

# Record of Meeting ABP-309259-21 1st meeting

Description	ABP-309259-21 - Proposed Coumnagappul Wind Farm consisting of up to 11 turbines, Co. Waterford		
Case Type	Pre-application Consultation under Section 37B of the P&D Act 2006, as amended.		
1st / 2nd / 3 <sup>rd</sup> Meeting	1st Meeting		
Venue	Virtually by Microsoft Teams		
Date	22/04/2021	Time	11am 12:15pm

Representing An Bord Pleanála					
Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)					
Patricia Calleary, Senior Planning Inspector					
Sarah Kerley, Executive Officer	s.kerley@pleanala.ie	01-8737287			
Representing the Prospective Applicant					
Alexander Kelly - Coumnagappul Wind Farm Limited					
Robert Greene - Coumnagappul Wind Farm Limited					
Michael O'Connor - Coumnagappul Wind Farm Limited					
Marc McLoughlin - Coumnagappul Wind Farm Limited					
Jim Hughes, Director - Fehily Timoney					
Rita Mansfield - Fehily Timoney					

#### Introduction:

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2021, 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 in any legal proceedings.

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## Presentation by the prospective applicant:

The proposed development includes the development of an eleven-turbine wind farm in Co. Waterford, approximately 13.6km north of Dungarvan and c. 13km south of Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, which is being developed by Coumnagappul Wind Farm Limited. The prospective applicant provided an overview of the proposed development under the following headings:

**Prospective Applicant Background** - Coumnagappul Wind Farm Limited is 100% owned by EMP Energy Limited (EMPower). EMPower is an international renewable energy developer who are developing projects across markets in Africa and Europe.

### Proposed Development

- 11 turbines (6MW output each with a maximum tip height of 185 m and a maximum rotor diameter of 155 meters).
- On-site substation.
- Grid connection: 110 kV new on-site substation connected into the Dungarvan
   110 kV substation via 110 kV underground cable.

#### Site Location

- Located approximately 13.6km north of Dungarvan and c. 13km south of Clonmel, Co. Tipperary.
- Low population density.
- High wind speeds.
- Land is designated a 'preferred location' for wind development in Waterford County Development Plan.
- Closest wind farm situated approximately 19km south west.

**Turbine Delivery Route -** The proposed route for the delivery of turbines to the site is currently undergoing technical assessment. It is potentially commencing at Waterford Port, running along the N25 through Kilcormac onto the N72 to the North of Dungarvan town, then progressing North onto the R672, before turning onto the local road, L5113.

The prospective applicant is aware there may be some pinch points in relation to the local road and these are currently being taken into consideration in its assessment.

**Design Iteration -** The prospective applicant is currently reviewing two access points to the site, A (South) and B (North)The prospective applicant is identifying the most suitable location for the turbines based on any sensitivities on the site, particularly seeking to minimise clutter when viewed from local receptors and also for wind optimisation. The substation and temporary compound are proposed to be located in the centre of the site. Due to low population density, it is possible to provide four-times tip height distance from receptors (740m).

Legislation & Policy - The prospective applicant states that the proposed development consists of 11 turbines with a total power output of approximately 66mW which exceeds the 50mW threshold set out in the Seventh Schedule of the 2006 Act. The prospective applicant is of the view that the development would be of strategic, economic and social importance to the State or the region in which it would be situate, as the development has the potential of powering up to 36,000 homes and displace the emission of over 50,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) per annum. It would also fulfil the objectives of the National Planning Framework, regional spatial and economic strategy for the Southern Region and also the Climate Action Plan. The proposed development is located in a "preferred area" under the Waterford County Development Plan Renewable Energy Strategy.

Receiving Environment - Most views of the site are to the South and to a lesser extent, to the East. The Comeragh Mountains assist in protecting the extent of visibility to the North. With regards to European sites, most proximate sites include the Comeragh Mountains SAC and the Nier Valley Woodlands SAC. No development is proposed within the SAC, however it does form part of the boundary of the proposed development. Several ecological surveys have been carried out on site since 2019 with preliminary findings showing no signs of significant bird populations in the area

The following details were also highlighted:

- No invasive plant species.
- No bat activity in August 2020.

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- No actual or potential bat roosts.
- Bird Surveys ongoing.
- Mammal survey ongoing.

#### Consultation

The prospective applicant stated that it places a strong emphasis on public engagement and interaction. Public engagement has been ongoing since October 2019, though it slowed down during 2020, due to Covid-19 restrictions. An online webinar was held in December 2020 and copies of the EIA scoping report were distributed to households within 2km of the proposed development. It is expected to hold a follow up webinar in May 2021, and subject to restrictions, a face to face event in July/August 2021. The prospective applicant stressed the importance of having multiple communication tools, including a public consultation website, email, telephone, letter and a Community Liaison Officer appointed in order to obtain effective feedback from the entire community. Meetings have also taken place with Eirgrid, Waterford City & County Council, Irish Water, ESB, GNI, Eircom, Planners, Heritage Officer and Archaeologist.

#### Discussion

The following matters were discussed:

- The Board's representatives enquired about potential pinch points along the turbine delivery route. The prospective applicant explained they have engaged with a specialist haulage company who are currently reviewing the best route to site and aims to mitigate any potential pinch points.
- The Board's representatives highlighted the importance of considering additional European sites which fall outside the 15km buffer which have the potential to be impacted by the proposed development. The prospective applicant agreed and stated that is their view at this point that appropriate assessment will be required and an Natura Impact Statement will be submitted with the planning application.

- The prospective applicant highlighted the interest in the community fund and their ongoing commitment to addressing local issues.
- The Board's representatives queried the number of affected landowners. The
  prospective applicant stated there are four main landowners, however, this
  may increase to seven, to include lands needed to secure turbine delivery and
  access to the site.
- The Board's representatives asked whether it is expected to include the grid connection as part of the proposed development. The prospective applicant said the grid connection will form part of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report however, it might not form part of the application as this is a matter yet to be decided.
- The Board's representatives queried whether the number of turbines in the
  proposed development is fixed at 11. The prospective applicant said there
  may be some minor amendments as they proceed through additional survey
  work and assessments however, the number of turbines is expected to remain
  at 11.
- The prospective applicant queried the timeline for a SID determination following receipt of the closure request. The Board's representatives advised to allow 6-8 weeks in their schedule for a SID determination from the Board.
- The Board's representatives offered its preliminary view that the development
  would seem to fall within the Seventh Schedule and would be Strategic
  Infrastructure having regard to Section 37(2). However, it emphasised that the
  ultimate decision on this will be a matter for the Board, in due course.

#### Conclusion

The record of the meeting will issue to the prospective applicant and it will then be a matter for the prospective applicant to submit any comments on this if it wishes to do so. It will be a matter for the prospective applicant to revert to the Board when it requires a further meeting or to seek to close the pre-application consultation process.

Ciara Kellett

**Assistant Director of Planning** 

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