



**An  
Bord  
Pleanála**

**Record of Meeting  
ABP-315916-23 1<sup>st</sup>  
meeting**

<b>Description</b>	ABP-315916-23 - Proposed development of a power plant comprising of a Combined Cycle Gas Turbine (CCGT) unit and an Open Cycle Gas Turbine (OCGT) unit, on land within the Derrygreenagh Bog group, Co. Offaly		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-application Consultation		
<b>1st / 2nd / 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Meeting		
<b>Venue</b>	Virtually by Microsoft Teams		
<b>Date</b>	12/05/2023	<b>Time</b>	11:00am -11:50am
<b>Representing An Bord Pleanála</b>			
Stephen Kay, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)			
Anthony Kelly, Planning Inspector			
Sarah Caulfield, Executive Officer		s.caulfield@pleanala.ie	01-8737287
<b>Representing the Prospective Applicant</b>			
Ed Barrett – Gravis Planning			
Sean Breslin – Gravis Planning			
Hugh Bannon – Bord na Mona			
Fintan Coyle – Bord na Mona			
Sean Creedon – Bord na Mona			
Peter O'Connor - AECOM			
Janette Simpson - AECOM			

## **Introduction:**

A representative of the Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 24<sup>th</sup> February 2023, requesting pre-application consultations and advised the prospective applicant that the instant meeting essentially constituted an information-gathering exercise for the Board. The representative 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's representative 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 proposed development consists of a power plant development comprising a Combined Cycle Gas Turbine (CCGT) unit and an Open Cycle Gas Turbine (OCGT) unit, grid connection, and associated buildings and infrastructure on land within the Derrygreenagh bog group in Co. Offaly.

Planning permission was previously granted by An Bord Pleanála under SID legislation in 2010 (An Bord Pleanála reference: 19.PA0011) for a 600MW power plant development including CCGT and OCGT units. No grid connection was permitted as part of this permission. The duration of this consent was extended by Offaly County Council in 2019, and will expire in April 2025.

New consent is required to facilitate connection to the national grid and for updated plant to comply with Best Available Techniques (BAT) for Large Combustion Plant CID(EU)2021/2326 and for long term project sustainability.

The proposed development includes a 710MW Power Plant, comprised of CCGT (approx. 570MW) and OCGT (approx. 140MW), a 220kV substation located to the west of the R400, a 220kV overhead line/below ground cable connecting to the existing 400kV transmission line, located approximately 7 kilometres to the south and a 220/400kV substation at the entry point to the transmission network.

Connection to the gas network will be facilitated by way of an Above Ground Installation (AGI) within the power plant site. A new pipeline connection to the existing high-pressure gas transmission line, which runs approximately 8 kilometres to the north of the site, will be subject to a separate consent by Gas Networks Ireland, under section 39A of the Gas Act. The prospective applicant said that while the gas connection will not form part of this application, it will be fully assessed as part of the overall project within the EIAR.

The prospective applicant presented a number of drawings which highlighted the site layout and the locations of the existing high pressure gas line to the north and the 400kV overhead line network to the south.

The prospective applicant said there are currently two preferred routes for the gas connection to the existing high-pressure line, one to the northeast and the other to the northwest. It was stated that options for connection to the gas network will be outlined and fully assessed within the EIAR.

The grid connection is proposed to run for approximately 7 kilometres to the south of the power plant site, to connect with the existing 400kV transmission line by way of a new 220/400kV substation.

The need for the development centres around the increased growth in energy demand, to provide security of supply of energy, and to facilitate the replacement of older, less efficient conventional technology. It was noted that to power a net zero future, there is a requirement for gas-fired power stations in support of a high variable renewable electricity system as part of the transition to carbon net zero emissions by 2050. The prospective applicant referred to Circular Letter PL12/2021 which states that new conventional generation including gas fired generation is a national priority and should be prioritised as much as possible.

The prospective applicant presented several slides detailing the specific elements of the proposed development, including the CCGT, OCGT, Air Cooled Condenser, storage tanks and water treatment plant and the proposed substation.

It was submitted that the proposed development is supported by local, regional, and national policy, referencing The National Planning Framework, Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, Climate Action Plan 2023, Offaly and Westmeath County Development Plans, in addition to Circular Letter PL12/2021.

