



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 1st Meeting ABP-317616-23

Case Reference / Description	ABP-317616-23 - Proposed wind farm development located in the townlands of Glenconauun More, Craghera and Cloonkett, Co. Clare.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	1 st		
Date	05/10/2023	Start Time	11:00 a.m.
Location	Virtually	End Time	12:30 p.m.

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Staff Members
Paul Caprani, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Liam Bowe, Senior Planning Inspector
Niamh Hickey, Executive Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Nadine Walsh, Greensource
Noreen Layden, Greensource
David McDonnell, Greensource
Imelda Barry, Greensource
Alison Delahunty, Fehily Timoney
Jim Hughes, Fehily Timoney
Michael Dobson, Woodrow APEM

Introduction

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 20th July 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 gave a brief overview and background of the applicant's company, it is an Irish renewable energy company based in Adare, Co. Limerick and it mainly focuses on onshore wind development. The proposed development's goal is to provide clean wind energy to up to 50,000 households.

The prospective applicant introduced the agent Fehily Timoney and the other companies that will be working on the proposed development such as Collett, TNEI, John Cronin and Associates, Woodrow APEM Group and Macroworks APEM Group.

The prospective applicant spoke about the targets of the National Climate Action Plan 2023 and noted that in 2020 only 42% of all electricity generated was from renewable sources. The proposed development has the potential to provide up to 67.5MW of renewable electricity or power for up to 45,000 homes which would contribute to more than 1% of the 6GW national onshore target for 2025. Regarding the Clare County Development Plan, the prospective applicant demonstrated on the map presented that the proposed development was in an 'Acceptable in Principle Area'.

The prospective applicant provided a summary of the proposed development which will consist of up to 17 turbines, with a tip height of 150m and power rating of 4.5MW. The exact maximum export capacity will depend on the design and type of turbines selected. There will be a 110kV substation as part of the proposed development and the grid connection is proposed to be underground to the 400kV Moneypoint substation. The prospective applicant also noted there will be new internal roads and ancillary civil and electrical infrastructure.

The prospective applicant showed a map of the proposed location. It is approximately 21km southwest of Ennis and 20km northeast of Kilrush. It is located in the townlands of Glenconnaun More, Craghera, Cloonkett and the Electoral Divisions of Killadysert and Kilfiddane. The prospective applicant also presented a

map of the preliminary site layout. The prospective applicant stated that in the initial design process 16 turbines were chosen, this was then further refined to 17 turbines. Based on the outcome of geological, hydrological, and ecological surveys, and archaeological and noise monitoring assessments, the turbines were reduced to 15 turbines. Surveys are still ongoing in regard to the design process.

The prospective applicant stated that it has 5 indicative grid route options, all of which are underground. A constraint's assessment was carried out which identified 2 preferred grid route options. Regarding the turbine delivery route, 2 preferred options are also being considered. Environmental and archaeology surveys are both ongoing for the 2 grid route options and the two turbine delivery route options.

The prospective applicant discussed the progress of the application to date.

The prospective applicant stated that there are 58 receptors in a 1km radius of the proposed development and 169 receptors within a 2km radius of the proposed development. The prospective applicant stated that it is committed to achieving a 4x tip height buffer to all dwellings, except for landowners involved in the project.

The prospective applicant discussed the landscape and visual impact of the proposed site. The prospective applicant stated that the visual impact was assessed within a 20km radius of the turbine array. The site is set within farmland, conifer forestry, bog and residences. The nearest scenic route is the R473 between Killadysert and Labasheeda, approximately 4km south of Turbine T13. Viewpoints are currently being assessed.

The prospective applicant stated that the noise model is being carried out in accordance with the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006. If revised guidelines are issued prior to the submission of the application, a second model will be produced. Baseline noise monitoring at noise assessment locations was carried out between April and May 2023. Noise modelling is currently underway.

The prospective applicant noted that the proposed site does not attract any nature conservation designations, but the Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the River Shannon and River Fergus Estuaries Special Protection Area (SPA) have downstream hydrological connections with the proposed site. Regarding significant effects on these, there are ongoing bird studies for the River Shannon and River Fergus SPA which will investigate how regularly the birds utilise the area. For the Lower River Shannon SAC, studies will be carried out on how downstream water quality and how highly sensitive aquatic species such as freshwater pearl mussel may be affected by the proposed development.

The prospective applicant gave a summary of the survey progress to date, including bird and bat surveys, protected mammals, avifauna, marsh fritillary, habitat surveys and aquatic surveys.

The prospective applicant also gave an overview of the hydrology, geology and hydrogeology of the proposed site.

A project website was set up in August. Letters and leaflets were issued to all residents within 2km of the proposed site. Door to door consultations were then carried out with residents 1km from the proposed development. The overall feedback has been positive. There is a phone line and email address that is monitored daily. A community event is proposed to be held once the surveys have been completed.

The prospective applicant provided an overview of the next steps in the application and gave their view that the proposed development constitutes strategic infrastructure development.

Discussion:

- The Board's representatives gave their preliminary view that the proposed development may be considered strategic infrastructure development but noted that the final decision would be a matter for the Board. The Board's representatives also requested the prospective applicant to provide clarity to the Board once they have finalised the number of turbines for the proposed development. The Board's representatives noted that if the proposed development would fall below the 50MW threshold for strategic infrastructure development following the completion of the peat surveys, it would fail to qualify as strategic infrastructure. The prospective applicant stated that it will keep the Board up to date in this regard and may require a second meeting.
- The Board's representatives queried if the prospective applicant has followed the advice regarding surveys from the National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS). The prospective applicant has adopted the best practice guidelines regarding surveys. The prospective applicant has had discussions with the NPWS also.
- The Board's representatives highlighted the importance of engaging with the NPWS and Clare County Council.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant that there is a designated scenic route on the Limerick side of the Shannon Estuary from Foynes to Glin that was not noted by the prospective applicant and that this should be included in any visual impact assessment.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to have regard to the 2019 Draft Windfarm Guidelines in relation to noise. The prospective applicant stated that it focuses on best practice guidelines in relation to Noise.
- The Board's representatives advised that the cumulative impacts regarding surrounding windfarms are to be fully addressed.

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.

**Paul Caprani****Assistant Director of Planning**