

An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 1st Meeting ABP-317409-23

Case Reference / Description	ABP-317409-23		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	3 rd		
Date	26/07/2023	Start Time	11:00 a.m.
Location	Virtually	End Time	12:30 p.m.

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Staff Members
Stephen Kay, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Una O'Neill, Senior Planning Inspector
Raymond Muwaniri, Executive Officer
Conor Donnelly, Ecologist
Eugene Nixon, Consultant
Marcella Doyle, Senior Administrative Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Colm Ryan, MKO Planning Director
Robert Kennedy, MKO Project Environmental Scientist
John Willoughby, MKO Project Planner
Ronan Dunne, MKO
Orla Murphy, MKO
Kieran O'Malley, Corio Development Manager

Claire Atkins, Corio Assistant Directing Manager
Tim Coffee, Head of Corio Ireland

Introduction

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 1st July 2024, requesting pre-application consultations under section 287 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. The Boards representatives also referred to the general procedures as set out at the first meeting held on 19th September, 2023 and included in the record of that meeting.

Presentation made by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant began its presentation with an update to its project since the previous meeting, which is summarised as follows:

- It is intended that a single application will be submitted to the Board to include all elements of the project, both onshore and offshore.
- An extension to the maritime area consent has been granted by MARA which includes an amended array area.
- That the proposed development is a single layout with a single turbine type of fixed turbine dimensions. No design flexibility is being sought in relation to the application. The final project design will include 30 no. offshore wind turbines with a total height of 324.9m, rotor diameter of 292m, and hub height of 178.9m. The proposed project will also include a 220kV offshore substation and an offshore grid connection cable with landfall, onshore grid connection cable from landfall, and an onshore compensation compound. The turbines will have a gravity based fixed bottom foundation.

All offshore and onshore surveys have been completed. EIAR Chapters and Impact Assessments are in client/legal review stage.

A tourism assessment was undertaken in the Connemara area, consulting with key stakeholders and tourists and which demonstrated the limited impact of offshore wind on tourism. An economic assessment has also been undertaken which demonstrates the very significant economic impact of the proposed development on the local area.

A 3-day public information event was held from the 11th to 14th June 2024. There is continued engagement with fishers through the Fisheries Liaison Officer.

Meetings were held with Clare and Galway County Councils, and TII, in relation to the delivery route. The EIAR/NIS will be finalised in July/August of 2024. Finalising of application documents and lodging of the application to the Board is expected to take place in September 2024.

Discussion:

- The prospective applicant in its presentation referred to the planning application documentation and acknowledged receipt of the procedures, as previously forwarded by the Board, to be followed for the making of an application.
- The prospective applicant asked if they could send in some sample drawings for the Board to confirm the correct scales prior to lodgement of application. The Board's representatives agreed to review some sample drawings.
- The prospective applicant queried whether or not it is necessary to consult with any Transboundary States in accordance with the relevant provisions of the MAP Act. In response the Board's representatives stated that following the closure of the pre-application consultation process a list of prescribed bodies will be forwarded to the applicant and this may include consultation with Transboundary States if applicable.

- A brief discussion took place in relation to design option flexibility and the prospective applicant reiterated that it will not be seeking design option flexibility.
- The Board's representative enquired as to the potential for diversion from the proposed development, to which the prospective applicant reiterated that they were comfortable with the layout and dimensions and that the turbines would be in the exact locations as shown on the maps. The prospective applicant also stated that in the event that there was a requirement for deviation from the layout indicated that they would go through the necessary procedures provided for in the legislation in relation to alteration/amendment to the application.
- The Board's representatives asked if there were any significant new findings from additional geophysical/geotechnical surveys undertaken, to justify the turbine layout, hydro dynamics and other findings. In response the prospective applicant stated that the geophysical and geotechnical investigations were completed in October 2023, CPT tests were also completed, and boreholes carried out in May 2024. From the knowledge and information received, nothing new was found that would lead to the need to change the turbine locations.
- The Board's representative enquired about the work to the seabed to facilitate the foundations, the volume of material to be dredged and where the material is proposed to be disposed. The prospective applicant stated that there will be dredging required at some locations and there will be a requirement for the placing of stone material at the foundation bases to provide a level platform for the gravity foundations and a solid bed for the foundations to sit on. The prospective applicant stated that the turbines will be on gravity based fixed bottom foundations, and tugs would be used to float them out to the site.
- The Board's representative reminded the prospective applicant that licences may be required for dumping of excavated material.
- The representative encouraged the prospective applicant to be clear in the documentation as to the extent of works and the methodology to be followed in construction.

