



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of Meeting ABP-307075-20 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting

<b>Description</b>	Proposed construction of windfarm and electricity substation, County Roscommon.		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-application consultation		
<b>1st / 2nd / 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup>		
<b>Date</b>	16/11/20	<b>Time</b>	11 am – 11.40 am

<b>Representing An Bord Pleanála</b>
Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Patricia Calleary, Senior Planning Inspector
Rob Mac Giollamáth, Executive Officer <a href="mailto:r.macgiollarnath@pleanala.ie">r.macgiollarnath@pleanala.ie</a>
<b>Representing the prospective Applicant</b>
Rob Scott, Energia
Grace Curran, Energia
Órla Murphy, MKO
Meabhann Crowe, MKO

## **Introduction:**

This was the second meeting held between the prospective applicant and the Board's representatives.

Following introductions, the prospective applicant was asked if there were any comments on the record of the first meeting to which they replied they had none. The prospective applicant proceeded with their presentation.

## **Presentation by the prospective applicant**

### **Proposed Development**

- The proposed wind energy development will likely comprise up to 20 no. wind turbines, access roads and entrance(s), electricity substation and associated control buildings and plant, borrow pits (to be confirmed pending site investigative studies), electrical cabling for grid connection, temporary construction compound and permanent anemometry masts.
- New sections of turbine access routes will also be required, the siting of which will have regard to the constraints identified onsite. All site cabling, including connection to the onsite substation, will be laid underground.

### **Site Location & Policy Context**

- The application site is located to the west of Athlone in County Roscommon.
- Site comprises two land parcels, north and south, separated by the R363, comprising agricultural grassland and both parcels are accessed via the R363.
- As the site was previously subject to a planning application, the prospective applicant was of the opinion that the site has already been deemed appropriate for wind energy and the site selection process has already occurred.
- There is support at all levels of planning policy for additional renewable energy and decarbonisation.

- Roscommon County Development Plan (CDP) 2014-2020 includes the Renewable Energy Strategy (RES) adopted in 2014. Aims to harness renewable energy in accordance with the RES and facilitate appropriate development of associated infrastructure.
- The Development Plan's Wind Energy Strategy Map identifies three tiers of areas of suitability for wind development with the subject site being in the 'Most Favoured'.
- Preparation of the next CDP 2021-2027 is underway – consultation Issues Paper closed in July 2020.

## **Wind Farm Design**

- There will be up to 20 turbines across two land parcels (7 in the north and 13 in the south).
- Underground connector cabling between the two sites will be across the R363.
- Access will be via the R363.
- Internal site roads will connect turbines.
- Proposed substation will be located within the southern land parcel.
- EIAR Study Area boundary outlined.

## **Grid Connection**

- Nearest grid infrastructure is the existing 110kV substation at Monksland Athlone – approx. 10km to the east/southeast of the site.
- An existing 110kV overhead line, which runs from the substation at Monksland is located approximately 6.5km from the site at its nearest point.
- Underground connection to an on-site substation.

## **Turbine Delivery Route**

- Turbines will come from Galway Port to the Proposed Development site via the M6, R362 and R363 before entering the site.
- Preliminary traffic report completed.
- Appropriate junction design at the site is underway.

## **Scoping and Pre-Application Consultation Update**

- A scoping document providing details of the proposed project and the site of the proposed development has been issued.
- Responses to date include those from the DAU, GSI, Irish Water, IAA and TII.
- Pre-application consultations are underway with Roscommon County Council – next meeting 18th November, 2020.
- The applicant has engaged in an extensive public consultation process during the design phase of the proposed development since February 2020.
- Door to door visits re-commenced in September 2020, but due to Covid-19 restrictions, these have now adjourned. They will recommence once the restrictions have been lifted.
- In October 2020, a letter was sent to all the remaining residents that were not reached by door-to-door visits pre-Covid containing contact details for the project.
- Regular updates are posted on the website.
- A virtual 'town hall' type public consultation video, supported by technology, is also intended to be prepared.

## **Environmental Impact Assessment Report**

The following developments were outlined:

**Chapter 6:** Biodiversity: Flora and Fauna. Full suite of ecological surveys have been completed on site. Identification underway for proposed habitat enhancement lands.

**Chapter 7:** Biodiversity: Birds. A full two year of bird surveys on site as per SNH have been completed as of October 2020. Surveys are continuing on site through the winter season.

**Chapter 8:** Land, Soils and Geology. Site Investigation works are starting on site in the coming weeks.

**Chapter 9:** Hydrology and Hydrogeology. Hydrological monitoring is continuing onsite during the winter - turlough and groundwater water levels and rainfall data collection are ongoing.

**Chapter 11:** Noise and Vibration. Noise Monitoring is underway (northern cluster complete, southern cluster ongoing).

**Chapter 12:** Landscape and Visual. Various landscape and visual assessments are ongoing.

**Chapter 13:** Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage. Archaeological site surveys have been completed as of October 2020.

## **Discussion:**

- The Board's representatives submitted that the site comprises of an open, elevated and distinct landscape with a number of residential dwellings in the vicinity. They were ruins and ringforts in the area, indicating archaeological constraints. The prospective applicant outlined that archaeological surveys were undertaken and all such archaeological features would be avoided.
- It was also stated for information that a previous Board decision to grant permission was quashed following a judicial review. The Board's representatives then asked if the Department of Arts and Heritage and the Gaeltacht (NPWS) were consulted. In response, the prospective applicant stated that there was consultation and further consultation will be progressed.
- Bird surveys had been carried out and were continuing. In this regard the prospective applicant was receiving input from the Department regarding methodology and guidance.
- The Board's representatives queried the nature of public consultation that had been carried out.

- The Board's representatives stated that it will be important to treat 'Land' as a topic in its own right in an EIAR and also deal with any issues regarding vulnerability to 'Major Accidents', as per the EIA Directive.
- The Board's representatives stated that in light of the new (Draft) wind energy guidelines, it would be of relevance to take note of recent Board Orders including noise conditions and to also have regard to any relevant recent court decisions.
- It was noted that the Board's current advice was that the entire application could be lodged under section 37 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, should the Board determine that the project is a development coming within the definition of Strategic Infrastructure Development

### **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. A further meeting can be held to clarify any issues or the prospective applicant can request that the pre-application consultation process be concluded.

 15/12/2020

**Ciara Kellett**

**Assistant Director of Planning**