



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-315864-23 1st meeting

Description	ABP-315864-23– Proposed development of Construction of up to 31 wind turbines (Tirawley Wind Farm), a permanent 110kV substation, 110kV underground cable and grid connection to the existing 110kV substation at Tawnaghmore Co. Mayo.		
Case Type	Pre-application Consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st Meeting		
Venue	Virtually by Microsoft Teams		
Date	05/04/2023	Time	11:00am – 12:00pm

Representing An Bord Pleanála

Stephen Kay, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)

Jimmy Green, Senior Planning Inspector

Sarah Caulfield, Executive Officer

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Representing the Prospective Applicant

Paddy Hynes – Constant Energy

Nicola O'Neill – Constant Energy

David Kiely – Jennings O'Donovan

Michael Garvey – Jennings O'Donovan

Introduction:

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 21st February 2023, 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 that it wished to receive advice on from the Board. The Board mentioned the following general procedures in relation to the pre-application consultation process:

- 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 as to the strategic infrastructure status of the proposed development. 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 in any legal proceedings.

Presentation by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant began its presentation by providing a brief company overview and topics to be covered in this meeting. Constant Energy Limited is an Irish company based in Co. Limerick who are seeking to develop and operate an energy portfolio with an emphasis on renewable and gas fuelled energy generation.

The proposed development consists of a wind energy development of up to 31 wind turbines located in north Mayo, between the towns of Killala and Ballycastle. A total of 29 turbines are proposed with a tip height of 125 metres and a 105-metre rotor diameter, generating up to 3.45MW each and 3 turbines are expected to have a tip height of 180 metres, 150 metre rotor diameter, and generating up to 6MW each. Therefore, the total combined output of the proposed development is in the region of 115MW.

Works include the following, a temporary construction compound, the erection of two meteorological masts, one on-site 110kV Air Insulated Substation, one on-site borrow pit, 10.9 kilometres of 110kV underground cable providing the grid connection to the existing Tawnaghmore 110kV substation.

In relation to local policy, the prospective applicant said the objectives within the Mayo County Development Plan 2022 – 2028, particularly the Renewable Energy Strategy 2011-2020 have been considered. The Renewable Energy Strategy 2011-2020 seeks to optimise the development of renewable energy sources, which make use of the natural resources of the area concerned in an environmentally acceptable and sustainable manner.

Under the provisions of the Renewable Energy Strategy, part of the proposed wind farm site (3 no. turbines) is located within a “Tier 1 (Preferred – Large Wind Farms)” area and 13 no. of the proposed turbines are within a “Tier 2 – Open for consideration” area. The other 15 no. proposed turbines are located on lands which have no designation status under the Mayo Renewable Energy Strategy but are in the vicinity of Tier 2 areas.

The prospective applicant stated that scoping documents detailing the project proposals have been issued to approximately 45 statutory and non-statutory bodies.

Scoping opinions and feedback will be incorporated into the project design and EIAR once received.

The prospective applicant provided an overview of the topics to be included within the EIAR. Regarding landscape and visual amenity, the prospective applicant said the wind farm is located within landscape character unit D - North Coastal Plateaux and unit G - North Mayo Drumlins of the Mayo Uplands within the landscape appraisal for Co. Mayo.

In relation to the existing landscape, it was noted that the site consists of peat bogs, conifer forests and small patches of grassland. The agricultural potential of the area is represented by occasional pasturelands and areas of natural vegetation. The current land uses include small-scale farms, livestock production, commercial forestry and interspersed rural housing.

A map was presented which highlighted the designated sites in closest proximity to the proposed wind farm site.

The prospective applicant said the EIAR is currently being prepared and it is expected to submit a planning application for the proposed development in June 2023.

Given the proposed output capacity in the region of 115MW, the prospective applicant said the threshold set out in the 7th Schedule of the Act would be exceeded and therefore qualify as SID.

Discussion

The following matters were discussed:

- The Board's representatives stated their preliminary opinion on the basis of the documentation that has been submitted and the presentation details is that the proposed development would constitute strategic infrastructure development but noted that the ultimate decision is a matter for the Board.

- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said their consultant ecologist has met with the NPWS and a meeting is scheduled with Mayo County Council in the coming weeks.
- The Board's representatives sought clarity in relation to the number of wind turbines proposed, whether it consists of 31 or 32 turbines. The prospective applicant said the final number has not yet been decided and landowner engagement is ongoing. The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to include any layout changes within any future closure request or be highlighted in the event of the second meeting, and that the pre-application consultation should not be closed until the layout and number of turbines had been finalised. The prospective applicant confirmed clarification will be provided in relation to the number of turbines and the tip heights of each.
- In relation to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said the main reasons for different tip heights (125 metres and 180 metres) within the proposed development are set back distances from residential dwellings, landowner requests, landscape designations and to ensure the proposed development is consistent with extant wind turbines located in the wider area.
- The prospective applicant said detailed constraints were applied in selecting the turbine locations. These constraints included ecology, geohydrology, watercourses, peat conditions, archaeology, telecommunications and residential dwellings. Additionally, it was noted that a separate part of the site (to the northwest) which was originally under consideration was subsequently excluded due to potential archaeological impacts.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said approximately 20-25 landowners are involved in the proposed development.
- The prospective applicant said informal consultations have been held with the local community (mainly door-to-door), and including the landowners involved. A community liaison officer has also been appointed and a public consultation event is expected in late April/early May 2023. The Board's representatives stressed the importance of good communication with the local community.

- The prospective applicant said that a minimum of 2 years of bird surveys have been/ are being undertaken for the entire site, with some areas of the site being surveyed for longer, and no significant findings have been made. It hopes to include elements of biodiversity gain as part of the proposed development and said this will be included in the planning application.
- In relation to the site characteristics, the prospective applicant said it consists mainly of a mix of peat, improved grassland, and forestry. It was noted that a peat stability management plan will be submitted as part of the planning application.
- The prospective applicant said they are currently reviewing the level of peat to be managed on the site and whether peat repository areas need to be identified. It said side casting will be utilised where possible. The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to incorporate the management of the borrow pit into the traffic management plan as public roads are proposed to be used to draw material to the various turbine cluster locations.
- The Board also reminded the prospective applicant of the implications of the Derryadd High Court judgement regarding details of the proposed development, particularly regarding turbine and foundation sizes and specifications, having particular regard to the two turbine types/heights proposed. The prospective applicant proposes to submit exact specifications in relation to the proposed turbines.
- In response to a query from the Board, the prospective applicant said the grid connection is expected to form part of the planning application.
- The Board's representatives reminded the prospective applicant to be cognisant of the sensitive landscape of the area, its proximity to the Wild Atlantic Way and the potential visual impacts on the scenic route to the north.
- With regard to wind energy policy as set out in the county development plan, the Board's representatives advised that a very strong location-specific justification would be required to justify the principle of positioning wind turbines

outside the areas identified within the Mayo Renewable Energy Strategy (i.e. Tier 1/Tier 2 areas).

- In relation to the underground cable, the Board's representatives advised that careful consideration would be required for the crossing of Palmerstown Bridge. A methodology for crossing of the bridge and full suite of mitigation should be included with any application.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to consider the cumulative impacts and in-combination effects with other proposed developments in the area, such as Sheskin Wind Farm (ABP-315933-23) and Oweninny Wind Farm Phase 3 (ABP-316178-23) among others.
- The prospective applicant said the haul route is currently under consideration, but it is expected to approach from Killala and cross over Palmerstown Bridge, before arriving onto the site. The Palmerstown bridge is the main pinch point on the route, and this is currently being assessed. The Board representatives highlighted the potential amenity impacts on Palmerstown Bridge arising from works related to the haul route and that these would be assessed.

Conclusion

The record of the meeting will issue to the prospective applicant, and it will then be a matter for the prospective applicant to submit any comments on this if it wishes to do so. It will be a matter for the prospective applicant to revert to the Board if it requires a further meeting or if it wishes to close the pre-application consultation process.



Stephen Kay

Assistant Director of Planning

