



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of Meeting

### ABP-312282-21- 2<sup>nd</sup>

### Meeting

<b>Description</b>	ABP-312282-21 - Proposed Kilsallagh Wind Farm consisting of 13 wind turbines and ancillary equipment including 110kV substation infrastructure, Kilsallagh and adjacent townlands, Kilcommon, Co. Mayo		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-application Consultation.		
<b>1st / 2nd / 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Meeting		
<b>Venue</b>	Virtually by Microsoft Teams		
<b>Date</b>	20/04/2023	<b>Time</b>	11:00am – 11:55am

<b>Representing An Bord Pleanála</b>		
Ciara Kellett, Director of Planning (Chair)		
Niall Haverty, Senior Planning Inspector		
Sarah Caulfield, Executive Officer	s.caulfield@pleanala.ie	01-8737287
Niamh Hickey, Executive Officer		
Barbara White, Administrative Assistant		
Evan McGuigan, Administrative Assistant		
<b>Representing the Prospective Applicant</b>		
John Willoughby – MKO		
Ronan Dunne - MKO		
Ellen Costello – MKO		

Emily Lynch - MKO
Aoife Sedgwick – EDF Renewables

## **Introduction:**

The Board referred to its previous meeting with the prospective applicant of the 2<sup>nd</sup> March, 2022 and the record of this meeting. The Board asked if the prospective applicants had any comments it wished to make on the record of this meeting; the prospective applicant replied that it had no comments to make.

## **Presentation by the prospective applicant:**

The prospective applicant began their presentation by providing a summary of the proposed development. The main items to be discussed today include an update on the turbine layout and internal road network, a new proposed bridge crossing over the Owenniny River and the proposed turbine delivery route.

The number of turbines proposed remains unchanged at 13, each with a tip height of 200 metres. The on-site 110kV substation location has been finalised and the grid connection will consist of an underground cable connecting into the existing Bellacorrick substation.

In relation to site access, a new bridge crossing is proposed over the Oweninny River to access the site via the N59 national road.

The turbine delivery route has been selected and includes the delivery of the turbines from Galway Port, following the N17, turning onto the N5 and N58 towards Ballina before joining the N59 and arriving onto the site. The prospective applicant said potential pinch points have been identified along the route and are currently being assessed. Additionally, it was noted that any required widening works along the route would be assessed in the EIAR and would be the subject of separate planning applications.

It was submitted that the design of the proposed development is constraints and facilitators led. A map was presented which highlighted the key constraints on the

site, including buffer zones from watercourses and lakes, Annex 1 exclusion zones, dwelling set-back distances, and buffer zones for telecommunications.

The prospective applicant provided an overview of planning policy from a local, national, and European level and highlighted strong policy support within them for renewable energy. The prospective applicant said the Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028 which was adopted in June 2022 also provides strong support for wind energy development in the county.

In relation to The Renewable Energy Strategy 2011-2022, the prospective applicant said this plan is expected to be updated later this year and provided a map of the current wind energy designations in the area. It was submitted that the proposed site lies mainly within a Tier-2 area, which is deemed 'open for consideration' for wind energy development. Small portions of the proposed development are located within un-zoned lands but not the turbines. The prospective applicant said the Renewable Energy Strategy is due to be updated 12 months after the adoption of the new Development Plan and therefore is expected later this year.

It was noted that Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) commenced as part of an early-stage feasibility study and scenic routes, designated views and amenity trails have all been considered as part of this process. Several viewpoints and photomontages were presented to the Board.

The prospective applicant provided an overview of the EIAR chapters, and the key consultants contributing to the report were identified.

Regarding public consultation, the prospective applicant said a dedicated project website has been published and a Community Liaison Officer appointed. A public consultation event took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> March 2023 in a local parish hall and was attended by 50-60 people.

An EIA scoping document was circulated to prescribed statutory bodies in August 2021, a number of responses have been received and feedback will be incorporated into the EIAR.

Discussions were held with Mayo County Council Roads Department in September 2022, in relation to the new site access off the N59 and the proposed new bridge crossing; good feedback was received. A meeting has been requested with Mayo County Council Planning Department and it is hoped to hold this in the coming weeks.

