

**An
Bord
Pleanála**

Record of Meeting ABP-315800-23 1st meeting

Case Reference / Description	ABP-315800-23 Proposed Dublin Array offshore wind farm. Located approximately 10km off the coast of counties Dublin and Wicklow, at the Kish and Bray banks.		
Case Type	Marine pre-application consultation under Section 287		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st Meeting		
Date	29/05/2023	Start Time	11:00 am
Location	Hybrid	End Time	12:20 pm

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Ciara Kellett – Director of Planning (Chair)
Stephen Kay – Assistant Director of Planning
Conor McGrath – Senior Planning Inspector
Maeve Flynn – Ecologist
Eugene Nixon – Consultant to the Board
Marcella Doyle – Senior Administrative Officer
Cora Cunningham – Senior Executive Officer
Niamh Hickey – Executive Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Peter Lefroy – RWE – Project Director
Paul Kelly – RWE – Senior Development Manager

John Lowry – RWE – Senior Engineering Manager
Siobhan McCabe – RWE – Senior Regulatory and Legal Manager
Ciara Conboy-Fischer – RWE – Offshore Consents Manager
Gillian Moore – RWE – Offshore Consents Manager (on-line attendance)

The meeting commenced at 11:00 am.

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.

The Board's representatives requested that in their presentation to the meeting, the prospective applicants should address the scope of the project, the nature and status of survey work carried out and an update on consultations carried out to date.

Presentation by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant provided an overview of the companies involved in the project as per the presentation. Some of the matters raised in the presentation are summarised as follows:

The prospective applicant presented a map of the proposed development location which outlined the Wind Farm Array area and the subsidiary area boundary. The prospective applicant confirmed that a separate application for the on-shore grid connection element will be pursued under s.182 of the 2000 Act as amended, and that the subject application boundary will generally reflect the MAC boundary.

In terms of cumulative effects, regard will be had to other proposed projects in the Irish Sea, including two off-shore projects off the coast of north Wales.

It stated that the number of turbines being assessed is between 39 and 50. The rotor diameter range is between 236m (50 turbines) and 278m (39 turbines) depending on the final number proposed.

With regard to the grid connection the prospective applicant stated that two potential connection nodes were considered, at Poolbeg and Carrickmines. In November 2022, Eirgrid directed the project to connect to the grid at Carrickmines .

Two indicative layouts have been submitted. Turbines will connect to offshore substation(s), where voltage will be increased from 66kV to 220kV. It is still to confirm whether one or two offshore platforms will be required. The transition joint bay is proposed at the Shanganagh Cliffs landfall, where the two offshore cables will connect to six onshore cables (3 no. in each) routed towards Carrickmines.

The prospective applicant stated that it is complying with the core policies of the National Maritime Planning Framework.

Consultations have been held with statutory and non-statutory bodies. In November 2020 and March 2023 consultations took place with prescribed bodies and interested parties and an EIA scoping report was previously circulated to relevant bodies.

The prospective applicant intends to enter into consultations with the Board in respect of Design Options under section 287B of the Act but are currently awaiting guidance in this regard.

The prospective applicant stated that it does not intend to seek screening for Environmental Impact Assessment or a scoping opinion from the Board.

The prospective applicant stated it will be seeking guidance in relation to the prescribed bodies to be notified of the application and also would seek clarity on elements of section 287(2) of the Act from the Board. It was noted that transboundary effects are under consideration.

The prospective applicant confirmed that it had engaged with Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council in relation to the project, but it anticipated that it may need to engage with some of the other coastal planning authorities such as Wicklow County Council and Dublin City Council due to the visual impacts arising from the proposed development. The prospective applicant stated that they would seek the guidance of the Board on which planning authorities should be consulted. Works in Dun Laoghaire Harbour, including new structures on St. Michael's Pier and the installation of pontoons to provide for an operations and maintenance base will be included in the s.291 application.

