



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of Meeting ABP-317307-23

<b>Case Reference / Description</b>	Wind Farm 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>1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Meeting		
<b>Date</b>	10/11/2023	<b>Start Time</b>	10:30am
<b>Location</b>	MS Teams	<b>End Time</b>	11:15am

<b>Representing An Bord Pleanála</b>
Paul Caprani, Assistant Planning Director - Chair
Una O'Neill, Senior Planning Inspector
Lauren Murphy, Executive Officer

<b>Representing the Prospective Applicant</b>
Matt Geraghty, Fehily Timoney Consultants
Brian Cronin, Fehily Timoney Consultants

## **Introduction**

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023, requesting pre-application consultations under section 37B 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 provided the Board with a brief overview of what the presentation will consist of.

The prospective applicant began by giving an overview of the proposed development. The prospective applicant stated that since the first pre-application

meeting with the Board, the proposed development has changed and will now consist of 11 wind turbines as opposed to 12-13 wind turbines.

The prospective applicant stated that the proposed wind turbines will have a tip height of 180m and a potential power rating of between 6.0MW and 6.6MW. The prospective applicant stated that the proposed development will also consist of new tracks and upgrades to existing tracks along with ancillary civil and electrical infrastructure.

The prospective applicant discussed the location of the proposed development which is set to be located 8km northwest of Tuam and 3.5km east of Shrule. The prospective applicant presented a map where the blue area marked shows the turbine development area, while the red area presented on the map is the study area.

The prospective applicant indicated the location of the proposed grid connection and turbine delivery route. The prospective applicant stated that the previously presented Turbine 13 has been omitted due to land ownership reasons.

The prospective applicant presented a site location map of the proposed development site and stated that the location of Turbine 1 will be positioned slightly south to remove it from a potential flood zone. It stated that the existing bridge located on the river will be reinforced as it will be used as an access track for the proposed development.

The prospective applicant stated that they conducted extensive peat probing within the site and located a large area of peat of significant depth. This will necessitate piling the foundations of some turbines. The prospective applicant also indicated the area proposed to be used as a spoil management area.

The prospective applicant completed a site walkover of the site in conjunction with the Office of Public Works (OPW). The proposed location of Turbine 12 is situated on the periphery of Clonbore Bog, the prospective applicant stated that continuous engagement with the National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) is taking place to ensure any potential biodiversity issues are addressed.

The prospective applicant indicated the location of the proposed substation.

The prospective applicant gave an overview of the Climate Action Plan 2023. The proposed development is stated to have the potential to provide approximately

73MW of renewable electricity. This represents 1.1% of the 6GW national onshore target for 2025. The prospective applicant stated that the proposed development could power 41,300-45,500 Irish homes.

The prospective applicant discussed the local policy context of Galway County Council Development Plan 2022-2028. It also discussed the Galway and Mayo renewable Energy strategies.

The prospective applicant stated that the proposed development includes 11 wind turbines with individual power outputs of between 6.0MW and 6.6MW. This exceeds the 50 MW threshold and as such the prospective applicant believes the proposal would constitute SID.

The prospective applicant briefly discussed the local context. Legal discussions are taking place with 120 landowners approx. in the area. It is also stated that there are 50 properties within 1km of the proposed turbine array area.

The prospective applicant presented a site location map where the bog areas on the proposed development site are marked out in brown. The prospective applicant discussed that they have been in contact with the NPWS noting existing bog land proximate to Turbine 12 is significantly degraded.

The prospective applicant discussed the geotechnical considerations in relation to the proposed development. They stated that the maximum topographic ground level of the turbines is 43.5m above sea level. The prospective applicant presented their findings in relation to a geophysical investigation and stated that the land comprises soft peat underlain by silt/clay and limestone bedrock.

The prospective applicant gave details of their meetings with the OPW, and their findings include parts of the proposed development land being subject to historic flooding.

The prospective applicant stated that the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) scoping was completed in April 2023. They also briefly discussed their meetings held with Galway County Council, the NPWS and the OPW. The prospective applicant stated that they have been having some difficulty liaising with Mayo County Council.

The prospective applicant also discussed community engagement it has undertaken to date. They have called to properties within a 2km radius of the proposed site and are proposing to go back out to the community with the proposed turbine locations.

**Discussion:**

- The Board's representatives questioned if Turbines 4 and 5 are located slightly outside of the boundary. The prospective applicant stated that all works carried out will be within the red line boundary of the site. All plans will be reviewed.
- The Board's representatives recommended that when the prospective applicant decides to close the pre-application consultation that they submit a formal letter to the Board, stating that the capacity of the proposed development.
- The Board's representatives queried if the proposed development foundations will hit bedrock on the site. The prospective applicant stated that the foundation type they have chosen for this proposed development is a piled foundation which will go 7m to 18m deep across the proposed site.
- The Board's representatives recommended that a proper drainage study is completed as part of this proposed SID application.
- The Board's representatives queried if the prospective applicant met with Galway County Council to discuss this proposed development. The prospective applicant stated that Galway County Council were receptive to the idea of the proposed development, and they recommended that they engage with the Roads Department.
- The Board's representatives recommended they ensure full engagement with Galway County Council and the OPW. The Board's representatives stated how important it is that the applicant fully considers all comments and the policies within the development plan.
- The Board's representatives stated that the prospective applicant should ensure full consultation with the NPWS in relation to this proposed development.
- The Board's representatives stated that the applicant must ensure that their drawings are clearly laid out and displayed correctly, with the red line boundary correctly indicated.

- The Board's representatives questioned why the previous location of Turbine 13 has since been changed from the last pre-application meeting. The prospective applicant stated that the primary reason for the removal of the turbines was due to landownership and legal entitlement.
- The Board's representatives queried comments made by the NPWS. The prospective applicant stated that the NPWS are satisfied that the proposed development area consists of degraded bog land.
- The Board's representatives recommended that the prospective applicant carry out robust surveys for the EIAR, including Biodiversity surveys and consider fully cumulative impacts associated with this proposed development.
- The Board's representatives requested further information in respect of consultations with the NPWS in relation to birds foraging, breeding or nesting in the area. The prospective applicant stated that the comment made by the NPWS was that there is nothing significant that they are aware of in relation to bird species or migration patterns in this area. Nevertheless, the application will have all the information laid out to be assessed.
- The prospective applicant stated that the NPWS advised them to be aware of the Lough Corrib Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which are located downstream of the site.
- The Board's representatives queried if there will be a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) submitted with the application. The prospective applicant stated that an NIS will be submitted as part of this SID application to the Board.
- The Board's representatives recommended that the prospective applicant address flood risk impacts and impact of any potential flooding in the area on the proposed turbines.
- The Board's representatives reminded the prospective applicant to review the meeting record of the first pre-application meeting to ensure all areas are covered before submitting the planning application.
- The Board's representatives gave their preliminary opinion that, even though a turbine has been omitted from the layout, the proposed development consists of over 50MW overall output, and therefore the development would constitute

strategic infrastructure, but noted that the ultimate decision is a matter for the Board.

- The Board's representatives stated that the prospective applicant must consider the most up to date methodology of the draft Wind Energy Guidelines 2019 and stated that it is not good practice to rely solely on the standards set out Wind Energy Guidelines set out in 2006.
- The Board's representatives highlighted that it is in the prospective applicant's best interest to submit a very robust Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and NIS with the application, this ensures that all issues that may arise are highlighted and discussed within the application.

**Conclusion:**

The Board's representatives advised that the 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.

The Meeting concluded at 11:15.



**Paul Caprani**

**Assistant Director of Planning**