



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of Meeting ABP-311587-21 1<sup>st</sup> meeting

<b>Case Reference / Description</b>	ABP-311587-21 Proposed development of between 10 to 14 wind turbines and associated works at Littleton Wind Farm, Co. Tipperary.		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-application consultation		
<b>1st / 2nd / 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>		
<b>Date</b>	15/02/22	<b>Start Time</b>	11 a.m.
<b>Location</b>	N/A	<b>End Time</b>	11.55 a.m.

<b>Representing An Bord Pleanála</b>
<b>Staff Members</b>
Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Donal Donnelly, Senior Planning Inspector
Kieran Somers, Executive Officer
<b>Representing the Prospective Applicant</b>
Eamon Hutton, Fehily Timoney and Co
Vincent Doyle, Bord na Mona
Caitriona Carter, Bord na Mona
Sean Creedon, Bord na Mona
Trevor Byrne, Fehily Timoney and Co
Jim Hughes, Fehily Timoney and Co

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 by the prospective applicant:**

The prospective applicant provided the Board's representatives with a description of the proposed development which is intended to comprise of between 10 and 14 wind turbines with a tip height of 200 metres. The proposed development is proposed to be located on three bogs in the Littleton Bog Group, County Tipperary; the subject site is approximately 1,020 hectares in size. A 110kV substation is also proposed as part of the development, as well as associated connection to the National Grid and ancillary works. The prospective applicant said that the turbine delivery route will likely utilise the M8 west of the site for the purposes of transport of turbine components. Recreational and amenity facilities are also proposed. Bio-diversity enhancement is also being considered throughout the subject site.

With respect to the rationale of the proposed development, the prospective applicant referred to the Climate Action Plan 2021 which includes the key target to achieve 80% renewable electricity production by the year 2030.

The prospective applicant referred to the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and, in particular, to the relevant threshold for proposed wind power projects. The prospective applicant pointed out that the proposed development would have a total power output of approximately between 40 to 80 megawatts and would thereby likely exceed the SID threshold of 50 megawatts.

With regard to the matter of impact assessment, the prospective applicant noted that the proposed development will require both EIA and Appropriate Assessment; it added that an EIAR and NIS will accompany the subsequent planning application. In relation to the EIA process, the prospective applicant advised that the EIAR Scoping Report for the proposed development has issued to both statutory and non-statutory consultees, including Tipperary County Council.

With respect to policy context, the prospective applicant referred to key plans/documents including the Draft Tipperary County Development Plan 2022-2028, the Tipperary Wind Energy Strategy and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Southern Region. The prospective applicant noted that the County's policy generally supports renewable energy.

With regard to the existing environment and proposed grid route to facilitate the proposed development, the prospective applicant said that the subject site is located approximately 10 kilometres east of Thurles and it also noted proximate settlements such as Gortnahoe and Littleton. The prospective applicant said that the current draft layout for the proposed development provides for up to 14 wind turbines in two clusters; it noted that there are circa 30 residential dwellings within 1 kilometre of the subject site and circa 156 dwellings within 2 kilometres of the subject site. The prospective applicant noted permitted and existing wind farm developments in the vicinity of the proposed development; these include Gurteen Lower Wind Farm, Ballybay Wind Farm and Lisdowney Wind Farm.

With respect to the matter of cultural heritage, the prospective applicant noted the presence of a number of RMP sites within the boundary of the subject site; the prospective applicant said that these sites/monuments have been considered and appropriate setbacks applied at design stage.

In relation to biodiversity, the prospective applicant advised that survey work is ongoing and that surveys have been conducted with respect to wintering birds, breeding birds, bats, terrestrial habitats, aquatic ecology and invasive species. Further surveys will take place at proposed turbine locations during the summer of 2022. The prospective applicant also noted relevant European Sites in the vicinity of the proposed development; these included the Lower River Suir SAC, the Cullahill Mountain SAC and the Galmoy Fen SAC.

With regard to the proposed connection to the National Grid, the prospective applicant advised that it is currently assessing a range of different connection options. All options will be the subject of environmental assessments the prospective applicant added.

With respect to the proposed on-site 110kV substation, the prospective applicant advised that it is currently investigating a suitable location for this; a number of options are being explored in this regard.

