



**An
Bord
Pleanála**

Record of Meeting ABP-311802-21 4th meeting

Case Reference / Description	ABP-311802-21 DART+ Coastal North (Northern Line) involving railway improvement works from Connolly Station to Drogheda Station, inclusive of the Howth branch line from Howth Junction Station to Howth Station. From East Wall Junction (to the north of Connolly Station) through to Drogheda.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	4th		
Date	17/06/23	Start Time	11.00 a.m.
Location	MS Teams	End Time	12.50 p.m.

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Paul Caprani, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Conor McGrath, Senior Planning Inspector
Niamh Thornton, Executive Officer
Fiona Fair, Senior Planning Inspector
Liam Bowe, Planning Inspector
Representing the Prospective Applicant
Colm Reynolds, Iarnród Éireann
Paul Wilcock, Iarnród Éireann

Patrick Conway, Iarnród Éireann
Rita Monaghan, Iarnród Éireann
Gillian Sisk, Arup
Clodagh O'Donovan, Arup
Stephen Hyland, Arup

The meeting commenced at 11.00 a.m.

The Board welcomed the prospective applicant to the meeting and introduced those attending from the Board, noting the change in the Chairperson. 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.
- 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 opened its presentation with a project update. Preliminary design is nearing completion, public consultation No.2 is underway, due to close on 23rd June, 2023 and work the Railway Order documentation is in progress.

Public consultation No.2 commenced on 9th May, 2023. Three in-person events have been held, with one online webinar. It was stated that attendance was good with over three hundred attendees at one of the events. Ongoing meetings are being held with the relevant local authorities, meetings with landowners have commenced and meetings with key stakeholders, emergency services etc. are being arranged as required. An EIA Scoping report has issued to relevant stakeholders.

It was stated that feedback has been generally positive, except for some issues raised by those who use the Howth branch line and the Howth Junction & Donaghmede Station. Some of the key issues raised include the potential for a shuttle service on the Howth branch line, the potential impact on the four level crossings, and concerns over increased road traffic as a result.

Submissions are being collated and a findings report will be prepared upon completion of the public consultation.

The prospective applicant gave an overview of the proposed construction programme, which is envisaged to last three years, with a start date in 2025. It was stated that the programme is driven by consideration of efficiency of works and reducing potential for environmental impacts. Works will take place during night-time possessions with limited disruptive possessions. 18 months of utility conversions and 6 months of construction compound establishment will be required. It was stated that vegetation removal will be planned with the nesting season in mind. Works will be phased and broken into three categories – enabling works, line-wide works, and specific geographic zones. Details of the works involved in these categories are available in the presentation.

It was stated that 1,800 OHLE masts and eight substations will be erected. Two types of construction compounds will be established – isolated compounds, and compounds to support line-wide works. The duration of the compounds will vary from months (for isolated works) to the full 3 years (for line-wide works). Compounds will

be operational 24/7. It was stated that relevant stakeholders would be consulted with in relation to these compounds.

A Construction Environmental Management Plan will be prepared and submitted as part of the application. The CEMP will set out the environmental mitigation and monitoring proposed to avoid, minimise and mitigate significant construction.

It was noted that the DART+ Coastal North line traverses/is linked to a number of European Sites. A NIS will accompany the Railway Order application. Extensive surveys have been undertaken and robust documentation will be provided to the Board for consideration. The prospective applicant presented a list of key considerations to be included in the AA/NIS.

The prospective applicant gave an update on the EIAR. It was stated that all baseline surveys have been completed, specialist assessments are being completed this month and cumulative assessment is being prepared. Associated documents, including CEMP and Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) are being prepared.

Regarding the Landscape Visual Impact Assessment, baseline photography is in progress with agreement from local authorities on locations. Mitigation will be proposed as necessary for construction and operational phases.

Regarding the Biodiversity Assessment, the prospective applicant presented a list of Key Ecological Receptors, including habitats, badger, otter, bats and birds, and presented the potential construction and operational impacts and where mitigation would be required.

The prospective applicant stated that a climate change assessment will be undertaken in accordance with new TII guidance.

The prospective applicant gave a detailed overview of the findings of the Traffic and Transportation Assessment, to be included in the application. The assessment includes impacts during construction and operational phases of the proposed development. The impact of increased level crossing closures on the Howth branch line was discussed in greater detail, such details are available in the presentation. It was advised that it is the duration of gate closure rather than the frequency which is the main factor to be considered. The prospective applicant assessed the capacity of the road network and junctions in the area and has concluded that the current network has capacity for any increased in traffic queues as a result of increased level

crossing closures. It was stated that, to date, 13 meetings have been held between the DART+ Coastal North team and Fingal County Council, 3 of which have included discussion on the Howth line level crossings. Another meeting has been requested with the local authority to discuss the impacts of the level crossings and increased frequency on the Howth branch line.

It was stated that baseline noise and vibration surveys are complete and the assessment is ongoing. Potential mitigation measures will be assessed when modelling is complete.

It was noted that there will be a standalone chapter in the EIAR to address cumulative impacts.

The prospective applicant confirmed that it intends to submit an application in Autumn/Winter 2023.

Discussion:

The prospective applicant confirmed that the scope of the application will include works at Doghnameade/Howth Junction Station.

It was clarified that there is one user level crossing north of Malahide estuary. This land has recently been purchased by Fingal County Council and will be included in the CPO of the Railway Order.

It was confirmed that the survey work referred to in the enabling works will not rely on post-consent surveys.

The Board's representatives queried the requirement for closure of the R132 Dublin Road overbridge in Drogheda. It was clarified that the prospective applicant has consulted with Louth County Council in relation to the road closure and that only partial closure would be required for the most part with limited full closure. It was confirmed that there will be no demolition of existing abutments.

The Board's representatives advised that the applicant be very clear about works to be carried out around Drogheda Station and potentially affecting protected structures, and to provide clear boundary lines for these structures.

In relation to EIA Scoping, it was clarified that the scoping document has been sent to the NPWS but that no response has been received to date. It was advised that the prospective applicant engage as closely as possible with the NPWs prior to lodging the application. Some areas that might be of concern to the NPWS were noted, such as effects on wintering birds and nighttime roosting activity.

The Board's representatives advised that if there are works proposed to existing culverts, any re-design should have regard to climate change and the future effects of same, likely increased flows for example.

With regard to the assessment of modifications to retained level crossings, the prospective applicants were advised to consider a review of the functioning and effect of existing, comparable level crossings on the Dart network, for example, at Merrion Gates.

It was advised that the labelling of roads and level crossings on drawings and maps in the application documentation should be very clear and consistent.

In relation to cumulative impacts, it was advised that the prospective applicant should ensure that there is consistency across the Dart+ applications in how they refer to each other.

A discussion was had in relation to the standalone cumulative impacts chapter proposed within the EIAR. It was stated that all relevant projects along the corridor would be identified and screening assessments carried out in relation to noise, biodiversity etc. to identify which projects might have cumulative impacts. It was advised that the cumulative impacts be addressed as clearly and succinctly as possible.

It was clarified that track lowering is proposed in 4 locations and depth varies from ~50mm to several hundred millimetres.

It was noted that the nighttime is more sensitive to noise and vibration impacts and that this should be addressed in the Noise and Vibration Assessment.

The prospective applicant was unsure if the CPO would include extinguishment of any public rights of way.

The Board's representatives advised that it was considered likely that one further meeting would be appropriate prior to closing the consultation.

Conclusion:

The onus is on 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.

The meeting concluded at 12.20 p.m.



Paul Caprani
Assistant Director of Planning

