



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting
ABP-310528-21 and
ABP-310529-21
1st meeting

Description	ABP-310528-21 – Wind energy development and associated works and services within Glenora and adjacent townlands, Co. Mayo		
	ABP-310529-21 – Wind energy development and associated works and services within Sheskin and adjacent townlands, Co. Mayo		
Case Type	Pre-application Consultation.		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st Meeting		
Venue	Virtually by Microsoft Teams		
Date	22/09/2021	Time	11:00am –12:55pm

Representing An Bord Pleanála		
Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)		
Niall Haverty, Senior Planning Inspector		
Sarah Caulfield, Executive Officer	s.caulfield@pleanala.ie	01-8737287
Representing the Prospective Applicant		
Tom Coleman – SSE Renewables		
Garry Brides – SSE Renewables		
Eimear Lenehan – SSE Renewables		

Emmet McLaughlin - Coillte
Eoin McCarthy – MKO
Karen Mulryan – MKO
Jimmy Green – MKO

Introduction:

The Board referred to the letters received from the prospective applicant on the 16th June 2021, requesting pre-application consultations in respect of two proposed developments 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 developments 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.

The Board noted that the prospective applicant had made two requests for pre-application consultation in respect of separate wind farm proposals and that separate determinations on the SID status of each proposed development would be made. Given the proximity of the two sites and common issues arising for discussion it was advised that one meeting record would be prepared and placed on each file.

Presentation by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant is a joint venture between SSE Renewables and Coillte Renewable Energy. The two proposed developments to be discussed are:

- ABP-310528-21: Glenora Wind Farm
- ABP-310529-21: Sheskin South Wind Farm

The prospective applicant reported that the development name has changed from Sheskin to Sheskin South in order to differentiate the proposed development from an adjacent consented development (ABO Wind Ireland – Sheskin)

The prospective applicant provided an overview of the proposed site locations.

Sheskin South Wind Farm

The proposed Sheskin South Wind Farm consists of up to 21 turbines (200 metre overall blade tip height), located within Sheskin and adjacent townlands in County Mayo. The proposed site is located south-east of Slieve Fyagh and approximately 11 kilometres south of the Atlantic coastline. The prospective applicant said the site area is approximately 1,000 hectares and is a Coillte forested site. The site is accessible via the N59, the local road L52926 and then via a Coillte forest road. The prospective applicant noted that the consented ABO wind farm is located directly to the north of the site with Oweninny wind farm and Bellacorrick Wind Farms located to the east. The Western Way trail traverses the site.

Glenora Wind Farm

The proposed Glenora Wind Farm consists of up to 22 turbines (180 metre overall blade tip height) located within Glenora and adjacent townlands in County Mayo. The proposed site is located approximately 5 kilometres south of the Atlantic coastline

and approximately 7 kilometres north east of the proposed Sheskin South wind farm. The nearest town is Ballycastle (approximately 7 kilometres) and Ballina (approximately 20 kilometres). The prospective applicant stated that the site area is approximately 1,300 hectares and is also a Coillte forested site. The site is accessed from local roads off the R314 and R315 roads. The Western Way trail also traverses this site.

The prospective applicant stated that a detailed screening exercise was undertaken on a much larger land bank, prior to the selection of these sites. Following the strategic identification of both sites, they were then subject to more rigorous reviews and assessments in order to progress the proposed developments.

The prospective applicant stated that there are several consented wind farm developments in the locality. They also provided four examples of historic wind energy applications in the vicinity which were refused permission. The prospective applicant emphasised how the key lessons learned from these applications have been carefully considered and incorporated into the design process to ensure that any forthcoming applications eliminate or manage any identified risks and address any issues that were raised. They also noted that a dedicated renewable or wind energy strategy was not in place at the time many of these historic cases were considered. In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant noted that the four examples provided are not on the subject lands and are the most proximate to the proposed sites.