The prospective applicant is of the opinion that the proposed development meets the requirements of Strategic Infrastructure Development.

A planning application is expected to be lodged in Q3 2023.

## **Discussion**

The following matters were discussed:

- The Board's representatives stated their preliminary opinion is that the proposed development would constitute strategic infrastructure development but noted that the ultimate decision is a matter for the Board.
- The Board's representatives said a strong justification would be required for development on 'Tier 2 open for consideration' lands instead of 'Tier 1 preferred' areas, with the distinguishing factor being landscape and visual sensitivities. Additionally, it noted that this development would be the first wind farm located south of the N59 national road and this should be fully considered as part of the EIAR.
- In relation to the potential updated Renewable Energy Strategy, the Board's representatives noted the commitment in the new Development Plan to review this within one year and advised the prospective applicant to be vigilant of any updates prior to submitting the planning application. The potential for a change in RE policy during the course of the assessment was noted.
- The Board's representatives reminded the prospective applicant to be cognisant of matters such as cumulative impacts and in-combination effects particularly given the number of existing, permitted and proposed wind farms in the area. A robust assessment will be required.

- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said a specific turbine and dimensions will be provided and said the turbine model is expected to be the V162, with a tip height of 200 metres and output capacity of 7.2MW.
- The Board's representatives noted the particularly wet nature of the site and reminded the prospective applicant to be cognisant of peat-related Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas in the vicinity of the site and to consider any potential hydrological/hydrogeological links or impacts on those sites. In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said no nesting sites for Merlin or Golden Plover have been identified following site surveys.
- The prospective applicant said the site mainly consists of abandoned forestry which was planted 60-70 years ago. It noted that the southern section consists mainly of failed forestry. The site includes man-made drainage channels but said this is not maintained. The prospective applicant said they are acutely aware of the forestry and drainage on the site and said this will be fully considered within the EIAR.
- In relation to peat depths, the prospective applicant said they vary across the site, but the average depth is approximately 2.3 metres. Areas of deep peat have been identified and will be avoided. A peat stability assessment and peat and soil management plan will be submitted with the application.
- The prospective applicant said biodiversity gain is being considered including encouraging new habitats and the rehabilitation of the site. These items will be submitted as part of the EIAR.
- The Board's representatives queried the type of Annex I habitat recorded within the site. The prospective applicant advised that this included dystrophic pools and bog/heath habitat areas between the forestry areas. The prospective applicant was advised to consider this with regard to the adjacent SACs and to address matters such as habitat fragmentation and connectivity and ex situ impacts.

- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said re-plant lands will be required as part of the proposed development and said these locations will be cumulatively assessed within the EIAR. The Board's representatives noted that this is only required where there is the potential for cumulative impacts with reference to the proposed wind farm.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to engage with Transport Infrastructure Ireland in relation to the new N59 access point and the grid connection which is proposed along the existing road network. The provisions of the Spatial Planning and National Roads Planning Guidelines relating to new access points were noted.
- The prospective applicant said the on-site substation and grid connection will form part of the planning application.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant confirmed that no works are proposed to the existing Bellacorrick substation as part of this application. The application will include the cables as far as the fenceline of this substation.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to engage with The Office of Public Works (OPW) and Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI) prior to submitting the planning application regarding the proposed new bridge crossing on the N59 national road. It was noted that a section 50 consultation will be required with the OPW post consent in relation to this watercourse crossing and other crossings within the site. The Board's representatives noted that OPW or IFI may have particular requirements with regard to the bridge design.
- The prospective applicant said a clear span bridge is proposed over the river with an entrance off the N59. Significant work has been completed on the design of the bridge including hydrological modelling to ensure sufficient clearance of the river.
- In relation to the southern access point, the prospective applicant said this access will only be used for initial construction traffic to facilitate the bridge construction. The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to

fully address this within the Construction Management Plan, given that this road forms part of the Western Way, giving rise to potential conflicts with pedestrians.

- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to be cognisant of the Mayo Dark Sky Park situated within the Wild Nephin National Park and to address this within the application. The prospective applicant said consultations are on-going with Mayo Dark Sky Park and the Irish Aviation Authority in relation to lighting requirements.

## **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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**Ciara Kellett**

**Director of Planning**