



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of Meeting ABP-309913-21 1<sup>st</sup> meeting

<b>Description</b>	<b>ABP-309913-21 – ‘North Connacht Project’, comprising the laying of a 3 phase 110 kV underground cable between the existing substations, Moy 110 kV substation and Flagford 220/110 kV substation, in counties Mayo and Roscommon</b>		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-application Consultation under Section 182E 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>	01/06/2021	<b>Time</b>	11:00am – 11:50am

<b>Representing An Bord Pleanála</b>		
Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)		
Una Crosse, Senior Planning Inspector		
Sarah Kerley, Executive Officer	s.kerley@pleanala.ie	01-8737287
<b>Representing the Prospective Applicant</b>		
Tomás Bradley, Senior Lead Planner (EirGrid)		
Lisa English, Senior Planner (EirGrid)		
Jason Kenna, Project Manager (EirGrid)		
Donna Hassett, Senior Environmental Scientist (Mott McDonald)		

Caroline Lew, Senior Environmental Scientist (Mott McDonald)
Lara Gough, Principal Town Planner Team Lead (Mott McDonald)

## **Introduction:**

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 9<sup>th</sup> April 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 provided a high-level overview of the proposed development: To include a 110 kV transmission circuit, comprising an underground cable (UGC) (approx. 60 km) between two existing substations - Moy 110 kV Substation in the townland of Gorteen (Barony of Tirawley), County Mayo and Tonroe 110 kV Substation in the townland of Ballyoughter, County Roscommon. In addition, the development will include an upgrade (approx. 32 km) of the existing 110 kV Overhead Line (OHL) between Tonroe 110 kV substation in the townland of Ballyoughter, County Roscommon and Flagford 220/110 kV substation in the townland of Flagford, County Roscommon, and upgrades to all three substations aforementioned.

The prospective applicant provided an overview of the proposed development under the following headings:

### **Development Need**

- Key asset in the transmission network
- Unlock significant wind resource in the West and bring it onto the transmission network
- Would contribute greatly to the targets set out in the Climate Action Plan 2019
- Enable more customers in the area to connect to the grid
- Transfer of electricity to areas of high demand
- Strengthens the grid in the Western region

### **Development Overview & Location**

- Transmission level upgrade from Flagford, Co. Roscommon to Moy, Co. Mayo
- Moy substation (110kV) to be connected back to Flagford substation (220kV)
- 220kV substation allows the transfer of electricity more readily and efficiently
- New 110kV underground cable (3 phase and approx. 60km) – from Roscommon, running along N5 before turning off at Swinford and onto secondary roads before crossing the River Moy and onto Ballina

- Upgrading of the existing Flagford-Tonroe 110kV overhead line
- Upgrading of the existing Moy, Tonroe and Flagford substations with associated ancillary works at each station and potential extensions to allow for new equipment
- Proposed route currently under consideration with a number of areas with constraints and significant alternatives being considered
- Eliminated the overhead line option following consultations with the local community

### **Development Constraints and Consideration of Route**

- Ox Mountains Bogs Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002006)
- River Moy Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002298)
- Towns of Foxford, Swinford and Ballaghaderreen
- Several river-crossings to be assessed before final design
- Laying cables alongside public roads which alleviates some environmental constraints (mainly natural heritage) Engagement with Transport Infrastructure Ireland and Roads Departments of both local authorities

### **Strategic Infrastructure Development Criteria**

The prospective applicant considers the project to comprise Strategic Infrastructure Development, having regard to Section 182A of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended. The development would form part of the 110kV transmission network and the prospective applicant states the development would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of the objectives in the National Planning Framework and adopted Regional, Spatial and Economic Strategy. The project is specifically referenced in the North and Western Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy.

The proposed development covers two planning authorities and would be of strategic, economic and social importance to the state when considering targets and objectives set out in the Government's Climate Action Plan, 2019.

## **Environmental Impact Assessment / Appropriate Assessment**

The prospective applicant considers the proposed development is not a type of development which falls within Annex I and Annex II of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive. Two similar developments which did not require an EIAR include:

1. Kellystown 220kV substation and associated cables (granted by An Bord Pleanála in 2019 – ABP-304862-19)
2. Cross-Shannon Cable route (decision pending with An Bord Pleanála - ABP-307798-20)

Environmental Impact Assessment screening will be carried out and submitted as part of any future planning application. The prospective applicant states that a Natura Impact Statement will be submitted as mitigation measures will be required to avoid any impacts on the River Moy SAC.

## **Next Steps / Timeline**

- Geotechnical investigations and design currently ongoing
- Landowner and community consultations currently ongoing
- Preparation of application currently ongoing
- Submission of planning application anticipated in Q1 2022
- Second pre-application meeting proposed for August/September 2021 (TBC)
- Expects to require 3-4 meetings with the Board

## Discussion

The following matters were discussed:

- The Board's representatives sought clarification in relation to the upgrading works involved on the existing line. The prospective applicant stated that it would involve the replacement of conductors, pole sets/angle masts reinforced or replaced.
- In relation to the crossing points on the River Moy SAC, the Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to identify where relevant previous proposals permitted by the Board where similar technologies were employed. The prospective applicant agreed to provide photographs from a similar ongoing project (ABP-304862-19).
- The Board's representatives requested the prospective applicant to provide a list of similar developments which were deemed as Strategic Infrastructure Developments by the Board for the next meeting.
- In response to a query by the Board in relation to public consultations, the prospective applicant stated that various online webinars were held, and an online consultation portal was established. This was made available to the public and was advertised widely through newspapers, radio and social media. From the feedback gained, the prospective applicant decided to eliminate the overhead line element and instead focused on an underground cable.
- The prospective applicant said they are not expecting an EIAR to form part of the application however, the alternatives considered will be detailed and an Environmental Report will be included in any future planning application.

## **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 prospective applicant anticipates requiring 3-4 meetings before closing the consultation process. The prospective applicant stated its current intention to lodge a planning application for the proposed development in Q1 2022.

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**Ciara Kellett**

**Assistant Director of Planning**