

An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting
ABP-314127-22 1st
meeting

Description	ABP-314127-22 – Proposed 110kV underground grid connection for Carrownagowan wind farm, Carrownagowan to Ardnacrusha, Co. Clare		
Case Type	Pre-application Consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st Meeting		
Venue	Virtually by Microsoft Teams		
Date	20/10/2022	Time	11:30am – 12:00pm

Representing An Bord Pleanála		
Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)		
Karla McBride, Senior Planning Inspector		
Sarah Caulfield, Executive Officer	s.caulfield@pleanala.ie	01-8737287
Representing the Prospective Applicant		
Charlie Langley - FuturEnergy Ireland		
Sinead O'Malley – FuturEnergy Ireland		
Ciaran McNamara – FuturEnergy Ireland		
Noelle O'Leary – MWP		
Aileen O'Connor - MWP		
Ken Fitzgerald - MWP		

Introduction:

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 20th July 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 proposed development consists of a 110kV underground grid connection to connect the recently approved Carrownagowan wind farm (An Bord Pleanála reference ABP-308799-20) to the national grid at Ardnacrusha 110kV substation.

The prospective applicant said the EIAR submitted for the wind farm development fully assessed the entire project including the preferred grid route from the wind farm to the Ardnacrusha connection point but that the grid connection was not included as part of the wind farm application. It was submitted that the grid connection route is primarily the same as what was considered in the EIAR, except for the final stage within the Ardnacrusha facility.

The grid connection has an overall length of 25.16 kilometres and the entire route will be located within the public road network. The prospective applicant said the route will comprise of 34 joint bays for pulling cables and several associated communication chambers. There are 9 watercourse crossings along the route, 7 of which will comprise Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) and 2 overbridge solutions, to prevent interaction with the watercourses.

The prospective applicant said there would be a requirement to close one road section to facilitate the works but the remainder of the route can be delivered using a stop-go system along with local diversions. It was noted that the project is anticipated to take between 6-8 months to complete, subject to the approach taken by the appointed contractor. All details will be included within the EIAR and the Traffic Management Plan.

The grid route was presented using Google Maps and includes Coillte forestry network at the permitted substation site, joining local roads for the majority of the route, before approaching Ardnacrusha Village and entering the Ardnacrusha 110kV substation site via existing access tracks. The prospective applicant said the final connection into the Ardnacrusha substation is currently being finalised but said it does not anticipate any great change from the connection included within the EIAR submitted for the wind farm development.

It is the prospective applicant's opinion that the proposed development constitutes strategic infrastructure as it comprises 110kV electrical infrastructure and given its association with a strategic wind farm development.

The prospective applicant said an EIAR will be submitted as part of the application and will include a chapter on the consideration of alternatives for the grid connection route. Additionally, it confirmed that an NIS will accompany the planning application.

Discussion

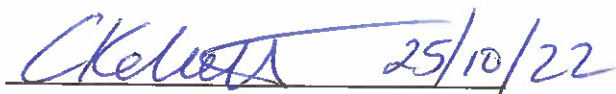
The following matters were discussed:

- The Board's representatives queried whether the grid connection route traverses the Slieve Bernagh Bog SAC (Site Code: 002312) and said if it does, significant assessments would be required in consultation with NPWS. The prospective applicant said it does not believe that the route crosses the SAC, but this will be confirmed, and a detailed map would be submitted to the Board shortly.
- In relation to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said 2 grid connection routes were considered which included a connection to the Ennis 110kV substation. The preferred connection at Ardnacrusha was selected as the best technical solution given its grid availability and capability along the public road network. It said lower voltage substations in the area do not have the capacity for a wind farm development of 90-110MW. The options considered will be assessed in the alternatives chapter of the EIAR.
- In relation to the presence of an invasive species along part of the public road network in the townland of Kilbane, the prospective applicant said an Invasive Species Management Plan will be submitted and engagement is ongoing with the Road Engineers in Clare County Council. It said these areas were highlighted during the assessments undertaken for the wind farm development and they are fully aware of them. The prospective applicant said most of the trenching will be within the road and therefore would be no interaction with the edges of the road however, they said this will be fully addressed in the EIAR.

- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to be cognisant of matters such as cumulative impacts and in-combination effects particularly given the number of developments permitted/proposed in the area. Additionally, it advised the prospective applicant to regularly check An Bord Pleanála's weekly lists as published on www.pleanala.ie for new pre-application consultation requests in the surrounding area. The Board's representatives reminded the prospective applicant to be cognisant of a separate pre-application consultation under ABP-313767-22, which also proposes to connect into the Ardnacrusha 110kV substation.
- The Board's representatives gave their preliminary view that the proposed development would constitute a strategic infrastructure development but said the final decision would be a matter for the Board.
- The prospective applicant confirmed the applicant's name on the planning application would be FuturEnergy Carrownagowan DAC.

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.

 25/10/22

Ciara Kellett

Assistant Director of Planning

