



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

**Record of Meeting  
ABP-310528-21 and  
ABP-310529-21 2<sup>nd</sup>  
meeting**

<b>Description</b>	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		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-application Consultation.		
<b>1st / 2nd / 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Meeting		
<b>Venue</b>	Virtually by Microsoft Teams		
<b>Date</b>	03/02/2022	<b>Time</b>	3:30pm – 4:40pm

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

Jimmy Green - MKO
John Willoughby - MKO
Eoin McCarthy – MKO
Karen Mulryan – MKO
Pat Roberts – MKO
Inga Reich - MKO
Niamh Igoe - MKO

### **Introduction:**

The Board referred to its previous meeting with the prospective applicant of the 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 2021 and the record of this meeting. The Board asked if the prospective applicant had any comments it wished to make on the record of this meeting; the prospective applicant replied that it had no comments to make

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

The prospective applicant is a joint venture between SSE Renewables and Future Energy Ireland (formerly 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 provided a recap on the proposed developments and said the areas to cover in this meeting include updates on planning policy, design and assessment, public consultations, and the proposed grid connection routes.

**Sheskin South Wind Farm** consists of up to 21 turbines. There has been no change to the proposed turbine locations and the overall blade tip height of 200 metres remains. The substation location and road layout has been confirmed and the number of borrow pits has been refined to 3. There may be a requirement for an additional borrow pit, this is currently under consideration.

**Glenora Wind Farm** consists of up to 22 turbines. There has been no change to the proposed turbine locations and the overall blade tip height of 180 metres remains.

The substation location and road layout has been confirmed and the number of borrow pits has been refined to 2. The number of construction compounds has also been reduced by 1.

The prospective applicant provided an overview from a planning policy context and made reference to the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act, 2021, which aims to meet climate neutrality by 2050 and a target of 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

The prospective applicant said the Mayo County Development Plan 2014-2020 (as varied), and the Draft Mayo County Development Plan 2021-2027, are both forward-facing and acknowledges the importance of renewable energy. It also said both plans highlight the broad support for additional renewable projects within County Mayo. In relation to the Draft Mayo County Council Development Plan 2021-2027, the prospective applicant said the review process has re-commenced (arising from covid disruptions) and highlighted some of the Chief Executives recommendations.

A pre-application consultation meeting took place with Mayo County Council, in respect of both developments on the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021. Several items were discussed including cumulative and visual impacts and turbine delivery and grid connection routes.

The prospective applicant said two meetings were also held with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), in September 2021 and January 2022, where survey methodologies and biodiversity enhancements were discussed.

In relation to Sheskin South, the preferred grid connection option is to connect via an underground cable to the existing substation at Bellacorrick and the preferred grid connection option for Glenora is connection via an underground cable to the existing Tawnaghmore substation.

It was stated that at the current time the grid connections will not form part of the wind farm applications and it is intended to apply separately, in the future, under section 182A. The prospective applicant said the grid connections will be assessed in all chapters of the EIAR. Additionally, the prospective applicant is currently exploring an option of connecting both sites by cable, through the Western Way trail

however, this has not yet been finalised. The prospective applicant noted a separate grid connection application in the area which is currently on appeal with the Board. (ABP-311157-21).

The prospective applicant provided an overview of the proposed amenities within both sites, to consist mainly of loops and trails, along the wind farm tracks for pedestrians and cyclists and to include wooden benches and viewing areas.

The prospective applicant presented several maps and highlighted the designated sites within a 15 kilometres buffer of both sites. Additionally, maps were presented in relation to habitats on both sites.

In relation to Sheskin South, it was submitted that the site consists mainly of commercial forestry, with small parcels of blanket bog. It is anticipated, as part of the rehabilitation plan, to remove certain sections of conifers, which are self-seeding into the area. Areas of clearfell were identified along with two small poor flush (PF2) areas.

With regard to Glenora, it was submitted that this site mainly consists of conifer plantation. There are larger areas of blanket bog in Glenora, mainly towards the north of the site. Conifer removal is also proposed on this site, primarily to the north and east.

The prospective applicant said an otter holt was found to the north, adjacent to a dystrophic lake however, its located on the northern side of the lake and therefore, far removed from any infrastructure proposed on the site.

Surveys suggest there are low levels of bat activity and there is no significant bat habitat on either site. Bird surveys were carried out over 2 years, with findings showing low levels of bird activity on the sites. Camera traps were installed adjacent to the proposed infrastructure, with no sighting of badger.

