

Emer Sexton
Ørsted Onshore Ireland Midco Limited (Ørsted)
Floor Five
City Quarter
Lapp's Quay
Co. Cork

Date: 7th March 2023

Re: Proposed wind farm development consisting of approximately 10 wind turbines, 110kV substation, grid connection and site infrastructure within the townlands of Oatfield, Crag, Cloontra West, Derryvinnaan, Cloontra, Cloonsheerea, Mountrice, Cloghera, Drumsillagh (Merritt), Drumsillagh (Parker), Kyle and Gortacullin, Co. Clare

Dear Sir,

I have been asked by An Bord Pleanála to refer further to the above-mentioned pre-application consultation request.

Please find enclosed a copy of the written record of the first meeting of the 23rd February, 2023.

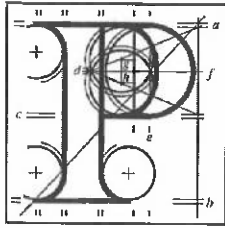
If you have any queries in relation to the matter please contact the undersigned officer of the Board.

Please quote the above-mentioned An Bord Pleanála reference number in any correspondence or telephone contact with the Board.

Yours faithfully,

Sarah Caulfield
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01-8737287

PC07



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-315239-22 1st meeting

Description	ABP-315239-22 – Proposed wind farm development consisting of approximately 10 wind turbines, 110kV substation, grid connection and site infrastructure, within the townlands of Oatfield, Crag, Cloontra West, Derryvinnaan, Cloontra, Cloonsheerea, Mountrice, Cloghera, Drumsillagh (Merritt), Drumsillagh (Parker), Kyle and Gortacullin, Co. Clare		
Case Type	Pre-application Consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3 rd Meeting	1 st Meeting		
Venue	Virtually by Microsoft Teams		
Date	23/02/2023	Time	10:00am – 10:30am
Representing An Bord Pleanála			
Ciara Kellett, Director of Planning (Chair)			
Máire Daly, Planning Inspector			
Sarah Caulfield, Executive Officer		s.caulfield@pleanala.ie	01-8737287
Representing the Prospective Applicant			
Emer Sexton - Ørsted			
Fiona Maxwell - Ørsted			
Shane Kiely – Ørsted			
Patrick McMorrough – Ørsted			
Howard Williams– Inis Environmental Consultants			

Introduction:

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 1st December 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 and topics to be discussed during the meeting. Ørsted are a global energy company with a portfolio of 332MW of onshore wind farms throughout Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The proposed development includes 10 wind turbines, with a tip height of 179-180 metres, rotor diameter of 138-150 metres, hub height of 105-111 metres and an output rating of 6-6.6MW, giving an overall output capacity in the region of 60-66MW. The proposed development includes a 110kV substation, grid connection and site infrastructure located in the townland of Oafield in east Co. Clare. The proposed development site is located in an upland setting dominated by commercial coniferous plantation forestry, blanket bog, wet heath and rough/wet grassland and is located 19.6 kilometres from Ennis, 11.7 kilometres from Shannon and 9.9 kilometres from Limerick City.

Regarding local policy, the proposed site overlaps two areas designated as a 'strategic area' and an area that is 'acceptable in principle' within the Clare County Development Plan 2017-2023 Wind Energy Strategy.

In relation to the EIA study area, it was submitted that turbine numbers 1 to 5 are located to the west and numbers 6 to 10 located to the east.

A preliminary analysis of possible grid connections and routes has been completed and 3 options are currently being considered, including a 110kV looped in connection into the existing Ardnacrusha-Ennis 110kV overhead line which traverses the site, a tail-fed connection to Ardnacrusha 110kV substation, and a tail-fed connection to Drumline 110kV substation. The final cable route and substation location will be selected based on the point of connection to the grid. Discussions are ongoing with ESB networks and EirGrid in this regard.

In relation to biodiversity surveys, vantage point surveys commenced in March 2021 and are ongoing, a full suite of bird surveys has been completed for all relevant bird species including Hen Harrier, Red Grouse, Merlin, Golden Plover and others. A full suite of surveys has also taken place for ecology receptors including habitat and

vegetation, mammal, bat, and aquatic. A site-specific Hen Harrier management plan will also be submitted as part of the planning application.

Formal consultations have been initiated and are ongoing with the Development Applications Unit, Inland Fisheries Ireland, Bat Conservation Ireland and the Irish Aviation Authority.

The prospective applicant is of the opinion that the proposed development falls within SID as the total installed capacity is expected to exceed 50MW. Additionally, the proposed development is expected to include a 110kV grid connection and therefore satisfies the criteria of section 182A(9) of the Act.

Community engagement is ongoing, with the first newsletter expected to issue in April 2023. Stakeholder and landowner engagement has also commenced and will continue. An EIA consultant is in the process of being appointed with EIA studies commencing in April 2023. The grid route is expected to be finalised shortly.

Discussion

The following matters were discussed:


- The Board's representatives advised that if a specific tip height is not finalised and ranges are brought forward, these ranges should be fully considered in the EIAR to allow the Board to examine and fully evaluate the likely impacts.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said the turbine delivery route is currently being assessed and engagement is ongoing with landowners to overcome a number of pinch points along the route.
- The prospective applicant confirmed that the grid route selected would be fully within public roads, in accordance with EirGrid's requirement. Consultations are expected with the local roads department once the grid connection options have been refined.
- The prospective applicant confirmed that the Gortacullin Bog NHA is located within the study area but not within the wind farm boundary.

- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said they are aware of hydrological links to the Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002165). This will be fully covered within the aquatic ecology section of the EIAR and Appropriate Assessment
- In relation to the blanket bog present on the site, the Board's representatives advised providing a robust peat stability assessment within the planning application.
- The Board's representatives referred to the Danes Hole, Poulnalecka Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 000030) which is located to the north of the proposed site and has a qualifying interest for Lesser Horseshoe Bat. The prospective applicant said the bat survey report will fully address this species.
- Given the presence of archaeological monuments on the site, the Board's representatives said a robust archaeological impact assessment would be required.
- The Board's representatives said any notable changes in the proposed new Draft Clare County Development Plan 2023–2029, Volume 6 Clare Wind Energy Strategy would need to be fully addressed within the planning application.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to be cognisant of matter such as cumulative impacts and in-combination effects particularly given the number of developments proposed in the wider area. Additionally, it advised the prospective applicant to regularly check An Bord Pleanála's weekly lists as published on www.pleanala.ie for potential new pre-application consultation requests in the surrounding area.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said no meeting has been held with National Parks & Wildlife Service, but they hope to in the future. The Board's representatives stressed the importance of consulting with the National Parks & Wildlife Service prior to submitting the planning application.

- 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 prospective applicant confirmed that the grid connection and wind farm development will be submitted as one planning application.
- The Board's representatives reminded the prospective applicant that a carbon calculation should be included as part of the climate chapter of the EIAR.

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

Director of Planning