



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 1st Meeting

ABP-310033-21

Development	Proposed development of a 220kV substation and grid connection at existing Dunnstown 400kV substation		
Location	Virtually by Microsoft Teams		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	31/08/2021	Time	11:00a.m. – 12:00p.m.

Attendees		
Representing An Bord Pleanála		
Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning		
Karla McBride, Senior Planning Inspector		
Jennifer Sherry, Executive Officer	j.sherry@pleanala.ie	01-8737266
Representing the Prospective Applicant		
Ryan McBirnie, Strategic Power Projects Ltd		
Kevin O'Regan, Malone O'Regan Environmental		
Carlos Galvin, PSC Consulting		
Brian Mackey, Malone O'Regan Engineering		
Peter Thomson, PT Planning Solutions		

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 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

The prospective applicant set out the background of Strategic Power Projects Limited as a leading renewable energy developer whose key mission is to deliver renewable energy developments through solar energy and battery energy storage.

An overview of the proposed development was provided by the prospective applicant which comprises of a new 220kV substation and grid connection to the existing Dunnstown 400kV substation. It is envisaged that the new substation would be a node on the national grid and would be located adjacent to the existing Dunnstown substation. The configuration of the substation would be a 'H Type' with a single underground cable which will connect into Dunnstown substation. The landscape surrounding the site is primarily agricultural lands.

The prospective applicant advised a number of other proposed developments are planned in the vicinity of the proposed new substation site. The first is for a battery energy storage system development which has been refused planning permission for 3 no. reasons by Kildare County Council. It has subsequently been appealed to An Bord Pleanála; case reference ABP-310841-21. It is proposed to connect the battery energy storage facility, if planning is approved, to the new substation the subject of this pre-application consultation.

Furthermore, another application for a c.120MW-130MW solar farm is being prepared by the prospective applicant which would connect into the proposed new substation through a 110kV grid connection. The solar farm design is still at a preliminary stage with an expected target date of late October 2021 to be lodged with Kildare County Council.

The prospective applicant provided 3 drawings as part of their presentation illustrating the grid connection and the overall site layout. It was highlighted that there are no significant environmental issues to note. There are no direct hydrological links to Natura 2000 sites. A robust application with supporting reports is being prepared to provide all of the details necessary for an application under section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

Discussion

The following matters were discussed as part of the meeting:

- The prospective applicant enquired if it is possible to include the 110kV grid connection cable from the proposed solar farm development as part of the proposed SID project. Therefore, changing the development description to include a 110kV grid connection from the proposed development of a solar farm to the new proposed substation (the subject of this meeting). The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant it needs to clarify what exactly it is seeking a determination on from the Board and amend their pre-application consultation application accordingly. Furthermore, the prospective applicant discussed the possibility of also including the associated substation from the solar farm development with the current pre-application process. The prospective applicant stated that they are still at design stage with respect to the size of the substation to serve the solar farm. The Board's representatives stated this is something that could be discussed at a second meeting, following clarification on what the project description would be.

- The Board's representatives referred to the ecology and landscape of the site and highlighted a number of topics to be considered by the prospective applicant as follows:

 - i. Birds/flight paths and in particular from Pollaphuca Reservoir SPA.
 - ii. Possible hydrological connections to the River Liffey/consultations with Inland Fisheries Ireland.
 - iii. Stage 1 screening assessment/Natura impact statement/consultations with National Parks and Wildlife Services.
 - iv. Haul routes and any possible widening of roads or junctions.
 - v. Public consultations/engagement with the local community.

- The prospective applicant in response to the Board's representatives query stated at present they have screened out doing an environmental impact assessment report and sought advice from the Board on what level of detail may be necessary for the SID application itself. The Board's representatives stressed the importance of preparing robust environmental reports if the need for an EIAR is screened out by the prospective applicant. The Board's representatives also advised the applicant to

carry out a robust assessment of cumulative impacts and in combination effects considering all the projects in the vicinity of the site. Furthermore, the Board advised it would be necessary to look at timelines for construction traffic and impacts of construction works on hydrology and ground water, impacts on birds, residential amenity, noise disturbance and dust.

- The Board's representatives stated its preliminary opinion is that the proposed development would constitute a strategic infrastructure development but ultimately that is a decision to be made by the Board.
- In general, the Board's representative's enquired what reasons for refusal were given by Kildare County Council for the battery energy storage system development. The prospective applicant stated it was due to concerns over fire safety, noise, insufficient detail regarding wastewater and Kildare County Council considered the application to be premature given the pending decision of the Board on the SID determination for the new proposed substation and grid connection to the existing Dunnstown substation.

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 or at the time of a further meeting. It was agreed that a further meeting would take place to clarify the description of the project and which elements will be included. The prospective applicant should contact the Board when they are ready to schedule a second meeting.

Ciara Kellett
Assistant Director of Planning