



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 3rd Meeting ABP-311299-21

Case Reference / Description	ABP-311299-21 – Construction of 9 wind turbines of approximately 6 megawatts each with a combined output of approximately 54 megawatts. Gortloughra, Kealkill, Bantry, Co. Cork.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	3 rd		
Date	24/05/2023	Start Time	11:00 a.m.
Location	Virtually	End Time	11:50 a.m.

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Staff Members
Ciara Kellett, Director of Planning (Chair)
Mairead Kenny, Senior Planning Inspector
Niamh Hickey, Executive Officer
Niamh Thornton, Executive Officer
Representing the Prospective Applicant
Michael O' Connor – EMPOWER – Project Manager
David Kiely – Jennings O'Donovan – Project Director
Andrew O' Grady – Jennings O'Donovan - Project Manager

Introduction

In relation to the 2nd pre-application meeting held on 24th May 2022, the prospective applicant had no comments to make on the record of the last meeting.

Presentation made by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant gave a brief background into the applicant company EMPOWER and advised that Jennings O'Donovan are representing them.

The prospective applicant outlined the changes to the project since the last meeting. The layout of the turbines has been revised and the site has been extended to the west.

The prospective applicant gave an overview of the proposed development. The subject site is located north of the R585 and northeast of the Cousane Gap, 9.7km North-west of Dunmanway and approximately 16km from Bantry. The proposed wind farm will consist of 9 turbines of 6MW each, with an overall capacity of 54MW, with a tip height of 175m and a rotor diameter of 150m. The prospective applicant has removed T05 and added T10, confirming there are only 9 turbines. It was stated that T05 was removed due to concerns in relation to wind take.

The project will also include construction of site access roads, borrow pits, an on-site 110kV substation and grid connection, and other ancillary works.

Regarding grid connection, it was stated that the closest node is Dunmanway 110kV Substation which is the preferred option and the final connection node will be assessed by Eirgrid.

The prospective applicant presented 3 potential grid connection routes. The grid connection will exit the site from the west. This is favourable from a community perspective. It was noted that upgrade works would be required as the station is nearing capacity. In relation to the turbine delivery route the prospective applicant provided a map and stated the orange line is the preferred delivery route.

Community engagement is ongoing, with 3 newsletter drops since 2021. One in-person event has been held with two more events planned before an application is submitted. It was stated that most frequently asked questions relate to landscape and visual, hydrogeology, archaeology, noise, grid and transport routes. The prospective applicant issued scoping documents detailing the project proposals to statutory and non-statutory bodies in December 2021.

The site is designated as 'Open to Consideration' for wind energy development in the Cork County Development Plan 2022-2028.

The prospective applicant gave a detailed overview of the surveys carried out to date.

The closest European Sites to the proposed development are Bandon River SAC, 7.5km to the southeast and Derryclogher (Knockboy) Bog SAC, 10km to the west of the site. The closest SPA is Mullaghanish to Musheramore Mountains, approximately 20km to the northeast.

The prospective applicant provided a summary of the topics which will be covered in the EIA. and gave an overview of some of the EIA studies that were carried out. The site is located within a freshwater pearl mussel sensitive catchment. It was stated that the peat is thin across the site with some isolated pockets of deeper peat, therefore peat stability is not considered high risk. In relation to noise, 23 receptors have been identified within 2km of the turbines. There are no national monuments within 5km of the proposed site and 23 recorded archaeological monuments are located within the site boundary. The proposed development is located mostly in a landscape area considered 'high' value /'local' importance. 29 viewpoints have been identified. The prospective applicant provided photomontages from a number of viewpoints.

The prospective applicant gave an overview of the application timeframes and stated that they intend to submit an application in Q3 of 2023.

The prospective applicant gave its opinion that the proposed development is Strategic Infrastructure Development.

Discussion:

- The Board's representative queried Vestas' concerns with wind take on T05 and the prospective applicant responded stating that the issue related to the subject wind farm and not to the potential of adjacent lands. .
- The prospective applicant confirmed that Vesta will supply the turbines and that a specific model has been identified for the project.
- The prospective applicant stated that the haul route has been identified and that design of the access roads is still ongoing.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to include a technical appendix in the application, demonstrating how the proposed project exceeds the 50MW threshold and therefore is a Seventh Schedule project.
- The prospective applicant stated that the proposed site will remain open for public access. This will be addressed in the archaeological chapter. It was clarified that the route from T07 to the regional road will remain open.
- In relation to the grid connection route, the Board's representatives advised that the applicant robustly demonstrate how it has chosen its preferred option. The prospective applicant stated that the route will follow mostly public roads and agreements will be in place with landowners, which will be submitted with the planning application. The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to attach maps for clarity on this.
- In response to a question from the Board's representatives about noise and shadow flicker, the prospective applicant stated that shadow detection and control systems would be in place and the turbine technology chosen also has regard to noise. . It was stated that noise studies are well advanced with no

issues identified to date. The Board's representatives advised the applicant to address 2019 Wind Energy Guidelines within their EIAR.

- The prospective applicant clarified that it has received general feedback from the DAU, NPWS and other prescribed bodies but that no meetings have been held.
- The Board's representatives encouraged ongoing Ornithology surveys.
- The prospective applicant stated that it may not require a further meeting and will likely request closure of the pre-application consultation process following receipt of the minutes of the instant meeting and once the grid connection route is finalised.

Conclusion:

The Board's representatives advised that onus is on the prospective applicant to either request a further meeting or formal closure of the instant pre-application consultation process. The Board's representatives advised that the record of the instant meeting will be issued in the meantime and that 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.

Ciara Kellett

Director of Planning