The prospective applicant gave an overview of national, regional and local planning policy and cited the Climate Action Plan. In relation to the Draft Mayo County Development Plan 2021-2027, the prospective applicant said that it is forward-facing and acknowledges the importance of renewable energy. It also states that this plan highlights the broad support for additional renewable projects in the county.

The prospective applicant provided a map which highlighted the strategic wind energy designations in the locality. The Glenora site is designated under 'Tier 1 large scale developments' and 'Tier 2 open for consideration'. It was noted that there are elements to the north and to the south which are undesignated. With regard to the

Sheskin South site, the prospective applicant noted that the majority is designated as 'Tier 2 open for consideration'.

The prospective applicant gave an overview of other wind farm developments in the area and their maximum tip heights. These included the consented ABO wind farm (165 metre tip height), Oweninny Phase 1 and 2 (176 metres tip heights each) Oweninny Phase 3 which is currently in pre-planning (proposed tip height of 200 metres), Bellacorrick (50.5 metre tip height), Corvoderry (100 metres tip height). The prospective applicant also noted a grid connection application in the area which is currently on appeal with the Board. (ABP-311157-21)

The prospective applicant stated that the design for the proposed Sheskin South and Glenora Wind Farms are constraints led. A desktop constraints study has been undertaken, and the key physical and environmental constraints identified within and around each site and the relevant buffers applied. The prospective applicant presented several maps which highlighted the site constraints and the details of the buffers implemented. It also provided maps showing designated sites within a 15 kilometres radius of both site locations.

The prospective applicant stated that site surveys and investigations are currently ongoing in both locations including geotechnical site investigations, hydrological and hydrogeological surveys, a full suite of multi-disciplinary ecological surveys, archaeological site walk overs and a full noise monitoring campaign has been conducted at various locations around each site. The results from these investigations and surveys will inform the refinement of the site layout at both locations.

In relation to Strategic Infrastructure Development criteria and the seventh schedule, the prospective applicant said due to the scale and size of both developments and considering both would be in excess of 50MW, it is their opinion that both proposed developments would constitute SID. It is also of the opinion that both developments would be of strategic, economic, and social importance to the Western region and the State and would significantly contribute towards reaching renewable energy targets and objectives at local, regional and national levels.

The prospective applicant stated its current strategy is to progress the two wind farm applications and follow up in the future with an application under section 182A for the connections into the national grid (currently two emerging preferred grid connection options). The prospective applicant informed the Board of the preferred grid connection options currently under consideration. In relation to Sheskin South, the preferred option is to connect via an underground cable to the existing substation at Bellcorrick, which is approximately 6 kilometres from the site. The preferred option for Glenora is connection via an underground cable to the existing Tawnaghmore substation, which is approximately 25 kilometres from the site.

In relation to the turbine delivery route, the prospective applicant said the Port of Galway has emerged as the preferred route to facilitate the delivery of turbine infrastructure to both Sheskin South and the Glenora sites. Scoping responses have been received from Transport Infrastructure Ireland and the Road Authorities and the prospective applicant intends to engage further in relation to consideration and refinement of these haulage routes.

The prospective applicant advised that it has commenced scoping of the projects with relevant prescribed bodies. Consultations have been held with the planning authority in respect of both developments on the 9th September 2021. A consultation meeting is also scheduled with the NPWS in the coming days.

In relation to the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) the prospective applicant said that this will cover topics such as biodiversity, ornithology, shadow flicker, noise modelling, geotechnical sites, surface water management and archaeology and cultural heritage.

With regard to the proposed turbines and landscape and visual impact, the prospective applicant presented some examples of viewpoints and photomontages which have been taken of both sites.

With respect to public consultations, the prospective applicant said that a community liaison officer has been appointed for the projects and that information has been circulated via newsletters and maps delivered in the area. Further planned consultations include virtual consultations and, subject to Covid-19 restrictions, an open day to be held in November/December 2021.

In relation to the timeline for the subsequent planning applications, the prospective applicant indicated its current intention to lodge these circa Quarter 1, 2022.

