



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP- 315920-23 2nd meeting

Case Reference / Description	Proposed Development of Scart Mountain Windfarm at Scart Mountain at Approximately 4km northeast of Cappoquin, Co. Waterford.		
Case Type	Pre-Application Consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	2 nd		
Date	12 th September 2023	Start Time	2:30pm
Location	Virtually by Microsoft Teams	End Time	3:20pm

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Paul Caprini, Assistant Director of Planning
Pauline Fitzpatrick, Senior Planning Inspector
Ashling Doherty, Executive Officer
Lauren Murphy, Executive Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Emer Campbell, Future Energy Ireland
Sinead O'Malley, Future Energy Ireland
Louise Byrne, Tobin Consulting Engineers
Oonagh Fleming, Tobin Consulting Engineers
John Staunton, Tobin Consulting Engineers

The meeting commenced at 2:30pm

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 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.
- The Board will serve notice at the conclusion of the process. The Board may at any time conclude the consultation where it considers appropriate to do so.
- 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 any legal proceedings.

Presentation by the prospective applicant:

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

The project developer is the renewable energy divisions of Coillte and ESB transition to create a new standalone joint venture company in 2021, Future Energy Ireland. Their ambition is to develop more than 1GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030

and make a significant contribution to Ireland's commitment to produce 80% of electricity from renewable sources by the end of the decade.

The proposed site is located in West County Waterford just over 4km northeast of Cappoquin. The proposed windfarm will be built within a site that extends to approximately 970ha. The site is mostly under commercial forestry, with the remaining area privately owned. Site elevation ranges from 125m to 486m above sea level. The proposed development is located in a number of river catchments, including the Glenshelane River and Farnane river. These are tributaries of the Blackwater River which part of the Blackwater River (Cork/ Waterford) Special Area of Conservation (SAC). A Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will be prepared and submitted with the current application.

The proposed grid route runs for approximately 16km from the proposed windfarm site to the existing Dungarvin 110kV substation with the route being mostly along local and regional roads. Approximately 3km will be off road. There are approximately 5 stream crossings, but no instream works are proposed. The proposed grid connection route will be subject to a separate planning application (the subject of a separate pre-application consultation under reg. Ref. ABP 317824). It is proposed to submit both applications (ie the current Windfarm Application and the grid connection application) at the same time with the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) covering both.

A preliminary assessment was carried out to identify the most suitable turbine delivery route. The route from Bellevue Harbour, it considered to be the optimum route, is largely via national roads including the 25, N29 and N72.

The prospective applicant referenced the REPowerEU Plan – Council Regulation (EU) 2022/2027 which provides a framework to accelerate the development of renewable energy. Nationally there is a 51% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions needed over the decade to 2030 and net zero emissions by 2050. The proposed windfarm would significantly contribute towards this over 35 years.

Objective UTL 13 of the Waterford City and County Development Plan 2022-2028 is noted. They noted that the proposed development site was previously "open for consideration" in the previous Waterford County Development Plan 2011-2017 Wind Energy Strategy Map. The prospective applicant feels the proposed windfarm zoning

has changed from positive to negative designation despite there being no change in the underlying environmental assets. The project will provide for 15 turbines ,2 no. temporary construction compounds, 110kV electrical onsite substation, new site roads and upgraded road with 2 no. onsite river/stream crossing. A limited range of turbine parameters are to be put forward. The electrical output of between 85.5-99MW will exceed the threshold of 50MW.

The prospective applicant gave an update on the public consultation undertaken to date and outlined that 3 newsletters have been distributed to local residents. There is an active website which provides the latest information and updates on the proposed development. An online webinar was held in August 2023 which included a Q&A session. There are also 2 dedicated community liaison officers assigned to the proposed development.

The prospective applicant outlined that a number of biodiversity surveys have been carried out including detailed ecological and habitat surveys. In terms of landscape and visual impact, there will be a 20km study area based on the potential 185m turbine tip height with over 30 selected viewshed reference points from a range of view angles, distances, and receptor types. The assessment will include landscape and visual policy from both counties Waterford and Tipperary.

The prospective applicants are proposing to submit the application in winter 2023.

Discussion:

The Boards representatives highlighted that since the 1st pre-application meeting, an application has been lodged with the Board for a windfarm on the lands immediately a to the east (Dyrick Hill Windfarm). They emphasised the importance of a robust assessment of the in-combination and cumulative impacts. The Board's representatives expressed concerns regarding the county development plan policy context and the fact that site is in an area designated as "not suitable" for wind energy. A robust analysis and reasoning for the proposal in view of the development plan designation will be required. The prospective applicant stated they have had some engagement with Waterford City and County Council with respect to technical aspects.

The Board's representatives noted the importance of the development plan and that more recent case law suggests that national policy does not override development plan policy. The prospective applicant was advised to have regard to case law. The Board's representatives mentioned court judgments including *Brophy V ABP* [2015] and *Murtagh v ABP* [2023]. The prospective applicant discussed the Renewable Electricity Spatial Planning Framework which is due to be published this month their understanding is that targets will be allocated at a regional level. As per the Climate Action Plan, regional renewable electricity strategies will have to be prepared. The policy context landscape is set to change.

The prospective applicant has stated they will be submitting a planning statement outside of the EIAR providing clear justification for the proposed development and its location.

The prospective applicant confirmed they have been in contact with the NPWS to which they have received feedback. The Board's representatives recommend further discussions with the NPWS including discussions on Annex 1 Habitat.

The prospective applicant confirmed that bats have been recorded on site, but no roosts have been identified. The Board's representatives highlighted the importance of covering the issue of Barotrauma in the EIAR.

The prospective applicant confirmed they will be submitting a peat stability report. The Board's representatives stated that it must be addressed comprehensively in the EIAR.

The Board's representatives emphasised the importance of using the correct, precise and definitive language in the NIS.

The Board's representative initial opinion is that the proposed application is a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID), but it is at the Board's discretion to issue a final decision.

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 onus is on the prospective applicant to either request a further meeting.

The meeting concluded at 3:20pm

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. Caprani', is written over a horizontal line.

Paul Caprani

Assistant Director of Planning