



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting
ABP- 315796-23
1st meeting

Case Reference / Description	Proposed development of an offshore wind farm and associated infrastructure for Arklow Bank Wind Park (ABWP) located on and around the Arklow Bank, approximately 6 to 15 km from the shore at Arklow, Co. Wicklow.		
Case Type	Marine pre-application consultation under Section 287		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	13 th June 2023	Start Time	11:10
Location	Hybrid	End Time	12:50

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Ciara Kellet, Director of Planning
Stephen Kay, Assistant Director of Planning
Auriol Considine, Planning Inspector
Eugene Nixon, Marine Consultant
Marcella Doyle, Senior Administrative Officer -
Ashling Doherty, Executive Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Kaj Christiansen – ABWP 2 Development Manager
Eimear Lenehan – Head of Offshore Consents Ireland
Marc Walshe – ABWP 2 Consents Manager
James O’Hara – ABWP 2 Construction Manager
Lauren Kirkland – Project Director (GoBe)

The meeting commenced at 11:10

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 purpose of the meeting is also to give the Board an opportunity to provide its opinion on issues relating to the making of an application and other matters including the NMPF, objectives of maritime spatial planning, the principles of proper planning and sustainable development and the environment and any European site in making a decision on an application.

The Board will not discuss or provide advice on the merits or otherwise of specific aspects of the proposed development. The Board wishes to ensure that the application presented to the Board will be as comprehensive as possible.

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.
- A further meeting or meetings may be held in respect of the proposed development.
- The Board envisages that the pre application consultation process under section 287 of the Act will not involve a significant number of further meetings. Following the conclusion of this meeting, the Board will be in contact regarding a suggested schedule and agenda for future meetings.
- In the event that the prospective applicant has submitted an application for an opinion under section 287A of the Act (Design Options) this discussion will be held at a later date, either in conjunction with discussion under s.287 or as part of a separate meeting. This will be advised to you after this meeting. The prospective applicant should note that a separate Board opinion will issue in respect of section 287A of the Act and that records relating to this application will not be available for public inspection until an application for permission is made to the Board.
- 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.
- In accordance with section 287(3) of the Act, the decision to close a consultation rests with the Board. At the conclusion of the pre application process the case file including the record of meetings held and the report of the

reporting inspector detailing the issues arising in the consultation, will be forwarded to the Board. The Board will issue a direction / Order clarifying that the consultation has closed and that the prospective applicant may make an application for permission under section 291.

- 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:

The Prospective applicant gave an overview of SSE Renewables Limited a world-leading developer, operator and owner of offshore wind energy. Their 4GW operational renewables fleet is the largest in the UK and Ireland, with onshore wind (2GW), offshore wind (0.5GW), and hydro power (1.5GW).

The Prospective applicant outlined the nature and scale of the proposed development which will be on and around the Arklow Bank, approximately 6 to 15 km from the shore. The proposed development area for the wind farm covers an area of seabed approximately 27 km long and 2.5 km wide and will comprise of 3 main components which includes the Offshore Infrastructure, the Onshore Grid Infrastructure and the Operation and Maintenance Facility. There is currently an existing wind farm on site which comprises 7 wind turbines and is owned and operated by GE.

The Prospective Applicant outlined the project background which was transferred to the MAP process from the Foreshore process in May 2022.

Approval was granted by the Board under reference number (ABP Ref. 310090) in relation to the onshore infrastructure which includes a 220kV substation at Shelton Abbey and a 220KV export cable and an overhead line connection.

The prospective applicant stated that consent was received from Wicklow County Council in June 2022 in relation to the Operations and Maintenance Facility which is located in Arklow's South Dock. The prospective applicant outlined the project timeline; it is envisaged that the application for permission will be submitted to the Board in 2023, construction to commence in 2025/26 and will be fully operational by 2029.

The Prospective Applicant outlined that the Offshore Infrastructure for the proposed development will comprise all development that is seaward of the High-Water Mark (HWM) including; An array of Wind Turbine Generators (WTGs) (comprising a tower, nacelle and three rotor blades) and Offshore Substation Platform(s) (OSPs) housing electrical infrastructure, all located within a defined Array Area. One WTG design and its associated layout will be selected from 4 discreet WTG options along with 1 OSP configuration to be selected from 2 options provided. OSP and WTF foundations will be either monopile or jacket design.

