

An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting ABP-317395-23

<b>Case Reference / Description</b>	ABP-317395-23 - Proposed development of 110kV substation and 110kV underground electricity cable to facilitate the connection of the proposed Dernacart Windfarm to the national grid at the consented Bracklone 110kV substation located within a rural area in North County Laois c3km northwest of Mountmellick town.		
<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>	1 <sup>st</sup>		
<b>Date</b>	20/07/2023	<b>Start Time</b>	11:00 a.m.
<b>Location</b>	Virtually	<b>End Time</b>	11:30 a.m.

<b>Representing An Bord Pleanála</b>
Stephen Kay, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Liam Bowe, Planning Inspector
Niamh Hickey, Executive Officer

<b>Representing the Prospective Applicant</b>
Rory O'Brien, Statkraft
Alice Power, Statkraft
Paddy Curran, MWP
Caitriona Fox, MWP

## **Introduction**

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 16<sup>th</sup> 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 proposed development, which comprises a 110kV substation and a 110kV underground electricity cable which will facilitate the connection of the proposed Dernacart Wind Farm to the national grid at the consented Bracklone 110kV substation. The proposed 110kV substation is to replace the 110kV windfarm substation currently under consideration as part of the planning application with the Board under Reference Number ABP-310312-21. The proposed development is a 15.4km underground grid line which extends from the site of the proposed Dernacart windfarm to the consented Bracklone 110kV substation.

The prospective applicant showed the two locations being considered for the relocation of the proposed substation on the submitted map. It also pointed out the proposed substation is currently with the Board for consideration as part of the Dernacart wind farm application.

The prospective applicant demonstrated the grid route on the submitted map.

The prospective applicant gave a brief background into the Dernacart Windfarm and grid connection. It is a proposed development of 8 number wind turbines and a 110kV substation. The requirements from EirGrid have changed since the planning application was submitted, resulting in the sizing of the substation no longer being adequate which is the reason behind the relocation options for the proposed substation. In a previous pre application consultation in advance of the submission of the windfarm application the proposed Dernacart Grid Connection was determined to not fall within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 as amended, (ABP Ref. 307022). The prospective applicant stated that a slightly shorter grid connection route has been identified relative to the indicative grid connection routes set out in the EIAR submitted as part of the wind farm application.

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

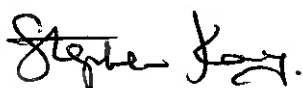
**Discussion:**

- In response to a question from the Boards representatives, the prospective applicant estimated that it should be able to select the optimal substation in approximately 4-6 weeks as it is considering factors such as land ownership. The prospective applicant also stated that the topographical survey will be able to assist with the decision. The Board's representative advised that it should have a clearly defined project and provide clarity on the chosen substation before requesting closure of the pre-application.
- The prospective applicant stated that the revisions to the substation arise as EirGrid requires a new layout which will result in a larger footprint. A future expansion area is also required.
- In response to questions from the Boards representatives, the prospective applicants clarified that the windfarm application included a 110kv substation on the site and that indicative grid connection options connecting this on-site substation to the permitted Bracklone 110KV substation were set out and assessed in the EIAR submitted. The prospective applicant also clarified that the revised substation locations presented with the current pre application consultation were either wholly or partially outside of the red line boundary of the wind farm site.
- The Board's representatives sought confirmation from the prospective applicant there would be no instream works and, therefore, no potential for water pollution in either of the streams. The prospective applicant confirmed there are no instream works proposed.
- The Board's representative highlighted the importance of consulting with the NPWS, Inland Fisheries Ireland and the local road's authorities.

- The prospective applicant stated that it plans to screen for EIA to show that there would be no likely significant effects on the environment. The Board's representative gave their opinion that an EIAR would likely be required. The prospective applicant queried if they could add the updated changes into the original EIAR for the proposed Dernacart windfarm when submitting the application, the Board's representative advised that this should be sufficient and that if they have any further suggestions on the matter, they can update the prospective applicant. The Board's representatives advised the cumulative impact assessment must be comprehensive.
- The Board's representative gave their preliminary view that the proposed development presented today 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.



---

**Stephen Kay**

**Assistant Director of Planning**

## **Post Meeting Note**

With regard to EIA, the prospective applicant is advised to satisfy itself that the EIA for the proposed windfarm captures all cumulative impacts arising from the changes proposed in the development the subject of this pre application consultation. As set out in the record above, and as advised at the meeting, given the nature and location of the proposed amendments to the previously indicated substation and grid connection, the Boards representatives are of the opinion that an EIA is likely required to accompany any application for the revised substation and grid connection. Such an EIAR would need to assess the likely significant effects on the environment arising from the substation and grid connection the subject of this pre application consultation plus relevant cumulative impacts including those arising from the wind farm development.