



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting
ABP-315383-22 1st
meeting

Description	ABP-315383-22 – Proposed development of 110kV substation, cable and 2 cable end masts, in the townlands of Castlegarden and Cloghscregg Co. Kilkenny		
Case Type	Pre-application Consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st Meeting		
Venue	Virtually by Microsoft Teams		
Date	10/03/2023	Time	10:00am – 10:30am

Representing An Bord Pleanála		
Ciara Kellett, Director of Planning (Chair)		
Mairead Kenny, Senior Planning Inspector		
Sarah Caulfield, Executive Officer	s.caulfield@pleanala.ie	01-8737287
Representing the Prospective Applicant		
Aidan Collins - Lightsource Renewable Energy Ireland		
Sam Toner - Lightsource Renewable Energy Ireland		

Introduction:

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 20th 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 provided a brief company overview and a background to the proposed development. The parent company, Lightsource bp are a global leader in utility scale solar developments with a presence in 20 countries, including Ireland. They currently have 8.8GW of solar projects globally with a target of 25GW of solar capacity by 2025. Planning applications in Ireland are submitted under the name Lightsource Renewable Energy Ireland Limited.

The proposed development consists of a loop-in loop-out 110kV substation and associated 110kV cabling to allow connection from the Great Island - Kilkenny 110kV overhead line to the proposed substation.

A planning application was recently submitted to Kilkenny County Council (Planning Reference: 2360069) for the development of a Solar PV Energy Development with associated Battery Storage Compound with a capacity of up to approximately 70MW (MEC). The solar farm application site is approximately 256 acres and located off the L4205 and the R703. The solar farm requires substantial grid infrastructure, which is the subject of this pre-application process.

The proposed substation is located approximately 18 kilometres southeast of Kilkenny town with Thomastown located approximately 5 kilometres southwest of the site. The land can be characterised as low quality and flat in nature. The existing Kilkenny - Great Island 110kV overhead line traverses the site, from north to south.

The prospective applicant referred to the Renewable Energy Support Scheme (RESS) and the Government's support for solar energy developments. The Climate Action Plan 2021 targets for solar were recently increased to 8GW in Ireland over the next 7 years. The prospective applicant said the solar farm development along with the proposed substation would assist the country in reaching these targets.

It was noted that the cumulative carbon savings of overall solar development would be approximately 32,397 tonnes which is the equivalent of removing 29,471 cars off the road or providing 18,142 houses with power annually.

The prospective applicant presented several maps of the site and highlighted the location of the proposed substation adjacent to the solar farm development.

In relation to planning policy, it was submitted that the Kilkenny County Development Plan 2021-2027 is supportive of the site selection process undertaken for this development. The site is located beside existing 110kV infrastructure, has potential natural screening, and consists of agricultural lands. It was noted that 3 meetings were held with Kilkenny County Council in respect of the solar development prior to submitting the application. Details of the proposed substation location and layout were highlighted in these meetings.

Indicative drawings were presented for the proposed 110kV substation and the 2 associated lattice towers. Photographs which depict the existing landscape character were also presented.

The prospective applicant is of the opinion that the proposed 110kV loop-in-loop-out substation would constitute Strategic Infrastructure Development.

Discussion

The following matters were discussed:

- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said the battery storage facility associated with the solar farm development would be located in close proximity to the proposed substation for operational reasons.
- 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.
- In relation to appropriate assessment, the Board's representatives reminded the prospective applicant not to screen out any qualifying interests of European sites which are being brought through to stage 2.
- The Board's representatives stressed the importance of assessing cumulative impacts between the solar farm development and the proposed substation.

- In response to a query on the matter the prospective applicant said that in line with Eirgrid's standard requirements there is room for potential future expansion within the substation.
- The prospective applicant said extensive public consultations were held in Autumn 2022 which included information in relation to both the solar farm development and the substation. These included the circulation of an information brochure, door-to-door consultations, an in-person community event, presentation to elected members and a dedicated project website.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said the access road leading to the site was designed to EirGrid specifications and is approximately 5.5 metres in width and therefore capable of supporting wide load vehicles.

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.

 22/3/23

Ciara Kellett

Director of Planning

