



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-312860-22 1st meeting

Description	ABP-312860-22 – Proposed development of 110kV electrical substation and its grid connection options to the existing transmission network at Friarstown Solar Farm, Friarstown, Co. Carlow		
Case Type	Pre-application Consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st Meeting		
Venue	Virtually by Microsoft Teams		
Date	26/05/2022	Time	11:00am – 11:35am

Representing An Bord Pleanála

Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)

Mairead Kenny, Senior Planning Inspector

Sarah Caulfield, Executive Officer

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Representing the Prospective Applicant

Allison Murphy – Tobin Consulting Engineers

Louise Byrne – Tobin Consulting Engineers

Michael Moore – Elgin Energy

Oyindamola Olawoye – Elgin Energy

Introduction:

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 24th February 2022, 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 its presentation by providing a brief introduction to the project team. Elgin Energy Services Ltd is a leading global solar energy company based in Dublin. They have received full planning permission for 13 solar developments in Ireland since 2015.

The proposed development includes an onsite 110kV substation, and its grid connection options to the national grid. The site is located in north Carlow and within the site of the proposed Friarstown Solar and Storage Park. The site is currently under agricultural use and the site boundaries comprise mainly of hedgerows and treelines. The Ardnehue Stream runs through the west of the site, but the majority of this stream is piped.

The prospective applicant said the site is not contained within or adjacent to any National or European designated sites.

In relation to the Friarstown Solar and Storage Park, the prospective applicant said a planning application was submitted to Carlow County Council for this development in May 2022 and a decision is expected on the 30th June 2022. It was submitted that this development has the potential to provide up to 50 MW of power to the national grid and has the ability to store and export 30 MW of power.

The prospective applicant said the substation type is an Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS). The proposed substation comprises an IPP control building, an EirGrid control building, an underground effluent holding tank, a transformer, lightning masts, lighting columns and security fencing and cameras.

In relation to the grid connection, the prospective applicant said they are currently assessing two options. One option consists of an underground cable along the public road R726 and connecting into the existing Carlow 110kV substation. The second option involves connection into the existing 110kV overhead line which traverses the site.

The prospective applicant is of the opinion that the proposed substation and its grid connection would form part of the transmission system operated by EirGrid and

therefore falls within the definitions of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

The prospective applicant said its current intention is to submit a planning application in Q3 2022.

Discussion

The following matters were discussed:

- A general discussion was had regarding the grid connection options. The prospective applicant said the preferred option would be via the existing overhead line however it may not have sufficient capacity. In relation to the second option, which runs along the public road, the prospective applicant said discussions are currently ongoing with Irish Water. The prospective applicant said they are also considering a 3rd grid connection option which would involve 3rd party lands and be subject to legal agreements. The Board's representatives requested that a map of this additional grid connection option be supplied to the Board.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said they expect that an NIS will be submitted as part of the application. The prospective applicant said it doesn't anticipate that the development will be subject to EIA but said that a planning and environmental considerations report would be submitted. The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant that the entirety of the Natura 2000 site is brought through to Stage 2 AA and not to select only some of the qualifying interests.
- The prospective applicant said the application for the Solar and Storage Park was submitted to Carlow County Council on the 6th May 2022 and the time period for observations is ongoing. It noted a history application on the site which received 1 observation and was granted planning permission.
- The prospective applicant said they have received no response from the National Parks and Wildlife Service to-date. The Board's representatives encouraged further engagement with the NPWS for its comments.

- In relation to designated sites, the prospective applicant said the River Barrow and River Nore Special Area of Conservation is located under 12 kilometres from the site and has a hydrological link to the site. It said the River Slaney Special Area of Conservation is located approximately 3 kilometres from the site but that there is no hydrological link here.

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.

Ciara Kellett

Assistant Director of Planning