

An  
Bord  
Pleanála

**Record of Meeting**  
**ABP- 317307-23**  
**1<sup>st</sup> meeting**

<b>Case Reference / Description</b>	Windfarm development of up to 13 no. wind turbines and associated works within the townlands of Beagh More, Cloonber, Cloonnaglasha, Cloonsheen, Cloonteen, Corillaun, Derrymore, Shancloon, Toberroe and Tonacooleen, Co. Galway.		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-Application Consultation		
<b>1st / 2nd / 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting</b>	1 <sup>st</sup>		
<b>Date</b>	4 <sup>th</sup> September 2023	<b>Start Time</b>	11:00am
<b>Location</b>	Virtually by Microsoft Teams	<b>End Time</b>	12:25pm

**Representing An Bord Pleanála**

Paul Caprani, Assistant Director of Planning

Una O'Neill, Senior Planning Inspector

Ashling Doherty, Executive Officer

**Representing the Prospective Applicant**

Rita Mansfield, Fehily Timoney

Anthony Ryan, Fehily Timoney

Matt Gerathy, RWE

Clionna O'Sullivan, RWE

Michael James, RWE

The meeting commenced at 11:00am

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.
- 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:**

The main issues raised in the presentation are summarised as follows:

RWE has been in Ireland since 2016 and RWE's global portfolio is based on offshore and onshore wind, solar, hydropower, hydrogen, batteries, biomass and gas. Focusing on wind energy, solar power and battery storage in Ireland, RWE's ambition is to be carbon neutral by 2040.

The proposed development will consist of up to 13 wind turbines with a maximum tip height of 180m and the power rating currently on the market is being examined with a large range of megawatt outputs available. 3 turbine models will be examined and assessed in the prospective application to be submitted. The exact maximum export capacity will be dependent on the final windfarm design. The proposed development will also consist of new tracks and upgrading of existing tracks along with ancillary infrastructure. The wind regime in the area where the site is situated is good and lands are available to alter the location of the turbines should it be necessary.

Having regard to the proposed development's location, it is approximately 8km northwest of Tuam and it is 3.5km to the east of Shrule. The grid connection into the Galway-Dalton 110kV overhead line is proposed. The applicant is currently looking at land parcels around the proposed site and is also having on-going discussions with landowners in the area.

The proposed turbine delivery route is via the R332, the local Castlegrove Road into the site. Most of the turbine delivery route will be via M6 motorway from Galway Port. There are currently constraints assessments and traffic surveys being carried out along the local roads that will be used as the delivery route. The turbine array layout was detailed the map presented with delivery and construction being considered at the east of the proposed development site.

The prospective applicant discussed the rationale and policy context and referred to the Climate Action Plan 2023, Galway County Development Plan 2023-2028 and Galway and Mayo Renewable Energy Strategies.

The prospective applicant discussed the existing environment and associated constraints. Each of the turbines will achieve a setback of 4 times tip height ie. 720 metres from the nearest occupied dwelling. There are approximately 50 properties

within 1km of the proposed turbine array. A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) is being carried out as part of the EIA which has identified 16 key vantage point locations within the area. The applicant has engaged with Galway County Council and sought comments in relation to the photomontages taken. A preliminary noise assessment has been carried out with further assessments ongoing. Having regard to the noise criteria, only 1 receptor exceeds the night-time criteria which is 43dB while a number of properties are affected by the noise exceeding daytime criteria. Turbine curtailment will be implemented where needed.

The site occupies lands with a variety of habitats and includes an extensive area of forestry in the wider environment mixed with peat, raised bogs and agriculture. To the north of the proposed development site, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) have identified an area of active raised bogs. The presence of 'penny royal', an endangered plant species, is located outside of the proposed site. As part of the aquatic surveys carried out, there is also a presence of Canadian pondweed throughout the proposed site to which the Office of Public Works (OPW) are aware of. A bird survey has recently been completed while the bat surveys are currently ongoing. Bat corridors have been identified on foot of the surveys, and the prospective applicant will provide an appropriate setback in terms of turbine location. A collision risk module is being developed as part of the proposed application which may influence the exact location of the turbines. An extensive aquatic survey has been carried out.