Discussion:

- The Board's representatives asked if the surveys on the main areas had been concluded. In response, the prospective applicant gave an overview of the surveys carried out to date, including two years of bird and marine mammal surveys, non-breeding birds, benthic surveys, monitoring of subtidal areas, fishing trawler surveys, bat monitoring at fixed locations (Kish, Dalkey Island and Sorrento), archaeological surveys and shipping and navigation surveys. It was confirmed that the surveys have been completed and that the project is now at detailed design phase.
- As some surveys were carried out in 2019, the Board's representatives advised that the prospective applicant should be satisfied that robust and up to date data is submitted as part of the application. In this regard the Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to ensure that cumulative environmental issues be addressed in any application submitted to the Board.
- The Board's representatives emphasised the need to ensure that the information submitted is robust and evidence based. In this regard, the conclusions of the environmental assessment, mitigation measures and associated modelling should be supported by relevant studies / evidence and experience from other off-shore development projects.

- The Board's representatives queried whether there were any issues anticipated in respect of the stability of the sandbanks. It was confirmed that the base of the sandbank was stable but that some movement occurs at upper levels.
- The Board's representative asked if the foundation design is dependent on turbine design or type. It was stated that the foundation is dependent on turbine technology and the results of geotechnical surveys carried out. Two options are currently being considered regarding the foundation type. The Board representatives advised that the further that these details can be refined in advance of the submission of an application the better.
- The prospective applicant advised that it is likely that underwater cables will be buried with a requirement for some protection measures where reef or rock arises. Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) below the seabed will be used to bring cables ashore, from a distance of approx. 1km.
- With regard to the landfall site, the Board's representatives advised that there is erosion on the coast in this location and that this is something to be aware of and considered in the application.
- With regard to marine habitats and community types, the Board's representative asked the prospective applicant to establish the proportionate loss or impact on such habitats or community types arising from the proposed development. In response it was stated that this will be taken into consideration, but that the data may not be available to fully quantify the loss in the area.
- The Board's representative asked if the prospective applicant would be able to demonstrate the efficacy of proposed mitigation measures and modelling, for example, the mitigation achievable by increasing the clearance of turbine blades over water in terms of the risk of collision. The prospective applicant stated that this process is still ongoing.
- With regard to cumulative effects, the prospective applicant stated that developers from other projects have come together to share appropriate levels of information such as collision risk monitoring. The Board's representative noted this and stated that it is important to have ongoing communication in this regard, and that there is consistency in approach and methodologies used. The Board would be assessing the cumulative environmental issues in dealing with all of the projects.

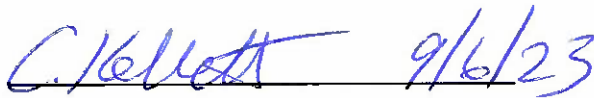
- The prospective applicants advised that engagement from the NPWS has been limited to date and it is hoped for further engagement in this regard.
- The Board's representative advised the prospective applicant to have regard to the provisions of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive.
- The Board's representative asked if there would be some reduction or disturbance in fishing activity during the construction phase. The prospective applicant noted that there is existing static (pot) fishing activity in the area but that such activity is not likely to be significantly affected by the development. There is no requirement for further surveys of fishing activity in the area.
- With regard to the role of the banks as a spawning or nursery area, the prospective applicant noted the project design is cognisant of the naturally prevailing environment and habitats. It stated that it is aiming for minimal environmental impacts and does not want to introduce additional technology into the receiving environment or give rise to changes or additional features such as growing seaweed and mussel strings. The provisions of the MSPF with regard to biodiversity were noted as relevant to this project.
- The Board's representative advised that a discussion in relation to transboundary environmental effects will take place at a follow up meeting.
- The prospective applicant confirmed that it would seek to commence section 287(B) consultations and would re-engage with the Board in consultations under section 182A in respect of the on-shore grid connection. It was noted that the prospective would seek advice from the Board with regard to the requirements for a Design Options consultation request under section 287(B) of the Act.
- The Board's representatives stated that they were advised there is a circular/letter in preparation regarding Design Options, which is expected to be finalised in the coming weeks.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant that the relationship between the onshore and offshore elements, regarding landfall and public open space, will need to be carefully managed.
- The prospective applicant queried procedures and matters in relation to the issuing of the opinion and in the making of the application, including the form of plans and particulars to be submitted.

- The Board's representative advised that an opinion will issue at the end of the pre-application consultation process. It was also stated that the Board would advise on the procedures for the making of the application at the final meeting.
- The Board's representatives requested the prospective applicant to submit a shapefile of the development area.

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 12:20 pm.



Ciara Kellett

Director of Planning