The prospective applicant said given the impending national hydrogen strategy, the plant design will enable the future transition to hydrogen use, if required.

Regarding the SID status of the proposed development, the prospective applicant stated that the proposed development exceeds the threshold listed in the Seventh Schedule being 'A thermal power station or other combustion installation with a total energy output of 300 megawatts or more' and stated that the proposed development meets all three of the criteria set out under section 37(A)(2) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.

The prospective applicant said they are of the opinion that the grid connection is ancillary to the proposed power plant and therefore a single SID application incorporating the grid connection is their preferred option.

It was stated that the application will be accompanied by an EIAR and NIS.

In relation to public consultation, the prospective applicant said three community consultation events were held in late March 2023 and were attended by approximately 150 people. The main issues raised include the grid connection, gas connection, community benefit, employment opportunities, and local road conditions. Door-to-door consultations were held with approximately 750 people which also included the distribution of information booklets. Follow-up consultations are expected prior to submitting the application.

A meeting was held with the EPA on the 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and engagement is ongoing.

The prospective applicant confirmed that a community benefit fund will be included as part of the proposed development.

The prospective applicant said it expects to lodge the application in September 2023.

## **Discussion**

The following matters were discussed:

- 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.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said the site will be subject to an IPC license and consultations are ongoing with the EPA in this regard. Additionally, it noted that there is an existing license on the site for historical peat extraction.

- The Board's representative referred to Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations and queried whether consultations had taken place with the Health & Safety Authority (HSA). The prospective applicant said they hope to engage with the HSA prior to submitting the application and said a full Land Use Risk Assessment will be submitted.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said there will be a requirement for some peat/soil excavation to facilitate the development and said this will be fully addressed within the EIAR. These excavations would primarily relate to the grid connection element of the project. Site investigations are currently ongoing in this regard.
- With regard to the proposed grid connection, the Board representatives noted the contents of s.182A / B of the Planning and Development Act and advised the prospective applicant to obtain their own legal opinion with regard to the proposed inclusion of the grid connection as part of any application.
- The prospective applicant said there is provision for a future carbon capture and storage plant to be developed at the site but that this would not form part of the planning application.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said the grid connection would follow the disused Bord na Mona light railway line to the south, under the public road and into the proposed substation site.
- The prospective applicant said a wastewater treatment plant will be located on the proposed site. Various assessments are ongoing in this regard.
- In relation to site access, the prospective applicant said topographical surveys are currently ongoing, but it is anticipated that the entrance to the south will remain as it is. A new entrance will be required for the AGI, located in the north of the site. The access requirements to the proposed 220kV substation to the west are currently under consideration.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to clearly distinguish in the documentation the specific elements that are being submitted

to the Board for approval under SID legislation (or to Offaly Co. Co. in the event it is not deemed to be SID) and the elements relevant to Gas Networks Ireland under the Gas Act to ensure there is no ambiguity in what is being submitted to which competent authority.

- In relation to water requirements, the prospective applicant said the previous planning application sought to utilise on-site bore holes to source water. Assessments are currently ongoing to verify whether the same approach can be used for the proposed development given the increase in the proposed installed capacity. It said there was a yield of 630 cubic metres per day on the consented application.
- In relation to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said a full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment will be submitted including photomontages from several viewpoints in the surrounding area.
- The prospective applicant said an EIA scoping document is expected to be issued imminently to several statutory consultees. Feedback received will be incorporated into the EIAR.
- The prospective applicant said a meeting is anticipated with Offaly County Council and Westmeath County Council in the coming weeks to discuss the proposed development. Initial consultations have been held with Offaly County Council.
- The Board's representatives highlighted the importance of consultation with the NPWS prior to submitting the planning application .
- In relation to a query on the matter, the Board's representatives said notification was not issued to Westmeath County Council (in relation to the gas element) on receipt of this pre-application consultation request as the elements submitted under this request do not fall within the jurisdiction of Westmeath County Council.

- The Board's representatives stated that any minor amendments to the proposed development could be forwarded with the request to close the pre-application process.

## **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.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Stephen Kay", is written above a solid horizontal line.

**Stephen Kay**

**Assistant Director of Planning**