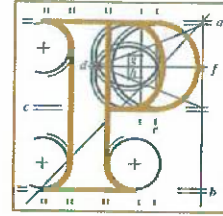


Our Case Number: ABP-315580-23



An
Bord
Pleanála

Tomás Bradley
Eirgrid plc
The Oval
160 Shelbourne Road
Ballsbridge
Dublin 4
D04 FW28

Date: 1st March 2023

Re: Modification and upgrade of the Binbane 110kV Air Insulated Station.
In the townlands of Meenacahan Inver, Binbane, Co. Donegal.

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 17th 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.

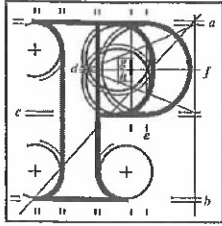
Yours faithfully,

Niamh Thornton
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01-873 7247

PC07

Teil	Tel	(01) 858 8100
Glaio Áitiúil	LoCall	1800 275 175
Facs	Fax	(01) 872 2684
Láithreán Gréasáin	Website	www.pleanala.ie
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64 Sráid Maoilbhríde	64 Marlborough Street
Baile Átha Cliath 1	Dublin 1
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An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-315580-23 & ABP- 315688-23 1st meeting

Case Reference / Description	ABP-315580-23: Modification and upgrade of the Binbane 110kV Air Insulated Station. In the townlands of Meenacahan Inver, Binbane, Co. Donegal. ABP-315688-23: Modification and upgrade of the Letterkenny 110kV Station. In the townland of Listellian, Co. Donegal.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	17/02/23	Start Time	11.00 a.m.
Location	N/A	End Time	12.00 p.m.

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Ciara Kellett, Director of Planning (Chair)
Jimmy Green, Senior Planning Inspector
Niamh Thornton, Executive Officer
Representing the Prospective Applicant
Tomás Bradley, EirGrid
Liam Toomey, EirGrid

The meeting commenced at 11.00 a.m.

The Board referred to the letters 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. It was noted that two separate pre-application consultations have been submitted by the prospective applicant, both seeking consultation and determination by the Board pursuant to section 182E of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. Both cases will be discussed at the instant meeting. 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 files 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 developments. 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.

ABP-315580-23

Presentation:

The prospective applicant opened its presentation by stating the need for the proposed development. It was stated that Power Flow Control devices are required to reduce constraints on the transmission network by balancing power flows. The use of Power Flow Control devices can add flexibility to the system, making it more efficient and enhancing the security of supply. The Power Flow Controllers are ground mounted devices, which are compact, modular and can be placed at a substation either end of or at any location along the line.

A video, introducing the new technology was shared with the Inspectors to watch in their own time which is embedded into the presentation document.

The proposed development will be located approx. 12km northwest of Donegal town at the Binbane 110kV AIS Substation, with a place of worship neighbouring the site. The proposed development will include an extension to the southwest boundary of the existing substation compound. In addition, development will include one 110kV circuit wooden poleset to connect to the overhead line, 2 no.110kV gantry structures to connect the circuit to the Power Flow Controllers, Power Flow Controllers comprising modular technology installed on steelwork towers and associated electrical equipment and works.

The prospective applicant presented a draft site layout plan and images of example Power Flow Controllers.

The prospective applicant referred to precedent cases where new technologies on the network had been introduced by EirGrid and had been deemed by the Board to not constitute Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID). It was stated that whilst the new technology is of considerable strategic importance to the transmission network, in planning terms, they constitute additional apparatus and an extension to the existing 110kV substation. There will be no increase in voltage, no material change to the input/output and the station will remain a 110kV substation.

Discussion:

The Board's representatives noted that the site is located within a high scenic area and advised the prospective applicant to address landscaping and the visual impact in any future application.

Regarding the relocatable nature of the Power Flow Controllers, the Board's representatives asked if it was the intention to relocate the controllers regularly, or if it would be likely that they could be relocated regularly. The prospective applicant clarified that there is a current need at that location and the controllers would remain for as long as there is a need. The controllers can be re-used at another location if the need at this location ceases and need arises elsewhere, however, it is not anticipated that this would be a regular occurrence.

It was clarified that the controllers can work effectively placed anywhere along the line. The prospective applicant stated, however, that its preference would be to avoid constructing new compounds for the controllers and to locate them at existing substation compounds.

The Board's representatives referred to a number of more recent precedent cases than those cited by the prospective applicant which they could refer to for information on the Board's definitions of 'transmission' and 'electrical plant', citing ABP-314361-22, ABP-314111-22 and ABP-313964-22.

The prospective applicant stated that a number of different sites had been assessed and that this location was the most beneficial technically.

It was noted that the proposed development brings the substation compound closer to the place of worship currently in use. The prospective applicant stated that there should be no increase in noise from the compound and Noise modelling is currently ongoing.

It was noted that a significant drain runs alongside the site which provides a link to a downstream European Site. The prospective applicant stated that the necessary ecological and appropriate assessment reporting will be carried out as required and that should a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) be required it will accompany any future application.

The prospective applicant clarified, when asked, that the proposed infrastructure is the first of its kind it has employed in Ireland, however, it plans on installing power flow controllers at about 5 locations across the country and any future plans will be informed by the results of the proposed infrastructure on the network at this location.

The Board's representatives shared their preliminary opinion that the proposed development is not SID, while noting that the final decision is for the Board to make.

ABP-315688-23

Presentation:

The prospective applicant intends to construct a GIS building and decommission some of the AIS infrastructure at the existing Letterkenny 110kV station. The site is located on the N13 national road about 2-3km to the south of Letterkenny. The prospective applicant stated that the proposed development is required to make the station more efficient and enhance the security of supply.

The prospective applicant presented a draft site layout plan, showing an extension of the compound and construction of the GIS building to the south-west. The prospective applicant stated that extension of the compound was challenging to design due to a number of constraints surrounding the existing substation including houses to the north, the national road to the east, plans for a relief road to the west and a range of different overhead lines coming in from the south.

The prospective applicant noted that the design process was still underway, however, they presented a number of images showing a range of previously constructed GIS building designs to inform consideration.

The prospective applicant referred to a number of precedent cases where introduction of a GIS station building to an existing AIS station was deemed not to be SID. The prospective applicant stated that whilst the development would be of great importance to the transmission network, in planning terms, it constitutes additional apparatus in an extension to an existing 110kV station. The prospective applicant clarified that the station will remain a 110kv station and there will be no increase in voltage or material change to the input/output of electricity from the station.

Discussion:

The Board's representatives noted that the site is located on an exposed hill in an area designated as high scenic area and that the site of the proposed development also appeared to be along the line of a designated view. The prospective applicant was advised that any future development at this location would need to be designed to minimise visual impacts and assimilate insofar as practicable into the landscape. The prospective applicant stated that it will discuss this and the designation of the site with Donegal County Council.

Regarding landownership, the prospective applicant clarified that it is in negotiations with the landowner to the south.

The Board's representatives noted that the site drains into Lough Swilly (which is both an SAC and SPA) and advised that any ecological assessments should take this into account.

The Board also advised the applicant to consult with Donegal County Council in relation to works on the N13 national road and if these works would be in the vicinity of the proposed development.

The Board's representatives shared their preliminary opinion that the proposed development is not SID while noting the final decision is for the Board to make.

Conclusion:

The record of the instant meetings 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 12.00 p.m.

 28/2/23

Ciara Kellett

Director of Planning