- The Board's representative enquired about the main issues raised in the community consultation meetings. The prospective applicant replied that the public was concerned about construction methodologies and clarity was provided over a mis-understanding in relation to foundation type proposed, which is gravity based and does not require pouring of large volumes of concrete in situ.
- The Board's representative reiterated the need to outline the impact on SPAs/SACs within the zone of influence, and the need for them to be robustly assessed in the NIS, noting the zone of influence can be extensive for mobile species. They added that any assumptions made, source of survey data, dates of surveys etc, must be clearly set out in the methodology.
- The Board's representative discussed the gravity base foundations, the cabling route to landfall, including what is being proposed in terms of burial and securing of cables. The Board's representative emphasised that the prospective applicant should consider impacts associated with cable burial and protection including on benthic habitat and material used to protect the cable. The prospective applicant replied that the protection of the export cable will vary depending on the sea bed conditions. Much of the cable route to the south off Clare is soft substrate which will be buried in the usual way, but there are small patches that require rock cover. Specifically immediately to the south of the array area there is a lot of rock that will require a rock berm whereas to the west of the Aran Islands there is more soft substrate where the cable will be buried. No work will be done at the intertidal zone.
- The Board's representative enquired if the prospective applicant will be using HDD at landfall, to which the prospective applicant replied they would be using a HDD or trenchless method.
- The Board's representative raised the importance of the need to consider potential impacts on hydrodynamics, on sediment transport, wave regime, tidal currents, and to understand the impact of high sediment transport and how it affects the area, given the proximity to European sites which include habitats

dependant on sediment supply, such as saltmarshes. The prospective applicant mentioned their original consideration was to look at the detailed modelling impact of sediment, and the potential impact on nearby SACs.

- The Board's representative raised general points about use of numerical modelling to assess impacts in relation to sediment dynamics and coastal processes which is also applicable to the use of models to assess impacts on birds and marine mammals. In all cases it is important that application documents make clear how the model used has been calibrated with empirical data, how far it has been validated with an independent data set outside of that calibration, what assumptions have been used in the model, justification for impact thresholds used and set out the limitations of the assessment and how have they been addressed.
- The Board's representative drew attention to the recent addition of harbour porpoise as a QI in a number of nearby SACs and that this needs to be included in the assessment. The SACs and SPAs in the vicinity of the development include mobile, very wide-ranging species including birds and marine mammals which may be impacted far from the European sites for which they are the qualifying interest. It is important that the application gives proper consideration to this in relation to zone of impact selected.
- The Board's representatives emphasised that the relevant policies of the NMPF must be adequately addressed, and that international fishing effort should also be adequately considered. Application documentation should clearly demonstrate compliance, using best scientific data, with the range of policies within the NMPF and ensure data is cross referenced where appropriate. The prospective applicant stated they were going through each policy contained in the NMPF, and if any did not apply, an explanation would be provided.
- The Board's representative enquired if there were any updates in relation to ports to be used in the construction and operational phases. The prospective applicant mentioned Shannon Foynes was being considered for marshalling of turbines during construction, Port of Cork is also suitable, and Rosamhil is

being considered for an operation and maintenance facility. The prospective applicant stated that these have not changed since the initial pre application consultation meeting.


- The Board's representative emphasised the need for robust documentation, in terms of surveys undertaken, demonstrating use of the best scientific data available, methodologies used, and the identification of any data gaps.
- The Board's representative emphasised that any other issues that arise or have recently arisen following on from further survey work and which haven't been discussed here, needs to be clearly set out and addressed in the documentation, including construction related practices and methodologies.
- The Board's representative asked about consultation with the Local Authority in relation to road access and traffic management. The prospective applicant stated they had discussions with TII concerning the roads and how the specific route was chosen. The prospective applicant further added that Eirgrid will be taking over the project after some period, and Eirgrid requires them not to use 3rd party land, but to use public roads. It was also stated there was good access to local roads, making the route easier. The Boards representatives advised the prospective applicant to get clear advice from TII and Clare County Council regarding their requirements for construction, cable joint bays and traffic management.
- The Board's representative stated that if any of the proposed development was located within the Gaeltacht area, that the public notices and any other documents, if feasible should be published in Irish and in English. The prospective applicant stated that it is aware of this requirement and have previously dealt with projects within the Gaeltacht area and that it is proposed to follow the process undertaken in previous SID applications located within the Gaeltacht.
- With regard to the procedures for the making of the application, the Boards representatives inquired if the prospective applicant had any questions, including in relation to the procedures document circulated in advance of the

meeting. The prospective applicants indicated that they did not. The Boards representatives informed the prospective applicants that should they have queries in relation to the procedures for making the application that it was open to them to consult with the Marine and Climate Section of the Board.

Conclusion:

The Board's representatives advised that the record of the instant meeting will be issued in due course and the prospective applicant can submit any comments it may have in writing. The Board's representatives also reiterated the general procedures set out at the first consultation meeting whereby the decision on closure of the pre application process rests with the Board and indicated to the prospective applicant that it was likely that this meeting would be the final one in the Section 287 consultation process.

The meeting concluded at 12.30pm.



Stephen Kay

Assistant Director of Planning