

An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of Meeting ABP-310844-21 1<sup>st</sup> meeting

<b>Description</b>	ABP-310844-21 – Proposed wind farm of between 13 and 17 turbines and associated site works, Lemanaghan and surrounding townlands, Co. Offaly.		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-application Consultation.		
<b>1st / 2nd / 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Meeting		
<b>Venue</b>	Virtually by Microsoft Teams		
<b>Date</b>	23/09/2021	<b>Time</b>	11:00am –12:20pm

### Representing An Bord Pleanála

Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)

Sarah Lynch, Senior Planning Inspector

Sarah Caulfield, Executive Officer	s.caulfield@pleanala.ie	01-8737287
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### Representing the Prospective Applicant

Caitriona Carter – Bord na Mona

Sean Creedon – Bord na Mona

David Naughton - MKO

Jimmy Green - MKO

Meabhann Crowe – MKO

## **Introduction:**

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 15<sup>th</sup> July 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:**

This consultation relates to a proposed wind farm development of approximately 17 turbines with a total output of between 68-102MW located at Lemanaghan and surrounding townlands in County Offaly. The tip height of the proposed turbines is approximately 220 metres. The total area of the site is approximately 1,200 hectares and the development is currently at an early design stage.

Lemanaghan bog is situated approximately 3 kilometres northeast of Ferbane and approximately 2.5 kilometres southwest of the village of Ballycumber. The larger towns located in the wider area include Clara, Moate and Athlone Town.

The prospective applicant said the proposed site comprises heavily cutover bog having been in active peat production until a few years ago. Peat extraction has since ceased on the site.

The prospective applicant gave an overview of their site selection process. Criteria considered as part of the selection process includes proximity to the grid, proximity to sensitive receptors, designated sites, wind speed, peat depths and the planning and policy context. Following the strategic identification of Lemanaghan Bog, a more detailed review of the site was carried out in order to progress to the next stages.

With respect to legislative and planning policy context, the prospective applicant referred to both National and Regional planning policy; these included the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region and the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020. With regard to the local policy context, the prospective applicant said the proposed site is located primarily within an area designated as 'areas open for consideration' in the Wind Energy Strategy (WES) of the Plan. It made reference to several objectives of the current County Development Plan 2014-2020 including Policy RDP-08, RDP-09 and RDP-11 which relates to wind energy projects.

The prospective applicant said the Draft Offaly County Development Plan 2021-2027, which includes a draft Wind Energy Strategy has been released (expected to be adopted in October 2021) and stated that the subject site remains located primarily within an area which has been designated as an 'area deemed open for

consideration for wind energy development' with a small portion of the site now located within an area designed as 'areas not deemed suitable for wind energy development'. The prospective applicant said it would provide justification for the positioning of turbines on lands outside of these areas in any subsequent planning application.

The prospective applicant provided an overview of existing and permitted wind farms in the vicinity including the recently approved Derrinlough development (21 no. turbines/185 metre tip-height), the permitted Cloghan development (9 turbines/150 metre tip-height) the existing Leabeg development (2 no. turbines/124 metre tip-height), and the existing Meenwaun development (4 no. turbines/169 metre tip-height)

The prospective applicant said recreation and amenity facilities are proposed as part of the development with further potential to link into existing or proposed facilities in the wider community.

The prospective applicant presented a series of maps which included landscape designations, Zones of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV) and designated sites (copies on file)

In relation to designated sites, the prospective applicant said they are cognisant of the potential for hydrological linkages and that a Natura impact statement will be prepared and submitted as part of any subsequent application.

The prospective applicant stated that the turbine layout design is at a preliminary stage at this time and that it has been informed through the application of a site constraints process which considers several set back/buffer distances.

The prospective applicant said there are several surveys currently ongoing including archaeology, ecology and ornithology.

The prospective applicant said the grid connection is currently being reviewed and there are two options currently being considered; one being connection via the existing 220 kV overhead line to the north of the site and the second being connection via an underground cable to the 110kV overhead line at the permitted

Derrinlough substation, which is located approximately 10 kilometres southwest of the proposed site.

In relation to the turbine delivery route, the prospective applicant said the route proposed has recently been assessed in relation to the Derrinlough development however, further assessments will be carried out in relation to this project. The proposed route includes travelling along the M6, N52 and N62 roads.

The prospective applicant advised that it has commenced scoping of the projects with relevant prescribed bodies and to date, responses have been received from approximately 50% of the consultees. A pre-application consultation meeting was held with the local authority in June 2021 and the prospective application emphasised that this feedback would be incorporated into the EIAR.

With regard to public consultations, the prospective applicant said a community liaison officer has been appointed for the project and that information has been circulated via door-to-door information drops. During the strict government restrictions, virtual clinics were organised via Zoom for people wishing to attend; 17 clinics were held in total. The prospective applicant said additional door-to-door consultations are expected in Q1 2022 when the design has been finalised.

In relation to the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) the prospective applicant said that this will cover topics such as biodiversity, ornithology, major accidents, material assets and archaeology, architectural and cultural heritage.

With regard to the proposed turbines and landscape and visual impact, the prospective applicant presented two examples of viewpoints and photomontages of the proposed development.

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

The prospective applicant noted the recent Derryadd High Court Judgement and noted the key considerations which pertain to its own development in light of this judgement.

Noting the history of peat harvesting on the proposed site, the prospective applicant said that it would be seeking to future-proof for any forthcoming planning application as best as possible. To this end, the prospective applicant signalled its intention to seek leave for substitute consent in relation to the historical peat harvesting carried out on the site. The prospective applicant expressed its intention to lodge a leave to apply for substitute consent application, followed if successful by a substitute consent application on a staggered approach and any forthcoming planning application would be before the Board at the same time. The Board's representatives noted this intended approach.

## **Discussion**

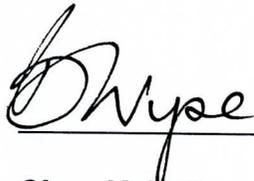
The following matters were discussed:

- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said that all relevant surveys are underway and will be continuing.
- In relation to the foundations for the proposed turbines, the Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to provide as much detail as possible within the EIAR in terms of potential impacts on the hydrology and hydrogeological regime in the area. This was noted by the prospective applicant.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said the site is subject to an EPA license and a similar approach will be taken as in the Ballivor Bog case (ABP-307471-20) whereby the prospective applicant noted its intention to submit an updated rehabilitation plan for the subject site as part of the planning application.
- The Board's representatives enquired about the potential for peat slippages in the area and asked if this would be covered in the EIAR. The prospective applicant said the proposed site is relatively flat however, it said this will be addressed in both the Major Accidents and Lands, Soils and Geology chapters of the EIAR.

- The prospective applicant confirmed there is a small portion of land on the subject site, outside of Bord na Mona ownership which includes a 'mineral island' for agricultural uses. The prospective applicant said the owner has been engaged with throughout the process.

## 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 will be a matter for the prospective applicant to revert to the Board if it requires a further meeting or if it wishes to close the pre-application consultation process.



PP. Ciara Kellett

Assistant Director of Planning

1 Oct 21.