

An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting
ABP-317395-23
2nd meeting

Case Reference / Description	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.		
Case Type	VC		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	2 nd Meeting		
Date	23/10/23	Start Time	11:00am
Location	MS	End Time	11:40am

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Stephen Kay, Assistant Director of Planning
Liam Bowe, Senior Planning Inspector
Lauren Murphy, Executive Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Rory O'Brien, Statkraft
Claire Walsh, Statkraft
Caitriona Fox, MWP
Paddy Curran, MWP

The meeting commenced at 11:00am.

Presentation:

The prospective applicant gave an overview of the proposed development, stating that it is intended to facilitate a connection between Demacart Windfarm in Co. Laois and the consented Bracklone 110kV substation in Portarlington, Co. Laois.

The prospective applicant presented a map with the route of the proposed 110kv substation and connector cables.

The prospective applicant discussed the development background. They stated that due to changes in EirGrid requirements since the submission of a planning application for a windfarm at Demacart the sizing of the substation compound was no longer adequate and requires a larger footprint.

The prospective applicant stated that the proposed development of 110kV grid connection cable as presented at the first pre application consultation meeting was located within a series of local and regional road networks extending 15.4km west to east from the proposed site of Demacart windfarm to the consented Bracklone substation in Portarlington, Co. Laois. The prospective applicant stated that this represented a slight change to the indicative grid connection presented as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report. The prospective applicant also gave a brief overview of the relocated substation options and grid route which were shown in the first pre-application meeting with An Bord Pleanála.

The prospective applicant then presented the development changes since the first pre-application meeting. The prospective applicant stated that due to the inability to secure landowner consent for the construction of the proposed substation a new alternative location for the substation is being proposed approximately 2.7km to the east / south east of the windfarm site. The prospective applicant stated that the new alternative substation location will require the provision of a collector cable from the windfarm to the substation which will be installed underground through agricultural and forestry lands.

The prospective applicant also highlighted that due to the proposed new alternative substation option the overall length of the proposed underground 110kV electrical

cable from the proposed Demacart Windfarm substation to the permitted Bracklone Substation has been reduced in length from 15.4km to 10.5km.

The prospective applicant presented a drawing comparing the original proposed substation and grid connection to the updated proposed substation location and grid connection.

The prospective applicant discussed the stage where they are at in relation to consultation periods. The prospective applicant said that they have undertaken or sought consultations with Laois County Council Roads Department, Offaly County Council Roads Department, the National Parks and Wildlife Services, and Inland Fisheries Ireland. The prospective applicant has stated that there has been no feedback to date received from the above-mentioned consultees.

The prospective applicant proposed that they are under the opinion that the proposed 110kV substation and associated interconnector windfarm collector cable and the 110kV underground electricity cable falls within Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended and is therefore strategic infrastructure development.

The prospective applicant presented questions for the Board regarding the SID status of the substation and collector cable and separately the grid connector cable between the proposed Demacart and consented Bracklone sub stations.

Discussion:

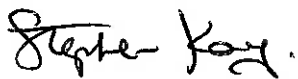
- In response to a question from the prospective applicants, the Board's representatives gave their opinion that the proposed development as amended should not be subdivided and would be considered as a single development with regard to its SID status. The Boards representatives stated that their preliminary opinion was that the proposed development comprising the connection between the proposed Demacart Windfarm and permitted Bracklone sub station and including a proposed new 110kv sub station would likely constitute strategic infrastructure development but noted that this is a decision for the Board.

- With regard to EIA, the prospective applicant stated that it was their intention to prepare an EIAR to accompany an application for the development. The Board's representatives recommended that the prospective applicant should satisfy themselves whether the environmental impacts of the overall project comprising wind farm, revised substation location and grid connection have been fully considered in the EIAR submitted with the Dernacart Windfarm application. The Board's representatives advised that the submission of an amended version of the EIAR as submitted with the Dernacart Windfarm application would likely not be appropriate to accompany any substation and grid connection application and that the most appropriate approach would be the submission of an EIAR or environmental report depending on the prospective applicant's assessment of the already submitted Dernacart Windfarm EIAR.
- The Board's representatives highlighted the recent revisions to the Fifth Schedule of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001 (as amended) relating to Rural Restructuring and advised the prospective applicant to quantify the amount of hedgerow removal that will be required and to ensure that it is fully assessed in the screening exercise or the Environmental Impact Assessment Report. The prospective applicant stated that their Ecologist has visited the site and that the potential impact of laying of the cable and the wider development on hedgerows will be considered in the application.
- The Board's representatives highlighted the location of a watercourse on the western side of the site where the substation is now being proposed. The board's representatives noted that this watercourse may be linked to the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) to the south and recommended that the prospective applicant's Ecologists review/ include this as part of the screening exercise for appropriate assessment.
- The Board's representatives noted that the prospective applicant has consulted with the road sections of Laois and Offaly County Councils and advised that the extent of cable laying proposed in road corridors is such that construction methodology and requirement for road closure would be potentially significant

issues in any application. Consultation with the road's authorities in advance of an application being submitted would therefore be desirable.

Conclusion:

The meeting concluded at 11:40am.



Stephen Kay

Assistant Director of Planning