



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting
ABP- 315801-23
1st meeting

Case Reference / Description	Offshore windfarm with a maximum of 42 WTGs off the coast of Dublin, Meath and Louth.		
Case Type	Marine pre-application consultation under Section 287		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	30 th May 2023	Start Time	11:00
Location	N/A	End Time	12:50

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Ciara Kellet, Director of Planning
Stephen Kay, Assistant Director of Planning
Karla McBride, Senior Planning Inspector
Meave Flynn, Ecologist
Eugene Nixon, Marine Consultant
Marcella Doyle, Senior Administrative Officer
Cora Cunningham, Senior Executive Officer
Ashling Doherty, Executive Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Fiona Patterson, Project manager, Arup
Tina Raleigh, Head of Offshore Wind Ireland, Statkraft Ireland
Enda O'Doherty, EIA Engineering Support, Statkraft Ireland
Anna Jamieson, Consents Lead, Statkraft Ireland

The meeting commenced at 11:00

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:

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

The prospective applicant outlined the background to North Irish Sea Array (NISA) Windfarm Ltd (NISA). The Developer is a Joint Venture partnership between Stakraft Ireland and Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners. The proposed development North Irish Sea Array offshore windfarm will be located approximately 13km off the coast of Counties Dublin, Meath and Louth. The proposed development comprises offshore and onshore infrastructure and associated developments. A grid connection point will be at an existing EirGrid/ESBN substation at Belcamp, Swords Co.Dublin.

The offshore element will comprise of 35 to 46 turbines and associated foundations which may be subject to change with an output of approximately 700MW. The prospective applicant presented an offshore layout plan which illustrates an indicative layout of the wind turbines and the location of the offshore substation.

The prospective applicant will be seeking an opinion on design flexibility through the section 287A process.

The prospective applicant also outlined the onshore aspects of the project which includes two transition joint bays, one onshore substation at the landfall and approximately 33km of a single 220kV High Voltage Alternative Current (HVAC) underground cable which will connect into the existing EirGrid / ESBN substation at Belcamp. The onshore cable circuits originate at the landfall site, head west under the Dublin-Belfast line and then proceed west through private lands to cross the R132 to reach the onshore substation. The onshore substation will be located in the townland of Bremore, County Dublin, approximately 2km north of Balbriggan town centre and west of the R132. The underground cable joins the R106 and R107 and then turns west along the R139 for approximately 2km before entering the existing EirGrid/ ESBN substation. The underground cable will cross the East West Interconnector Cable (EWIC), the M1 motorway, a number of watercourses and bridges.

The prospective applicant outlined the associated infrastructure with regard to the Operation and Maintenance Facility. It will be required to service the NISA offshore wind farm throughout the operational phase. Associated storage facilities will be provided as well as a number of berths for the vessels required to access the wind farm. A number of locations are currently being assessed in terms of suitability. The (O&M) facility will be subject of separate applications for approval to the relevant planning authority.

The prospective applicant stated that the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) is being prepared. Informal EIA Scoping was completed in 2021 with Environmental surveys (onshore & offshore) ongoing since 2019. It was also stated that a robust cumulative impact assessment is critical for EIA. The EIAR will include topics such as Policy, Need for the Proposed Development, Construction (Offshore & Onshore), Cumulative Effects, inter-related effects & transboundary environmental effects, Mitigation & Monitoring & Residual Effects. Having regard to Appropriate Assessment, the screening report and Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will cover all aspects of the project which will include a complete assessment for onshore and offshore and associated developments. Furthermore, all relevant European Sites will be examined throughout the assessment. In this regard the prospective applicant presented an extract map of Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation.

The prospective applicant confirmed that consultations are ongoing with relevant stakeholders. A dedicated Community Liaison Officer was appointed to the project in 2020. It was also stated that discussions and consultation with fisheries organisations, landowners and the local community are also ongoing. The next phase of public consultation for NISA is scheduled to commence in June 2023.

The prospective applicant concluded the presentation with a proposed timeline for the proposed development. A planning application for permission will be submitted to the Board in Q4 of 2023 with construction being planned for 2026-2028. It is envisaged that the development will be in operation in 2028.

Discussion:

- The Board's representatives emphasised the need to ensure that the information submitted with any application is robust and evidence based in order to avoid the need to request further information during the application process. In this regard, the conclusions of the environmental assessment and associated modelling should be supported by relevant studies/evidence and experience from other offshore development projects.
- The Board's representatives enquired about the design stage of the proposed development with regard to how close they are to the final layout of the array and also turbine foundation excavation works & design. In response the prospective applicant stated that the final layout of the array has not been set but works are ongoing. They are considering either monopile or jacket foundation types. Additional surveys will be completed shortly.
- The Board's representatives sought clarity on the coastal processes which includes seabed characteristics, any stability issues, sediment release, movement, and the current status of sediment modelling. The prospective applicant stated there was no sandbank at that location but there is a weak seabed and they are cognisant of this. It was also stated that currently there is no stability issue, but data collection is ongoing. Deep sediment is to the north with shallow sediment on the south side. Sediment release assessment is ongoing with the worst-case scenario being looked at.
- The Board's representatives sought clarification in relation to impacts on marine mammals during the construction stage and operational stage. It was stated that they will rely on precedence from other projects during construction and operational stage and they will consider having monitoring surveys at existing operational windfarms peer reviewed by an academic to support their results. Surveys in relation to marine ecology are ongoing.
- The Board's representatives sought clarification on the disturbance to fisheries and the effects on spawning & nursery habitats. The prospective applicant stated a scouting survey has been carried out and consultations with commercial fisheries is ongoing. No information is currently available on spawning and nursery habitats, but a full assessment will be presented.

- The Board's representatives raised the issue of birds and the proximity to European sites. The prospective applicant stated that they are completing a collision risk management report and have completed 3 years of surveying which includes video stills and vantage point surveys. Significant engagement with the NPWS is also continuing. It was noted that there will be an expansion of the SPA network-and that a full assessment will be carried on the impacts of birds and marine mammals.
- 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 modelling. 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 will be assessing the cumulative environmental issues in dealing with all projects. The Board's representatives stated that transboundary issues will be discussed during this pre-application consultation stage.
- The Board's representatives asked about supporting land-based infrastructure which includes Port location options, Operation & Maintenance depot and substation (within a wider archaeological landscape). The prospective stated that a number of options are being considered in terms of port locations.
- The Boards 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 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 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 meeting concluded at 12:50

Ciara Kellett

Ciara Kellett

Director of Planning

14/6/23