



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of Meeting ABP-309375-21 1<sup>st</sup> meeting

<b>Description</b>	<b>ABP-309375-21 – Oweninny Wind Farm Phase 3, Co. Mayo</b>		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-application Consultation under Section 37B of the P&D Act 2000, as amended.		
<b>1st / 2nd / 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Meeting		
<b>Venue</b>	Virtually by Microsoft Teams		
<b>Date</b>	28/04/2021	<b>Time</b>	11am – 12:15am

<b>Representing An Bord Pleanála</b>		
Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)		
Patricia Calleary, Senior Planning Inspector		
Sarah Kerley, Executive Officer	s.kerley@pleanala.ie	01-8737287
<b>Representing the Prospective Applicant</b>		
Sean Creedon, Bord na Móna Powergen Limited		
Caitríona Carter, Bord na Móna Powergen Limited		
Michael Gill, Bord na Móna Powergen Limited		

Brian Gallagher, TOBIN Consulting Engineers
Mark McCarthy, TOBIN Consulting Engineers

## **Introduction:**

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 8<sup>th</sup> February 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.

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

The prospective applicant started its presentation by introducing the team and providing a high-level overview of the company's history. Bord na Móna have been undergoing a transition from 'brown to green' energy for over ten years, with one of the key milestones being the announcement in January 2021, that it has permanently ceased harvesting peat on its lands. This has resulted in a transformation from a traditional peat harvesting business to a climate solutions company, with a focus on renewable energy, recycling, restoration and the provision of low carbon goods and services.

The prospective applicant referred to the subject site for the proposed development, which is situated on the Oweninny bog, in North Mayo. The proposed development would make up the third phase of development on this site. Phase 1, consisting of 29 turbines is currently operational and Phase 2, consisting of 31 turbines is currently under construction.

The prospective applicant outlined the nature of the proposed development which includes approximately 18 wind turbines, with an approximate capacity of 90mW and a maximum tip height of 200m. It would also include a 110kV substation and grid connection, alongside all ancillary works.

The prospective applicant stated that the region is sparsely populated, and that peat extraction had occurred on the site for many years. The proposed site comprises cutover/cutaway bog, with industrial scale peat production operations having

formerly occurred at the site for over 50 years and which supplied the ESB Bellacorrick peat burning power station. Peat production ceased in 2005 following the closure of the power station and the plant was later decommissioned. Bellacorrick Wind Farm (Ireland's first windfarm), consisting of 21 turbines, built in 1992 would be decommissioned as part of the proposed development.

The prospective applicant provided a map which illustrated the proximity of the proposed development to sensitive receptors. Due to the area being sparsely populated, the prospective applicant stated there are no sensitive receptors within 1km of the turbines. This would increase to 11 sensitive receptors within a 2km radius.

The prospective applicant gave an overview of other wind farms in the region, mainly the Phase 1 and Phase 2 Oweninny development within the Oweninny bog site, the Corvoderry Wind Farm (consented), a separate entity, which is located within the Oweninny bog but outside of the prospective applicant's site and Sheskin windfarm (consented) which is located to the north of Oweninny Phase 2 turbines/Oweninny Bog site.

With regards to whether the proposed development would fall within the scope of Strategic Infrastructure Development, the prospective applicant put forward their view that it would fall within the development thresholds specified in the seventh schedule, as it would exceed 50MW. Furthermore, it stated the proposed development would be of strategic, economic or social importance to the State or region and it would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of national, regional and local objectives.

The prospective applicant stated that careful consideration is being taken in relation to cumulative impacts for the proposed development. They intend to assess the impacts in relation to the three wind farm sites and not just in relation to the proposed development. The prospective applicant highlighted some of the key considerations including, ornithology, bats, noise and landscape and visual impacts.

A substantial quantity of bird surveys have been carried out since 2002, with very little of significance being found. With respect to bat surveys, it was presented that there is a low level of bat activity in the area. One maternity roost of Natterer's bat was recorded, and the prospective applicant is currently investigating mitigation measures in relation to same. The prospective applicant also noted it is taking a conservative approach to the design in order to minimise the noise impact and discussed the noise conditions that were attached to the approval on the Phase 1 and Phase 2 developments.