The Prospective Applicant presented an 3D interactive tool in order to provide a visualisation of the proposed development.

The prospective Applicant outlined an overview of Environmental Assessments which will include An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Report, an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) an Appropriate Assessment Screening and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) which will consider construction, operation, and decommissioning phases of the proposed development with cumulative impact effects of the proposed development in combination with the onshore components of the ABWP which includes the OGI, and OMF and other applicable developments such as existing and/or approved projects included in the assessment. There will be a wide range of specialist areas considered. Baseline surveys and public consultations have also been completed. The EIAR and NIS will identify the maximum design scenario (MDS) from the 4 discrete WTG options, 2 discrete OSP options and cabling and foundations. An audit will allow technical stakeholders or members of the public to understand how each MDS has been derived.

Discussion:

The Board's representative acknowledged the detailed presentation presented by the prospective applicant and stated that most of the queries were responded to throughout the presentation. However, the Board's representative raised some issues which are summarised as follows:

- The Board's representatives noted the lack of success at the recent ORESS Auction and queried if it will delay the lodging of the application and if so, to ensure all surveys are robust and up to date at time of lodgement. In response the prospective applicant stated it is fully committed to the project.
- The Board's representatives noted the existence of the existing windfarm and that consent has been given for the onshore elements of the overall scheme and stated that in this context justification for location of the proposal should be closed out in the EIAR.
- The Board's representatives asked if experiences at Arklow Bank 1 have been fed into the considerations around the proposed development having regard to technical investigations and outcomes. The prospective applicant clarified that GE own the Arklow Bank Phase 1 and not SSE.
- In response to update on surveys the prospective stated that surveys are ongoing and continuing and will be up to date in accordance with EU Directives
- The Board's representatives noted that the existing wind turbines are absent from the layouts provided, including cable arrays and offshore cable routes to shore and it was pointed out that details in relation to this should be included in the application.
- The Board's representatives referred to the need to take into consideration impacts on fisheries and noise impacts on marine mammals. It was also stated that coastal processes, stability issues, sediment release or potential changes to tidal patterns and possible erosion need to be addressed in the application.
- The Board's representatives asked if there was information/monitoring data on bird collisions from the existing windfarms. In response the prospective applicant stated this data in relation to this is available. In this context the Board's representatives emphasised the need to ensure that information submitted is robust and covers all of the above in order to avoid the need to request further information during the application process. The Board will be assessing the cumulative environmental issues in dealing with all projects.

- The Board's representatives also raised the issue of the impact the proposed development will have on the existing windfarm. The prospective applicant stated the existing windfarm is due to be decommissioned and stated that this will be covered in the application. The Board's representatives advised that as the existing windfarm is not in the ownership of the applicant, the future of the existing turbines cannot, and should not, be assumed. The turbines are an existing feature in the environment and the impact on them needs to be fully considered – including, but not limited to, issues around wind take, servicing, access for decommissioning if that is what is intended by the owners etc.
- The Board's representatives confirmed that they are holding all the initial 1st pre-application consultation meetings over the coming weeks. It was also stated that design options may be discussed at the 2nd pre-application consultation meeting. The Board's representatives stated they were advised there is a circular/letter in preparation by the Department regarding design options, which is expected to be finalised in the coming weeks. It was also stated that the Board would advise on the procedures for the making of the application at the final meeting.
- The prospective applicant sought clarity on the fees and process of the application. The Board's representative stated the procedures are similar to Strategic Infrastructure Developments (SID) process. The fees are currently before the Department and the Board is awaiting confirmation of approval. It was also stated that any transboundary environmental issues need to be addressed before the closing of the pre-application consultation process. The Board's representatives stated that whether or not the provisions of the COMAH/Major Accidents Directive and Regulations apply needs to be clarified.
- The prospective applicant asked if it was likely that an oral hearing will be held in relation to the proposed development. The Board's representative stated it is at the Board's discretion to have a hearing in any case and it cannot confirm at this time.
- The Board's representatives requested the prospective applicant to submit a shapefile for the MAC development area, with the format to be advised.

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 Board will revert to the prospective applicant in relation to scheduling a further meeting.

The meeting concluded at 12:50

 23/6/23

Ciara Kellett

Director of Planning