



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of Meeting ABP-311403-21 1<sup>st</sup> meeting

<b>Description</b>	ABP-311403-21 Proposed development of 110kV infrastructure within the townland of Clonin, Rhode, 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>	01/12/2021	<b>Time</b>	11:00am – 11:33am

<b>Representing An Bord Pleanála</b>			
Brendan Wyse, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)			
Donal Donnelly, Senior Planning Inspector			
Sarah Caulfield, Executive Officer	s.caulfield@pleanala.ie	01-8737287	
<b>Representing the Prospective Applicant</b>			
John Brennan – Highfield Solar Limited			

## **Introduction:**

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 16<sup>th</sup> September 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:**

The prospective applicant began the presentation by giving an overview of the policy context and the need for the proposed development. It said a climate emergency has been declared with various publications such as the Climate Action Plan and the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) alongside commitments made by the Government which support the need for the proposed development. The Government has increased the RES-E target from 70% to 80% by 2030. The prospective applicant said RESS-1 is currently under construction and RESS-2 is open for qualification in December 2021.

The prospective applicant set out that the proposed development is a 110kV development to facilitate the connection of Clonin North Solar Farm to the transmission network. The development requires a 110kV on-site substation and associated compound and cabling in order to facilitate grid connection to Derryiron 110kV substation.

The site is located on un-zoned agricultural lands adjacent to the Derryiron 110kV substation in Rhode, Co. Offaly. A site location map, site layout, wider site overview, substation plan and elevation drawing were included in the presentation provided by the prospective applicant.

In relation to EIAR, the prospective applicant said environmental assessments previously prepared and submitted for the solar farm application, which incorporated a lower voltage substation would be updated to reflect the proposed development.

These assessments will include the following:

- (a)** Ecology – Appropriate Assessment Screening
- (b)** Archaeology, Architectural Heritage and Cultural Heritage
- (c)** Hydrology – flood risk assessment and drainage impact assessment
- (d)** Landscape and Visual Assessment – viewpoint analysis and photomontages, landscape plan, mitigation planning
- (e)** Traffic and Transportation – construction traffic management

The prospective applicant noted that the Board has previously determined large scale ground mounted solar PV does not require EIA and similarly the proposed

110kV substation does not fall within Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

The prospective applicant made reference to Section 182A (9) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended for the definition of “Transmission” as “a high voltage line where the voltage would be 110kV or more or an interconnector, whether ownership of the interconnector will be vested in the undertaker or not”. The prospective applicant also referred to the Electricity Regulations Act 1999 for its definition of “electric plant” as “any plant, apparatus or applicant used for, or for the purposes connected with, the generation, transmission, distribution or supply of electricity...”. It was confirmed by the prospective applicant that a “Transmission Connection Agreement” was received by Eirgrid in May 2021 under the ECP-2.1 process.

The prospective applicant said it is of the opinion that the proposed development would fall within Strategic Infrastructure Development.

## **Discussion**

The following matters were discussed:

- The Board’s representatives gave their preliminary view that the proposed development would constitute a strategic infrastructure development but said the final decision would be a matter for the Board.
- In response to a query from the Board, the prospective applicant said it doesn’t foresee an NIS being required, however this will be agreed in conjunction with their ecologist.
- The prospective applicant confirmed that the proposed development would become an Eirgrid asset once completed.
- The Board’s representatives agreed that the 110kV substation and underground cables would not be a class of development for the purposes of EIA.

- The Board's representatives advised that an environmental report with any future application should include an assessment of the potential visual impacts with other developments in the surrounding area and an assessment of the impact on archaeology and cultural heritage.
- The Board's representatives advised that the documentation accompanying any future application to the Board should clearly highlight the works for which permission is being sought.

## **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.

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**Brendan Wyse**

**Assistant Director of Planning**

6<sup>th</sup> December 2021