The prospective applicant said there are no protected plant species recorded on either site. However, low levels of rhododendron is present in Glenora with high levels in parts of Sheskin South.

In relation to public consultations, the prospective applicant said a virtual public consultation room was launched in November 2021, for both sites. This included an information video, information boards, photomontages, and a feedback form. There was also a press release in November 2021, which received widespread coverage, and was advertised extensively over a four-week period using newspaper advertisements, radio advertisements and social media. Information brochures are expected to be circulated in February 2022, to all residents within a 2-kilometre radius of the developments and also to residents along the proposed turbine delivery route.

The prospective applicant said meetings were held in December 2021 with the Chief Executive Officer of Mayo County Council, Westport/Belmullet Municipal District Council (in relation to Sheshkin South) and the Western Development Commission to discuss the proposals. A meeting is anticipated with Ballina Municipal District Council in February 2022, in relation to the proposed Glenora development.

Preparation of the EIAR is currently ongoing and it is anticipated to lodge the two separate planning applications towards the end of Q2 2022.

## **Discussion**

The following matters were discussed:

- It was noted that one of the Board's representatives visited the sites in December 2021, which provided an understanding of the baseline environment.
- Regarding project timelines, the Board advised the prospective applicant to be cognisant of both the Mayo County Development Plan 2014-2021 (which is extended until September 2022) and the Draft Mayo County Development Plan 2021-2027.
- The Board's representatives noted that the current Renewable Energy Strategy is referenced in the Draft Development Plan, with a commitment to renew it over the lifetime of the Plan.
- The Board's representatives advised that a strong justification and assessment would be required in the planning applications for the positioning of turbines on

lands outside of Tier 1/Tier 2 designated areas in the Renewable Energy Strategy. The Board also advised addressing material contravention (if relevant), in the planning documents.

- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to comprehensively consider the potential 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.
- In relation to the potential cable connection between both sites, the prospective applicant said this is currently under review and a decision has not been made yet. It was submitted that the EIAR and NIS for both projects will assess all potential options of future connections and clearly indicate the red line boundary.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to be mindful of the potential impacts on human beings (pedestrians, cyclists) from construction traffic, along the Western Way trail.
- A general discussion was had around the requirement for, and extent of, conifer clearance. The prospective applicant said the mitigation measures will be included and the felling areas identified. In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said there is a mix of second rotation and mature forestry on the sites. Additionally, it was noted by the prospective applicant that the re-planting locations will be spread across several counties. These locations will be cumulatively assessed in the EIAR where relevant.
- The Board's representatives advised the cumulative assessment of landscape and visual impact, particularly from Sheskin South. This was noted by the prospective applicant.
- In relation to the virtual consultation events, the prospective applicant said there were 97 views on the Sheskin South virtual event and 205 views on the Glenora event. It was submitted that the response has mainly been positive in the local area.
- The prospective applicant said a consultant has been engaged and extensive aquatic surveys have been carried out, including kick sampling, electrofishing, and habitat quantification. They are aware of the highly sensitive nature of the

watercourses (primarily downstream) and noted the results from the surveys are currently being finalised.

- The Board's representatives noted that the management of peat and surface water would be a key consideration, given the nature of the site and the potential for peat slippage, contamination of watercourses with runoff, potential need for peat deposition areas etc. The prospective applicant noted that the watercourses and the peatland were identified at a very early stage as major constraints and were fully considered and incorporated into the design for each site.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said the main issues raised from the NPWS included marsh saxifrage and marsh fritillary. Additionally, the prospective applicant said they requested all relevant bird survey data from the NPWS.
- There was a general discussion had around Ornithology and the prospective applicant noted buzzard was the only raptor found on the sites.
- The prospective applicant confirmed habitat enhancement measures will be carried out on both sites. The Board advised highlighting this in the report and suggested providing a quantitative analysis of the biodiversity losses and gains.
- The Board's representatives 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 Board's representatives advised maintaining clarity between the two developments and providing clear distinguishment in the red line boundary.

## 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 not anticipated that further meetings will be required. It will be a matter for the prospective applicant to revert to the Board if/when it wishes to formally close the pre-application consultation process.

*Ciara Kellett 8/2/22*

**Ciara Kellett**

**Assistant Director of Planning**