

An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-314112-21

Case Reference / Description	ABP-314112-22 Development of a 400 kV underground cable between Dunstown 400 kV substation in the townland of Dunstown, Co. Kildare and Woodland 400 kV substation in the townland of Woodland, Co. Meath known as the 'Kildare-Meath Grid Upgrade'		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1st		
Date	15/09/22	Start Time	11:00
Location	N/A	End Time	12:10

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Staff Members
Stephen Kay, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Conor McGrath, Planning Inspector
Doina Chiforescu, Executive Officer
Representing the Prospective Applicant
Tomas Bradley, Eirgrid
Kevin Dolan, Eirgrid
Fay Lagan, Jacobs
Voirrey Costain, Jacobs

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant requesting pre-application consultation 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.
- 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.

Representation by the prospective applicant

The prospective applicant provided the Board's representatives with an overview of the proposed development and noted that it is a significant project in the Grid Capital Investment Program, known as Kildare – Meath Grid Upgrade. It is a 53km long 400 kV electricity transmission connection between Dunstown in County Kildare and Woodland in County Meath. The project is essential to meet the Ireland's Climate Action Plan target of up to 80% of renewable energy generation by 2030 and will help to more effectively transfer power to the east of the country to meet growing demand for electricity due to increased population and economic activity. The project will also help distribute electricity within the network in Meath, Kildare and surrounding counties. It is a strategic project that is a key part of the solution to addressing amber alerts on the system, meeting demand in the Dublin region and facilitating more renewable power on the grid.

The prospective applicant stated that the power is currently transported across the country on two high-voltage power lines from Moneypoint, Co. Clare to the Dunstown substation in Kildare and Woodland substation in Meath. Transporting more electricity on these lines could cause electricity supply problems throughout Ireland, particularly if one of the lines is lost (where power is out) unexpectedly. This project is a key part of the solution by connecting Woodland Station and Dunstown Station.

The prospective applicant noted that they have been developing this project for several years and have been engaging with the communities in the area and all other stakeholders (landowners, businesses, chambers of commerce and anybody else that would have an interest in this proposed development). Four route options were identified, which were distilled down to one preferred option. Many design principles and routing principles have been taken into consideration, including avoidance of motorways and maximising the use of national, regional and local roads, where suitable. Town centres and industrial estates were avoided and impacts on communities are minimised where possible. The route avoids going off-road, through private land and through agricultural land where possible. Natural and built heritage locations including protected areas, and other services in the road such as water, gas and drainage were avoided.

The prospective applicant stated that the route generally remains unchanged since lodgement of the pre-consultation request, although there is some micro sighting and / or alternative routing following consultations with the landowners.

The proposed development description consists of various elements including installation of the underground cable (fibre optic cables, joint bays, passing bays, off-road joint bays, reinstatement of road surfacing, etc.), upgrade to the existing Dunstown Station and Woodland Station (additional electrical equipment, renewal, alteration and removal of associated electrical equipment, etc.) and all ancillary site development works (site preparation works, vegetation clearance and reinstatement, landscaping, etc.)

The prospective applicant presented some photomontages with examples of typical arrangements for an UGC in public roadway, a joint bay in public road, for pulling cables, a passing bay installation and a horizontal direction drilling receiving pit 220kV cable being pulling through trenchless duct.

With regard to the SID status of the proposed development, the prospective applicant noted that the proposed development is for the purposes of electricity transmission as defined in section 182A (9) of the Act and will form part of the 400kV transmission network. The prospective applicant also noted that the proposed development would contribute to the fulfilment of objectives in the National Planning Framework, would be of strategic economic or social importance and would occur in the functional area of more than one local authority.

With respect to the matters of EIA and Appropriate Assessment, the prospective applicant stated it's current consideration is that the proposed development is not of a type that falls within Annex I and Annex II of the EIA Directive or Schedule 5 of the regulations. This would be addressed in an EIA Screening statement in any subsequent planning application. The prospective applicant also stated its current intention to submit a Natura Impact Statement with any planning application. In the event of the proposed development being determined as SID, the prospective applicant said that it would request the Board's advice in relation to these matters.

The prospective applicant indicated that further meetings would be sought with a view to completing the consultation process in Q4. The current intention is to lodge the subsequent planning application circa Quarter 1 2023.

Discussion/Queries

The Board's representatives queried the number of passing bays likely to be required and implications in terms of keeping roads open. The prospective applicant said that the passing bays are temporary mitigation measures to facilitate traffic. Assessments are underway with regard to the number and location of passing bays, and what roads would require full closures. It was stated that not every jointing bay will require or be suitable for a passing bay. There are many considerations for each scenario (including avoidance of mature tree line, access point, existing utilities, road junction). The prospective applicant noted that this is probably the key impact of this project, but it would be all detailed and included in the planning documentation.

In response to the Board's query on the likely timeline for the project, the prospective applicant stated that it is envisaged that 50 metres to 100 metres a day could be achieved. There will be a possibility of having works on-going in a number of locations at the same time.

Responding to the prospective applicant's query on the matter, the Board said that it would be a matter for the prospective applicant to determine whether to prepare an EIAR and an AA, and that a preliminary view cannot be given at this stage.

In response to a Board query, the prospective applicant said that this would probably be the longest high voltage underground cable project in Ireland, something similar to the Celtic Interconnector. Other similar projects of similar length would be at a lower voltage.

The Board's representative raised the potentially significant environmental impacts of the works, given the length of the project and number of passing bays likely to be required, the significant footprint of the project and associated hedgerow loss etc. It highlighted that this should be given careful consideration as part of the documentation and each location should have detailed information of the impact and

fully assessed as well as assessment of cumulative impacts. The importance of the number and duration of road closures was highlighted, along with details of the passing bays, especially from a public participation point of view. The prospective applicant said these passing bays details needs to be finalised and surveys currently underway will be taken into consideration in the design.

The Board's representative advised that planning application documentation should be clear with regard to the separate SID pre-application consultation request in respect of Woodlands station, and the need and rationale for the two projects. The prospective applicant said that clarification in respect to the two separate consultation requests would be submitted.

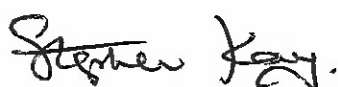
The prospective applicant's stated their intention to seek an additional meeting in the future to discuss further planning and environmental considerations.

The Board representative noted the prospective applicant's timeline in respect of closure of consultations and lodgement of a subsequent planning application and indicated that this may be challenging, given the issues outstanding and the number and scale of projects currently before the Board. The prospective applicants advised that this is regarded as a priority capital project at this time and would be hopeful that it could be dealt with by the Board in this context.

Conclusions

The Board's representatives advised that a 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 request a further meeting.

The meeting concluded at 12:10 p.m.



Stephen Kay

Assistant Director of Planning