Discussion

The following matters were discussed:

- The Board's representatives asked whether it is intended to have two concurrent applications. The prospective applicant said it is their intention to submit both applications around the same time.
- In relation to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said the megawatt ranges have not been finalised at this time, however it is anticipated that both developments would be in excess of 100MW. The prospective applicant said the exact ranges would be specified in any pre-application closure request in the future.
- The Board's representatives stated their preliminary opinion is that both proposed developments would constitute strategic infrastructure development but noted that it is ultimately a decision for the Board.
- In relation to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant stated that the current County Development Plan encourages turbine development to be provided within Tier 1 (preferred) and Tier 2 (open for consideration) designated areas but there is no policy prohibiting development outside of these locations. The Board's representatives advised that a strong justification would be required in the planning applications for the positioning of turbines on lands outside of Tier 1/Tier 2 designated areas.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to be cognisant of matters such as cumulative impacts and in-combination effects particularly given the number of wind farms in the area and the potential for impacts to arise during the construction phase given other proposed/permitted wind farm projects in the area. This was noted by the prospective applicant.
- The prospective applicant said an auto track analysis has been completed in relation to the larger components to be delivered to the site and should junction accommodation works be required; these would be assessed/considered, and engagements held with landowners if required. The Board's representatives

noted that details of any works required on the turbine delivery route and letters of consent, where required, should be included.

- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant agreed that pinch points on delivery routes to Sheskin South may have been addressed due to existing wind farms in the area. In relation to Glenora, this is currently under investigation and the preliminary results shows no major pinch points along this route.
- In response to a query on the nature of the proposed recreational/amenity development, the prospective applicant said it is intended to create looped trails within both sites for pedestrians and cyclists. It said the local community is encouraged to provide feedback in relation to types of recreational amenity they would welcome on both sites
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said they don't have exact figures at this time in relation to the amount of forestry to be removed or where it will be re-planted. It said these details will come to light once the final layout design has been agreed and stated that these details would be included in the EIAR for the purposes of cumulative assessment.
- The prospective applicant confirmed that both Sheskin South and Glenora are peatland sites and will be subject to extensive geotechnical site investigation works. They noted that peat stability assessments will be one of the main determining factors in the final site layouts.
- The Board's representatives noted that historic landslides are recorded within the Sheskin South lands. The prospective applicant said buffers have been created around these areas in order to avoid them completely. They said geotechnical consultants are currently assessing these sites and creating construction buffer zones and identifying areas of weak peat; these areas will be avoided. The Board's representatives recommended comprehensive peat stability assessments be conducted for both sites. The Board's representatives also reminded the prospective applicant to be cognisant of the number of bog related SAC's in the vicinity, and the potential for impacts arising from changes to drainage.
- The prospective applicant said it is currently reviewing the level of peat to be managed on both sites and whether peat depository areas need to be

identified. It said this will become evident once the final geotechnical studies are completed.

- In relation to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said there is no current peat extraction on either site. It noted that there are some peat extraction activities in the wider area however this would not be deemed as industrial.
- The Board's representatives reminded the prospective applicant to include details in relation to major accidents as part of the EIAR. This was agreed and noted by the prospective applicant.
- The prospective applicant said there are no recorded sites or monuments within either site. It said that nothing has arisen from preliminary archaeological studies however there are site walk overs scheduled in the coming weeks to fully assess both sites. The prospective applicant confirmed that the nearby Sheskin Lodge is not an archaeological feature, but a buffer has been implemented to avoid this area. This is a disused structure on adjacent lands.
- In regard to biodiversity and appropriate assessment, the Board's representatives highlighted the density of designated sites (SACs, SPAs, NHAs, pNHAs) surrounding the sites and it was suggested that the Board's ecologist would attend at a second meeting. The prospective applicant agreed and said their ecologist would also be in attendance.

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 is anticipated that a second meeting will be required, and it will be a matter for the prospective applicant to revert to the Board when it wishes to schedule this meeting.

 24/9/28

Ciara Kellett

Assistant Director of Planning

