



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP- 315645-23 1st meeting

Case Reference / Description	Proposed 110kV electrical infrastructure and connection to the National Grid at the existing 400kV Moneypoint substation at Cahermurphy and Moneypoint, Co. Clare.		
Case Type	Pre-Application Consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	29 th August 2023	Start Time	2:30pm
Location	Virtually by Microsoft Teams	End Time	3:30pm

Representing An Bord Pleanála

Paul Caprini, Assistant Director of Planning

Auriol Considine, Senior Planning Inspector

Ashling Doherty, Executive Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant

Alan Clancy, MKO

Shaun Doolin, MKO

Fergal Connolly, MKO

Charlie Langley, FuturEnergy Ireland

Fionna O'Regan, FuturEnergy Ireland

The meeting commenced at 2:30

The Board referred to the letter 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. 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.
- The Board will serve notice at the conclusion of the process. The Board may at any time conclude the consultation where it considers appropriate to do so.
- 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.

Presentation by the prospective applicant:

Some of the matters raised in the presentation are summarised as follows:

The prospective applicant for the Proposed Development is Cahermurphy Renewables DAC, this is a joint venture between Mid Clare Renewable Energy Windfarm Ltd and FuturEnergy Ireland. Their ambition is to develop more than 1GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030 and to make a significant contribution to Ireland's commitment to produce 80% of electricity from renewable sources by the end of the decade.

MKO, on behalf of the applicant issued a letter in January 2023 to An Bord Pleanála under section 182E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, for a proposed 110kV electrical infrastructure to facilitate the connection of the proposed 'Cahermurphy Two' Windfarm to the existing 400kV Moneypoint Substation, Co. Clare. At the time the letter was issued, the 'Cahermurphy Two' Windfarm was under consideration by the Board. The Board subsequently refused permission for the development and the applicant has undertaken Judicial Review proceedings against the Board's decision. The prospective applicant is proceeding with the proposed 110kV electrical infrastructure application and working concurrently on a revised windfarm layout. An application will be made to the Board seeking a determination in relation to the Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) status, or otherwise, of the revised windfarm layout. It is the prospective applicant's intention to submit separate planning applications for the revised new windfarm layout and proposed 110kV electrical infrastructure under section 37A and section 182A with a single Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) covering both.

The prospective applicant provided a description of the proposed development which included the following, a new 110kV electrical substation and underground electrical cabling (110kV) between the proposed windfarm and the existing 400kV Moneypoint Substation in Co.Clare. There are currently 5 options being explored and more than 1 option may be included in the application lodged. The revised windfarm layout will include 8 or 9 wind turbines, with an increased tip height and rotor diameter. The new layout will exceed the 50MW threshold, therefore, making it a Strategic Infrastructure Development. The proposed development will be located within an area designated as a "strategic area" in the Clare County Renewable Energy Strategy.

The prospective applicant discussed the proposed 110kV grid connection options, which included 5 underground cable (UGC) routes between the proposed windfarm site and the Moneypoint 400kV substation with the favoured route being Moneypoint 400kV Substation to Cahermurphy windfarm site with a distance of 26.5km. A more detailed analysis of the route will need to be completed to determine the viability of each proposed route.

The prospective applicant highlighted a number of documents which are relevant to the proposed development, these included National Energy Security Framework, The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, Climate Action Plan 2023 and Project Ireland 2040 National Planning Framework.

The prospective applicant discussed the environmental context of the site which included the following, the constraints mapping is currently underway with the nearest Natura 2000 sites being the River Shannon, River Fergus Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) and Mid-Coast Clare SPA. Having regards to Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) Lower River Shannon, Tullaheer Loch and Bog SAC, Carrowmore Dunes SAC, Carrowmore Point to Spanish Point and Island SAC. The National Heritage Areas located in proximity to the proposed development include Loch na Mine Bog National Heritage Area (NHA), Cragnashingaun Bogs NHA, Lough Acrow Bogs NHA and Slievecallan Mountain Bog NHA.

The prospective applicant set out the EIAR structure which will accompany the application.

It is the applicant's considered opinion that the proposal falls within the scope of section 182A(1) of the Act.

The prospective applicant discussed scoping and public consultations for the proposed development. A scoping document was issued to 33 relevant bodies in January 2023 providing details regarding the proposed development. The document set out the proposed scope of work for the EIAR. Consultees were invited to contribute to the EIAR by suggesting baseline data, survey techniques, cumulative project lists and potential impacts that should be considered as part of the assessment process and in the preparation of the EIAR. So far 13 of the bodies have responded, with follow up scoping planned for those who have not yet responded. The prospective applicant has engaged with the local residents prior to the

submission of the windfarm development application through an appointed Community Liaison Officer (CLO). A detailed Project booklet containing details of the project was produced in March 2020 and distributed in the area from March to August 2020. In April 2020, a project website was launched for the proposed development, providing the public access to information on the project. The website is continually updated since its launch, allowing the public to stay informed with the latest developments. The prospective applicant continues to consult with the local community, with the latest information issued to local residents in March 2022.

Discussion:

The Board's inspector highlighted that due to the amendments of the proposed development they had not inspected the 2 new route options under consideration as part of the proposal.

The Board's representative emphasised the importance that a robust EIAR must be submitted and to ensure that all cumulative impacts are covered.

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 Board's representatives sought clarity on the proposed route options and if the route coming into the Moneypoint facility impinges on any SAC or SPA. The prospective applicant clarified the grid would be running alongside the boundary of the site, with the southern boundary of the site impinging on the SPA.

The Board's representatives emphasised the importance of engagement with prescribed bodies and in particular the National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS). It is also recommended that there should be engagement with Clare County Council and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in relation to if the proposed development will affect national roads.

The Board's representatives recommended engaging with Uisce Éireann if the proposed development will have implications for their assets having regard to the digging of trenches along public roadways.

Conclusion:

The record of the instant meeting 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 to request closure of the consultation process.

The meeting concluded at 3:20pm



Paul Caprani

Assistant Director of Planning