



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 1st Meeting ABP-317275-23

Case Reference / Description	ABP-317275-23 - 110kV Substation, grid connection and associated site works located within the townlands of Mihanboy, Cuillen, and Monksland, Athlone, Co. Roscommon.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	1 st		
Date	03/08/2023	Start Time	11:00 a.m.
Location	Virtually	End Time	11:40 a.m.

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Staff Members
Paul Caprani, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Karla McBride, Senior Planning Inspector
Niamh Hickey, Executive Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Tommy Harlin, MKO
John Willoughby, MKO
James McDermott, EDF Renewables
Aoife Sedgwick, EDF Renewables
Kevin McKeown, EDF Renewables

Introduction

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 6th June 2023, requesting pre-application consultations under section 182E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, 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's representatives 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 made by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant gave a brief overview of the company EDF Renewables. It is involved in many projects in Ireland, both onshore and offshore. It provided 28MW of renewable energy last year into the Irish grid. The prospective applicant also gave a summary of the background into the proposed development, its purpose is to facilitate the connection of the consented TDC Community Solar Park to the national grid. The TDC Community Solar Farm was granted permission by Roscommon County Council in 2020 with an extension being granted in 2022. It was also granted permission for a Battery Energy Storage System by Roscommon County Council in 2023. A previous pre-application for a similar substation was submitted under case reference number ABP-310846-21 to An Bord Pleanála and was determined to constitute a strategic infrastructure development. However, due to feasibility issues the proposed development required a location change which has resulted in the new pre-application for the proposed development.

The prospective applicant demonstrated the two grid routes being considered on the submitted map which are approximately 4.6km. Both routes are being assessed to ensure the most suitable route is chosen. The prospective applicant stated that it will be using a service road adjacent to the M6 road. The proposed site is located to the south-east of the TDC Community Solar Park and adjacent to the Battery Energy Storage System. It also pointed out the location of the previously proposed substation on the map.

The prospective applicant demonstrated the layout of the proposed development on the submitted plan.

The proposed site will be accessed through the TDC Community Solar Farm. An internal road which links the Battery Energy Storage System facility to the Solar Farm will also be used to access the substation. It is proposed to widen the site

entrance to enable the delivery of abnormal loads and additional widening in sections along the consented access track may also be required. The prospective applicant stated that swept path analysis and auto tracking assessments are currently ongoing.

The prospective applicant provided an overview of the context of the project at European, national, regional and local level and described how each relevant policy supports the implementation of the proposed development. The prospective applicant talked about the importance of renewable energy projects which aid emission reduction targets and renewable energy targets. It also discussed the Climate Action Plan 2023.

The prospective applicant provided a list of documents that are proposed to form part of the application so far. It provided a timeline of the application and stated that it plans to submit an application in Q4 of 2023.

The prospective applicant gave their opinion that the proposed development would likely constitute a strategic infrastructure development.

Discussion:

- The Board's representative advised the prospective applicant to have up to date surveys and data.
- The prospective applicant confirmed that there were no objections or appeals on the Battery Energy Storage System application.
- In response to a query from the Board's representative, the prospective applicant confirmed that the grid connection route is the same as the previous pre-application grid connection route.
- The Board's representative noted the proximity of the River Shannon Callows SPA and SAC to the proposed site. It also noted that the grid connection route

will traverse the River Cross and advised that Appropriate Assessment screening will be required. They also advised a Natura Impact Statement may be needed. The prospective applicant stated that it intends to carry out Horizontal Directional Drilling under the riverbed.

- The Board's representative advised the prospective applicant to carry out Otter surveys as there are several watercourses and drainage ditches in the area of the proposed site. The Board's representative also mentioned that this species is a Qualifying Interest for the River Shannon Callows SAC.
- The Board's representative highlighted the issue of hedgerow removal and advised the prospective applicant to estimate the loss of hedgerow removal and to find a replacement for this.
- The Board's representative queried the widening of the site entrance off the local road and the internal access road. The prospective applicant stated that it intends to widen the access further to what was previously permitted. It also stated it is looking to widen the internal access road from 3.5m to 4.5m. The Board's representative advised to make sure all of this is reflected in the Archaeology report.
- The Board's representative highlighted the importance of consulting with Roscommon County Council and the prescribed bodies, in particular the NPWS.
- The Board's representative gave their preliminary view that the proposed development presented does appear to be in line with the requirements of section 182A of the Act, however it was pointed out it is for the Board to decide if the application meets the criteria set out in section 182A of the Act.

Conclusion:

The Board's representatives advised that onus is on the prospective applicant to either request a further meeting or formal closure of the instant pre-application consultation process. The Board's representatives advised that the record of the instant meeting will be issued in the meantime and that 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.



Paul Caprani

Assistant Director of Planning