



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of Meeting ABP-310846-21 1<sup>st</sup> meeting

<b>Case Reference / Description</b>	110kV substation to feed into the existing Athlone 220/110 kV substation at Monksland, Co. Roscommon, including underground cable connection and all associated works. Tarduff West, Athlone, County Roscommon.		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-application consultation		
<b>1st / 2nd / 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>		
<b>Date</b>	29/09/21	<b>Start Time</b>	11:03 p.m.
<b>Location</b>	N/A	<b>End Time</b>	11:35 p.m.

<b>Representing An Bord Pleanála</b>
<b>Staff Members</b>
Brendan Wyse, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Una Crosse, Senior Planning Inspector
Niamh Thornton, Executive Officer
<b>Representing the Prospective Applicant</b>
Aoife O'Keeffe
Gerard Hobbins
Kevin McKeown

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 it wished to receive advice on from the Board. The Board mentioned general procedures in relation to the pre-application consultation process as follows:

- 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 gave a brief introduction to EDF Renewables Ireland. The prospective applicant established an Irish office in 2019 and acquired the TDC Community Solar Park in Roscommon in 2020.

The prospective applicant gave an overview of the relevant planning history. TDC Community Solar Park is a circa 40MW solar farm, which received planning permission in August 2020 (planning reference 20/36). The prospective applicant submitted a planning application to Roscommon County Council for a 40MW extension to this solar farm in June 2021, which is still under consideration. The proposed 110kV substation would be required to serve the extended circa 80MW solar park and would replace the 38kV substation originally permitted. The site area comprises circa 130 hectares of agricultural grassland and is bound by the L75817 local road and the M6 to the south.

The prospective applicant clarified that the proposed development consists of a 110kV tail-fed 'Air insulated Switchgear' (AIS) electrical substation with associated buildings and services, and a new 110kV underground cable connection, approximately 5km in length, which will connect the solar park to the existing Athlone 110kV substation at Monksland, Athlone. It was clarified that ESB Networks would be the asset owner of the proposed development and that Eirgrid would be responsible for the operation of the substation and transmission line.

Two grid connection routes have been identified and are currently under consideration. The prospective applicant described both options. Both options follow the same path for part of the route alongside the motorway. It was stated that Option 1, the green route, is currently the preferred route as there are less constraints along this route and a large portion of the route runs through County Council land folios. Two constraints of note along route Option 2, the yellow route, are the crossing of a bridge and two crossings of a railway track, which would lead to the necessity to consult with Irish Rail. Both options cross over waterways.

The prospective applicant stated that the tail-fed nature of the proposed development means that it would not form a new node on the transmission network and therefore, would not be considered to be of strategic importance. The prospective applicant referred to several examples of precedent cases where tail-fed

connections were considered not to be SID by An Bord Pleanála. Due to the nature and scale of the proposed development and planning precedent, the prospective applicant consider that the proposed development does not constitute SID.

### **Discussion**

It was agreed that the prospective applicant would provide details of the area of the proposed substation site as this was not included in the documentation submitted.

The Board's representatives sought clarification as to whether the substation would be decommissioned in line with the solar farm. The prospective applicant outlined that this will form part of the ESB networks assets.

It was clarified that the application for the extension to the permitted solar farm included a Natura Impact Statement and is currently the subject of a further information request.

The Board's representatives stated their preliminary opinion that the proposed development would not constitute SID. However, the final decision on this is a matter for the Board.

### **Conclusion:**

It is open to the prospective applicant to either request a further meeting or formal closure of the instant pre-application consultation process. The record of the instant meeting will issue in the meantime and the prospective applicant can submit any comments it may have in writing or alternatively bring any comments for discussion at the time of any further meeting.

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**Brendan Wyse**

**Assistant Director of Planning**