The prospective applicant provided an overview of the statutory and non-statutory consultees to-date. These include various Departments, prescribed bodies, the aviation industry and telecommunications, among others. It is also intended to hold a pre-planning meeting with the local authority shortly. The Environmental Impact Assessment Scoping Report has also been distributed to all statutory and non-statutory consultees.

The prospective applicant proposes to develop an amenity facility as part of the proposed development. This track would pass through the site, with access to the local road and away from the busy N59 regional road. During consultations, local residents highlighted safety concerns in relation to this road. The prospective applicant also noted that features of interest would be installed in order to enhance the journey as you pass through the site.

The prospective applicant discussed the public consultation that has been completed to date. Due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, it wasn't possible to hold consultations in local venues, however, door to door consultations were carried out in June and December 2020. A Community Liaison Officer was appointed, and local residents were provided with project information documents, brochures and feedback forms. The prospective applicant noted that a dedicated email address and project website had been set up in order to provide as much information as possible to members of the community.

The prospective applicant provided the Board's representatives with a project timeline. It is anticipated to begin EIAR preparation in May 2021 and submit a planning application in late 2021.

## Discussion

The following matters were discussed:

- The Board's representatives sought further information in relation to the Corvoderry Wind Farm, which lies in the middle of the proposed site. The prospective applicant said it is not constructed however, planning approval will expire in 2022.
- The Board's representatives expressed their preliminary view that it is likely that the proposed development would be strategic infrastructure but emphasised that the ultimate decision will be a matter for the Board.
- The Board's representatives queried the height of the existing and permitted turbines. The prospective applicant stated the original Bellacorrick windfarm turbines, erected in 1992 are 64 metres in height and the previous two phases of the Oweninny development are 176 metres. It stated that the proposed turbine would have a tip height of c.200m.
- In response to a query in relation to the turbine delivery route, the prospective applicant said this was still currently under review and was not finalised at this point.
- In relation to consideration of proximity to European sites and the issue of Appropriate Assessment, the prospective applicant tabled a constraints map with the site shown in the context of those sites stating that it was progressing AA through the various stages.
- The Board's representatives highlighted that the current 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines are expected to be replaced by the awaited new guidelines and suggested that, notwithstanding the guidelines are not yet adopted, the provisions may be relevant particularly if they are adopted prior to the Board's decision. The prospective applicant sought clarity from the Board's representatives in relation to noise conditions attached to recent Board decisions. The Board's representatives agreed to send reference numbers of

recent decisions for information. (post meeting note – ABP-306303-20 is an example)

- The prospective applicant highlighted the interest in the community fund and the amenity development which is proposed to run through the site.
- In response to the Board's query on the matter, the prospective applicant stated its intention to carry out further site investigation works in relation to peat on site. The Board's representatives stated that any future planning application should include details of peat depths and volume of peat proposed to be excavated and the safe management of peat movement and drainage during construction.
- The Board's representative stated that a decommissioning plan for the turbines associated with the 'Bellacorrick windfarm' erected in 1992 should be included with any future planning application.
- The Board's representatives asked whether there is an active EPA licence on the site. The prospective applicant said the IPC licence is still live, however, they are entering the final stages and intend to surrender this licence soon. Furthermore, the Board's representatives advised to clearly indicate the status of this licence at an application stage.
- The Board's representatives queried whether the grid connection would form part of any subsequent application. The prospective applicant said this is their intention and the grid connection would connect back to the Bellacorrick site.
- In response to the Board's query on the matter, the prospective applicant stated the total number of turbines between the three phases would total 78.

## **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. The Board advised the prospective applicant to keep the pre-application consultation process open for the time being, in the event that a further meeting might be required. The prospective applicant noted this and said it will consider this further following the meeting. The prospective applicant stated its current intention to lodge a planning application for the proposed development prior to the end of 2021.

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**Ciara Kellett**

**Assistant Director of Planning**