



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-306727-20 1st meeting

Case Reference / Description	ABP-306727-20 Proposed windfarm and substation, Shronowen, County Kerry.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	30/04/20	Time	11 am – 12 pm

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Rachel Kenny, Director of Planning (Chair)
Patricia Calleary, Senior Planning Inspector
Rob Mac Giollarnáth, Executive Officer r.macgiollarnath@pleanala.ie
Representing the prospective Applicant
Alexander Kelly Project Manager EMPower
Marc McLoughlin Chief Operations Officer EMPower
Caitríona Fox Environmental Consultant Malachy Walsh & Partners

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 that it wished to receive advice on from the

Board. The Board mentioned the following general procedures in relation to the pre-application consultation process:

- 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:

- **Introduction and description** – The proposed development is for the development of a wind farm (Shronowen Wind Farm), consisting of 12 turbines, at a site 6 kms north of Listowel and 5 kms south of Ballylongford in County Kerry. The site is primarily across a peatland site where some excavation of peat occurs on a non-commercial basis. There is also a proposed 110 kV sub-station (within the site boundaries) with loop-in connection to the national grid. The proposed output of the wind farm is 50.4 MW. The prospective applicant currently has projects in excess of 300 MW operating in Ireland.

- **Site location and layout** –The location was chosen having considered environmental issues and also having regard to wind availability and noting environmental constraints including sensitive receptors. The area itself is one that is designated as being ‘open for consideration’ in the relevant County Development Plan. The layout had regard to the turbary rights/cutting areas on the site. Agreements have been put in place with landholders and turbary rights holders.
- **Environmental issues** –Regarding an EIAR, the baseline studies have been completed and impact studies are ongoing. Bird survey work has been carried out for an 18-month period and so far no issues have been arisen.
- **Public consultation** – An initial meeting was held with local people in September 2019 and a follow up meeting was proposed because of the COVID-19 situation. A community benefit fund is proposed as part of the project in which funding will be dispersed over the lifetime of the project to benefit householders and to fund community projects. The public feedback so far has been largely positive.
- **Connection to Electricity network** – A sub-station is proposed on site and there are two current options regarding connection to the electricity network. The first proposal is a loop-in connection with an existing 110kV line passing directly to the east of the site. The second proposal would connect near to a proposed solar farm at Drombeg (approximately 2.5 kms to the south of the current project). The applicant is due to meet with Eirgrid shortly to discuss the grid connection.
- **Draft Wind Energy Development Guidelines** – The proposed development would be in compliance with the draft guidelines and noise emissions have been considered.
- **Overall benefit of the project** – The proposed project aligns with the National Planning Framework Objectives and would significantly contribute to Ireland’s goal of sourcing 70% of electricity from renewables by 2030. The project itself would increase Ireland’s generation from wind energy by 1.6% and would result in approximately 75,000 tonnes CO₂ being abated annually.

Discussion:

The following matters were discussed:

- The issue of peat on the site was raised with regard to the depths, the amount of same and any potential slippage. The prospective applicant submitted that they had regard to the depth of peat in selecting areas for the actual turbines and any area that was greater than 4 metres in depth was avoided. Some of the peat areas had been cut away and there was potential to store any excess peat on site. They will revert as to the actual volume of peat that would be excavated as part of the project.
- On behalf of the Board it was stated that although the prospective applicant had clearly indicated that the development could come within the statutory parameters relating to strategic infrastructure there had been no reference to the relevant regional spatial strategy and it would be advisable to refer to same in any follow-up meeting.
- On behalf of the Board, a preliminary view that the proposed development would constitute strategic infrastructure was expressed, though as in all cases, the final view would be a matter for the Board to decide.
- In response to the prospective applicant's query around progressing both the proposed electricity grid connections, the Board's representatives stated that it would be strongly advisable to assess the environmental impacts relating to both options separately but the assessments and findings could be set out within one EIAR as part of the application to the Board.
- In response to a query on a slight reduction of power output, the Board's representatives advised that if the total power output was to fall under 50 MW then the application for the wind farm should be made to the planning authority in the first instance. Where a 110kV grid connection is nonetheless proposed, the Boards representatives expressed its preliminary view that the application would be required to be made to the Board under Section 182A of the PDA 2000, as amended.

- If the power output proposed is greater than 50MW and a 110kV grid connection is proposed, the Board's representatives stated its preliminary view that the application would constitute SID but under two different sections of the Act (Section 37A for the windfarm development and Section 182A for the 110kV grid connection). In this regard, it was stated that the Board are currently reviewing this matter of a SID application under two sections of the Act, and would provide further guidance to the prospective applicant in due course. The prospective applicant stated its view that one application would be required to be submitted for both the windfarm and the grid connection elements, while referring to both applicable sections of the Act.

Conclusion:

The record of the instant meeting will issue. The prospective applicant can then respond with their own comments on issues raised in the record. It may be that a further meeting will be held to clarify and to develop issues.

Rachel Kenny

Director of Planning