the Act.

#### **Other matters:**

The prospective applicant sought clarification from the Board as to whether the intended approach vis-à-vis 100-metre corridor assessment for the proposed cable route would be appropriate given the intended use of a 50-metre application / red line boundary. The Board representatives stated that this approach appeared to be appropriate. In response to a query regarding the drafting of the red line boundary, the Board representatives stated that the approach set out by the prospective applicant was considered appropriate. Finally, the Board also confirmed that, with respect to the onshore element of the project, its jurisdiction extends up to the high-

water mark and that the use of the HWM as indicated on the 1 in 25" map was appropriate.

**Conclusion:**

With respect to the formal closure of the pre-application process, the Board reminded the prospective applicant that it should request such closure by written correspondence and that it should expect up to a six-week time period for the Board's SID determination (this is to allow the reporting inspector to complete report and recommendation to the Board).

The Board advised that the pre-application consultations cannot be closed until receipt of the record of this meeting. The prospective applicant indicated that it was likely that it would not seek to close the pre application process until closer to the projected date for submission of an application as per the submitted timeline.

The record of the instant meeting will issue and the prospective applicant can submit any comments it may have in writing. It is open to the prospective applicant to seek a further meeting if so required.

The meeting concluded at 10 a.m.

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**Ciara Kellett**

**Assistant Director of Planning**