In relation to the matter of visual impact and assessment, the prospective applicant presented a number of intended viewpoint locations for the proposed development (Viewpoint 1 – Longford Pass and Viewpoint 2 – Good Shepherd Cemetery, Gortnahoe).

With regard to consultations to date, the prospective applicant advised that the EIAR Scoping document was issued to 68 statutory and non-statutory and relevant stakeholders in September 2021. The prospective applicant reported that, to date, six responses have been received and that key issues raised related to cabling in the public road and ecological effects. The prospective applicant also advised that it held a pre-planning meeting with representatives of Tipperary County Council in December 2021. In relation to public consultations, the prospective applicant advised that there is a dedicated project community liaison officer for the project and that two phases of public consultations have been held to date.

With respect to project milestones, the prospective applicant advised of a substitute consent application which is due to be lodged in Quarter 2 2022 if leave to apply is granted. In relation to the instant project, the prospective applicant stated its current intention is to submit the planning application circa Quarter 3 2022.

**Board's advice/queries:**

With respect to the Board's query on the matter, the prospective applicant said that it was confident that the total power output for the proposed development would exceed 50 megawatts and that this would be confirmed at a second meeting.

The Board noted key considerations to the prospective applicant with respect to the draft County Development Plan and the wind energy strategy of the relevant local authority.

In response to the Board's query on the matter, the prospective applicant said that it would be considering other viewpoints and would generate photomontages with respect to visual amenity impacts.

With regard to the proposed hub heights for the turbines, the prospective applicant said that it would be in a position to indicate the range of these heights at a later stage in the pre-application consultation process. The Board noted that if a range of heights are proposed, it is critical that the various options are fully assessed in the EIAR.

The Board also noted the importance of peat stability assessment and peat depths in relation to the proposed turbines and their individual foundations. Other matters such as peat removal and the necessity for a chapter in the EIAR on climate were also noted by the Board. Cumulative effects should be robustly assessed the Board advised.

In response to the Board's query on the matter, the prospective applicant confirmed that the proposed grid connection would be included in the same planning application. The prospective applicant said that it would be in a position to indicate the preferred grid connection route at a later stage in the pre-application consultation process. The prospective applicant said that it would be consulting with and working with Eirgrid and the ESB with regard to this.

The Board representatives noted that ecological surveys are well underway for the proposed development and, with regard to any historical surveys, it referred the prospective applicant to the Advice Note on the Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys (CIEEM).

In response to the Board's query on the matter, the prospective applicant said that it was seeking to have a meeting with the NPWS. The Board noted that, according to the current draft layout for the site, the Longford Pass site is not currently proposed for any turbines. The prospective applicant noted certain constraints with regard to this site and said that turbines may yet be sited there, but it would have to have regard to constraints with respect to this site.

The Board also advised that a shape file would be very useful with regard to matters such as environmental sensitivity mapping.

The Board enquired as to whether there was any update on the permitted casino in the vicinity; the prospective applicant replied that it has engaged with the landowners and noted that the planning consent for this is due to expire sometime in 2023.

With respect to the Littleton Labyrinth project by the local authority, the prospective applicant said that it has engaged with the local authority in relation to this. The prospective applicant said that the local authority is seeking to bring the project forward and is aware of the instant proposed development with regard to this (matters such as interconnections between the projects).

The prospective applicant said that it is engaging with the EPA with respect to the project. With regard to third parties, the prospective applicant said that feedback has been positive generally; some concerns have been raised with respect to proposed heights of the turbines and visual impacts arising from the proposed development generally. The prospective applicant noted public amenities to be provided such as walkways and public access paths.

With regard to the matter of substitute consent, the prospective applicant said that the relevant application is imminent (for historical peat extraction in relation to the subject site).

**Conclusion:**

The record of the instant meeting will issue shortly and it will then be open to the prospective applicant to request a further meeting or formal closure of the pre-application consultation process. The prospective applicant indicated that it may seek a further meeting prior to the closure of the pre-application process. The Board said that this can be facilitated.

The meeting concluded at 11.55 a.m.

*Ciara Kellett* 16/2/22

**Ciara Kellett**

**Assistant Director of Planning**