The prospective applicant has carried out extensive geotechnical assessments at the proposed site, these indicated possible karstified limestone on site. After further extensive ground investigations were completed, it was confirmed to be surface subsidence only. Bedrock was confirmed to be 'medium strong' to 'significantly strong' with subsidence features (dolines) observed on site limited to overburden deposits overlying the bedrock. Due to the presence of peat, the prospective applicant proposes to pile the foundations. An extensive geotechnical assessment and peat stability risk assessment will also be carried out. Floating roads will be constructed along areas of deep peat, as to not interfere with the ground conditions. A baseline flood risk assessment has been carried out on the lands which has indicated there is flooding in the area of the proposed development. As part of the

project, the prospective applicant will hold discussions with the OPW with a view of upgrading any culverts at roads crossings which currently impede flow.

The prospective applicant will also carry out a shadow flicker assessment and will examine any material assets including any impact on utilities. The cable connecting the substation will be laid a minimum of 0.75m below the existing ground surface. Horizontal directional drilling or dry deck construction should be employed at cable watercourse crossings.

Having regard to scoping and consultations, public consultation begun in April 2023 with a letter drop to 221 homes within 2km of the proposed development. When locations of turbines, site infrastructure, access routes etc. are finalised a further letter drop and door to door consultation will take place. Prior to submitting the planning application, it is proposed to hold a drop-in clinic over a number of days at a local venue to allow stakeholders to discuss final plans with the wider development team and consultants.

#### **Discussion:**

The Board's representatives emphasised the importance of submitting a robust EIAR and also to engage with Galway County Council, Mayo County Council, prescribed bodies and in particular the NPWS.

The Board sought clarity in relation to biodiversity and what surveys have been completed to date. It also emphasised the importance of when the surveys are carried out and to highlight any limitations, and to be clear about the methodology particularly in relation to birds, with consultation in this regard with NPWS important. A full invasive species management plan should also be submitted.

The prospective applicant clarified that to date 3 walkover surveys the entire site has been carried out and mapped in regard to habitats. A high-level walkover for mammals has been carried out but the final mammal survey will not be completed until they have a final turbine layout has been agreed.

The Board's representatives emphasised the importance of the EIAR identifying and assessing the impact on bats and in particular barotrauma. The prospective applicant stated they have identified the key bat habitats in the area and are setting back the proposed turbines accordingly.

The Board's representatives emphasised the importance of carrying out a robust peat stability report and sought clarity if borrow pits would be used. The prospective applicant clarified that due to the depth of the peat it is unlikely they will use on-site borrow pits. They will have a soil management plan prepared as part of the EIA, and as they are using floating roads it will limit the amount of peat disturbance.

The Board's representatives sought clarity on Galway having the capacity to accept the turbines and to engage with TII with regards haulage routes. The prospective applicant confirmed they are confident for Galway Port to accept the turbines. Galway Port have carried out a detailed analysis and have provided information stating it can deliver the proposed turbines.

The Board's representatives raised the importance of Derryad Judgement, and that each turbine type to be considered as part of the proposal is assessed in the EIAR. It is important that members of the public have a clear understanding of the proposed development and its implications.

The Board's representatives raised the importance that photomontages cover any tourist or historic sites in the area of the proposed development.

The Board's representatives emphasised the importance of clearly highlighting in the wind analysis that a curtailment will need to be applied if there is a noise exceedance for some of the dwellings in the area.

The prospective applicant highlighted that an archaeological assessment has been carried out and the proposal has been designed to avoid any known archaeological features.

The Board's representatives sought clarity in relation to the sites surface hydrology and the water quality of the watercourses in and surrounding the site.

The Board's representatives advised that any EIAR submitted should include an analysis of the carbon losses and gains that can be attributed to the proposed development.

On foot of a question posed by the Board, the prospective applicant confirmed that a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will be submitted as part of the proposed application.

The Board's representatives sought clarity if the footprint of the proposed wind turbines were outside the active raised bog area. The prospective applicant confirmed that one turbine will be located on the border of the active raised bog, however a detailed drainage assessment will be undertaken to ensure that any impact is minimised. Furthermore, a detail archaeological assessment has been undertaken and the prospective applicants are confident that the bog in question does not qualify as an active raised bog.

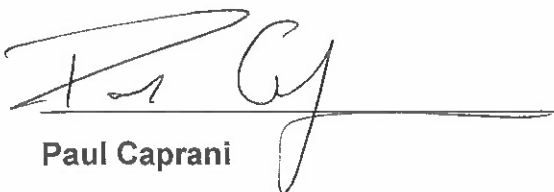
The Board's representative advised the prospective applicant to avoid the raised bog if possible, in the construction of the turbine foundations.

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.

**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 12:25pm

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

**Paul Caprani**

**Assistant Director of Planning**

