



**An  
Bord  
Pleanála**

## **Record of Meeting ABP-313483-22 1<sup>st</sup> meeting**

<b>Case Reference / Description</b>	Proposed 110kV substation and loop-in/loop-out connection to existing 110kV overhead power lines. Keamsellagh East and Cloghboley, Co. Galway.		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-application consultation		
<b>1st / 2nd / 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>		
<b>Date</b>	14/06/22	<b>Start Time</b>	11.00 a.m.
<b>Location</b>	N/A	<b>End Time</b>	11.43 a.m.

<b>Representing An Bord Pleanála</b>
Brendan Wyse, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Alaine Clarke, Planning Inspector
Niamh Thornton, Executive Officer
<b>Representing the Prospective Applicant</b>
Ed Barrett, Gravis Planning
Rob Roche, Harmony Solar
Fred Tottenham, Harmony Solar
Niamh Kennedy, AECOM

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 introduced the project team, Harmony Solar, Gravis Planning and AECOM. Harmony Solar Ireland Limited has entered into a relationship with ESB to develop solar energy projects across Ireland. A new company is set up for each development.

The proposed development consists of a 110kV substation and loop in/loop out connection which the prospective applicant considers to be development within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

The development is required to serve a proposed solar farm which will be subject to a section 34 planning application to Galway County Council.

The prospective applicant presented two possible site locations for the proposed development. The preferred site is located east of the solar farm site and the alternative is located within the solar farm site. The prospective applicant stated that it is 90% committed to the preferred site whilst acknowledging that the preferred site is 'tight' to accommodate the proposed development.

Further details of the proposed development, on the preferred site were presented.

An existing 110kV overhead line traverses the preferred site. The development will be completed in phases over 1-2 years.

The proposed elements of the project consist of:

- 110kV substation to Eirgrid standards
- Security and safety fencing
- Customer compound with switchgear building
- Eirgrid compound with substation building (c. 450sq.m), electrical equipment and lightening mast
- Site road providing access to the public road network (L4506) to the east
- 2 no. end masts (c. 16m) linked to the substation by underground cabling
- Associated site works and drainage

The substation and LILO connection will be linked to the solar farm by way of underground cabling. If the preferred site option is used, the underground cabling will be 33kV and not form part of the SID application to An Bord Pleanála.

If the alternative site is used the cabling will be 110kV and will form part of the SID application.

The prospective applicant stated that the development of renewable energy is supported by national and local policy.

The prospective applicant stated that it considers the development to constitute 'electricity transmission' as per section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000. The proposed substation constitutes an 'electric plant' and the loop in/loop out connection will form part of the transmission system and constitute a new node.

The prospective applicant stated that an EIA is not required based on assessments to date. A Planning and Environmental Considerations Report will be prepared. Appropriate Assessment screening has not yet been completed. It was stated that Stage 2 may be required based on the proximity to SACs and SPAs. A map of surrounding European and Heritage Sites was presented.

The prospective applicant stated that there will be public consultation before an application is submitted and a meeting will be planned to discuss the project with Galway County Council.

It is currently envisaged that the planning application for the solar farm will be submitted to Galway County Council in November 2022 and the SID application will be submitted soon after.

### **Discussion:**

The Board's representatives gave the preliminary view that the development would constitute SID. The final determination however is for the Board to make.

The Board's representatives brought the prospective applicant's attention to the 'solar potential' and 'solar sensitivity' maps included in the Draft Galway County

Development Plan 2022-2028, which is understood to come into effect in July 2022. The point was raised that these maps may not support solar development on the location chosen for this project. This was noted by the prospective applicant who will discuss the matter with Galway County Council.

The Board's representatives noted that the proposed location for the development is adjacent to an Annex 1 habitat and that any ecological assessment should have regard to that. It was also noted that there is a regionally important aquifer at this location.

Regarding the alternative site, it was noted that there are a number of archaeological monuments in the area, a turlough to the northwest of the site and the underground cable route as presented is close to a historic groundwater flooding site. The prospective applicant clarified that Eirgrid would not develop through a historic flood site.

It was stated that landscape and visual impact would be important to consider due to the proximity of the M18 and overpass.

It was clarified that the substation would become an Eirgrid asset.

The Board's representatives questioned the use of the term 'sub-threshold' which was used in the presentation regarding EIA. It was questioned if the applicant considered this was a class of development which could require EIA. If it is not a class of development, it was stated that it cannot be 'sub-threshold'.

### **Conclusion:**

The record of the instant meeting will issue in due course 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 onus is on the prospective applicant to either request a further meeting or formal closure of the instant pre-application consultation process.

The meeting concluded at 11.43 p.m.



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**Brendan Wyse**

**Assistant Director of Planning**

*21 June 2022*