



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-307058-20 1st meeting

Case Reference / Description	ABP-307058-20 Proposed windfarm (11 No. wind turbines) and electricity substation, County Galway.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	22/06/20	Time	11 am – 12.40 pm

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Patricia Calleary, Senior Planning Inspector
Rob Mac Giollarnáth, Executive Officer r.macgiollarnath@pleanala.ie
Representing the prospective Applicant
Jimmy Green, MKO
Owen Cahill, MKO
Paul Sweeney, MKO

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:

- **Proposed development** – The prospective applicants Clonberne Windfarm Limited are proposing to develop a wind farm of 11 number wind turbines each with a 170 metres tip height. Each turbine would have a generating capacity of approximately 4.8MW each giving a total installed capacity of 52.8MW. The application would include all associated works, including access roads, 110kV substation, battery storage compound and temporary construction compound.
- **Site Selection** – The site has been identified as being highly appropriate for the provision of renewable/wind energy developments on the basis of the following criteria:
 - County Development Plan Policy; (site is ‘open to consideration’)

- Wind resource
- Low population density and
- Reasonable access to the national electricity grid.
- **Policy context:**
 - Strong National and International support for additional renewable energy and de-carbonisation:
 - Recognised future impact of climate change.
 - Ireland is on track to not meet the 2020 targets.
 - Clear need to meet 2030 and 2050 targets.
 - National Planning Framework 2018-2040: National Strategic Outcome 8- Transition to a Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Society
 - Climate Action Plan 2019:
 - Increase electricity generated from renewable sources to 70%.
 - CAP identifies a need for 8.2GW of onshore wind generation and states that in 2017 there was 3.3GW in place.
 - Northern and Western Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy:
 - The RSES supports the transition to a low carbon economy.
 - It is recognized that this region has the unique natural endowment of ample carbon-neutral, energy supplies that gives us an opportunity of forging and leading the new clean economy of the future.
- **Local Planning context**
 - Supported by Galway County Development Plan 2015-2021, area is 'open to consideration' for wind farm development. These objectives are set out in **Policy IS33, IS34, IS36** and **Policy IS37**.
 - Supporting Objectives are set out in **Objectives IS18** and **Objective IS19**.
- **Development Guidelines**
 - Planning applications for wind farm development should be in compliance with Departmental Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006 (including any new guidelines when issued) and the County Galway Wind Energy Strategy (WES).

- **Project Design/Constraints Study**

- Project design has been informed through the application of a site constraints process which considers the following set back/buffer distances:
 - Dwellings plus 700-metre buffer.
 - Designated sites plus 200-metre buffer.
 - Rivers plus 50-metre buffer.
 - Streams plus 50-metre buffer.
 - Telecommunication links plus operator-specific buffer.
 - Neighbouring existing or permitted wind turbines plus 2.5 x rotor diameter buffer.
 - Application of the above constraints results in the viable area for the provision of turbines.

- **Public consultation**

- Initial consultation held with the Communications Regulators and all relevant stakeholder with potential transmission links in the area as part of the constraints-led design.
- Meetings held with Community Council as part of the public consultation in the area.
- Stage 1 community door to door consultation completed by March 2020.
- Project specific information and site layout shared with stakeholders.
- Any concerns raised by residents are being clarified with further relevant information provided by the Community Liaison Officer/Project Manager.
- Frozen site layout to be shared as part of Stage 2 community consultation.
- Stage 2 consultation to be completed through various online platforms where practical and the posting of information to residents, having regard to the public health restrictions in place due to Covid-19.
- Project information & timeline to be published on dedicated project website with all contact details provided.

Discussion:

The following matters were discussed:

- The prospective applicant outlined the criteria for reaching the threshold for strategic infrastructure development and stated their view that the project would meet the appropriate threshold for strategic infrastructure. The Board's representatives stated their general agreement with this assessment and noted as always that the final decision would rest with the Board.
- On behalf of the Board's representatives it was stated that given the presence of SACs in the area (reference was made to the Lough Corrib SAC) it was important that hydrology and drainage issues were robustly dealt with and presented in the EIAR. This included silt active management, run-off from peat excavation/drying out and any other related drainage matters. The prospective applicant outlined its intention to deal with these and other water issues on a clear site specific basis. Its assessment would also include mitigation measures, for example, interceptor drains and the treatment of water run-off during the construction phase as well as proposals for improving existing drains if required.
- In relation to the EIAR itself, on behalf of the Board's representatives it was stated that, having regard to the EIA Directive, the topics of land and also vulnerability of the project to major accidents should be clear.
- In relation to the NIS on behalf of the Board's representatives it was stated that it should be robust and the basis for screening out any European sites should be clear.
- Regarding the electrical connection it is intended to include the electrical connection in the application. Two routes (both underground) were currently being considered as options for connecting to the electricity network. Both options would be assessed as part of the EIA. There was some discussion as to whether the windfarm itself and the electricity connection element of the project could be lodged as one project if both deemed to be SID developments. It was agreed to discuss this further at the next meeting. It was stated that there is a live permission for a 38 kV line running through the proposed site but there was no indication if this would be developed by the

ESB and it is due to expire in September 2020. The prospective applicant would intend to have battery storage on-site as part of the application which would make for a more efficient development.

- Reference was made by the Board's representatives to the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006. The prospective applicant was advised to be aware of the recent 'Balz' judgement.
- Nothing contentious had been identified in the transport route for the turbines, no major pinch-points or road infrastructure upgrades are required. It was intended to primarily use national and regional roads.
- It was not intended to disturb (in so far as possible) any farming/peat-cutting activities. There were about 20 landowners involved. The prospective applicant would intend to improve the access for landowners in the area.
- On behalf of the Board's representatives it was stated that there should be a comprehensive peat management plan in relation to excavation during construction and storage. There should be a risk assessment carried out with regard to any potential peat slippage.
- With regard to community liaison some 90% of owners in the area had been consulted. Given the Covid-19 restrictions it would be intended to roll out a virtual presentation with website but at the same time engage further with people who didn't have access to the technology for accessing same.
- The prospective applicant would envisage lodging an application in late Q3/Q4 of this year.

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.

Ciara Kellett

Assistant Director of Planning