



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 2nd Meeting ABP-317616-23

Case Reference / Description	ABP-317616-23		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	2 nd Meeting		
Date	4 th March 2025	Start Time	2:30pm
Location	MS Teams	End Time	3:40pm

Representing An Bord Pleanála

Una Crosse, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)

Liam Bowe, Senior Planning Inspector

Fiona Patterson, Ecologist & Environmental Specialist

Lauren Murphy, Executive Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant

Jim Hughes, Fehily Timoney Company

Trevor Byrne, Fehily Timoney Company

Aaron Clarke, Fehily Timoney Company

David McDonnell, Greensource

Noreen Layden, Greensource

Nadine Walsh, Greensource
Michael Dobson, APEM
Emmeline Cosnett, APEM
Richard Barker, MacroWorks
Peter Connell, MacroWorks

Introduction

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 7th of February 2025, requesting a second meeting for 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's presentation, which is on file, outlined that the proposed development site is located within an area designated as 'Acceptable in Principle' for wind energy developments in the Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.

The prospective applicant provided an update on the proposed development by providing a site location drawing and comparing the proposed development discussed at the first meeting in 2023 and the revised proposed development as of 2025. The updated proposed development is intended to have a total Maximum Export Capacity of 63MW.

The prospective applicant presented drawings of the proposed site layout plan including the locations of the turbines, ancillary development and the proposed on-site 220kV loop in loop out substation.

The landscape and visual assessment studies to date were discussed presenting a drawing of the 20km radius from the perimeter of the turbine array, following on with photomontage samples from Viewpoints 6-8.

The prospective applicant discussed the ecological surveys carried out to date and the important ecological features that have been assessed in detail in relation to the proposed development. The prospective applicant described the proposed biodiversity enhancement and management plan (BEMP) as noted in the prospective applicant presentation. They also discussed in detail their surface water quality monitoring programme 2024-2025.

The prospective applicant concluded their presentation by discussing their community engagements to date and the proposed project next steps.

Discussion:

- The Boards representatives began the discussion by asking the prospective applicant to further discuss the refinement of the red line boundary which was discussed during the presentation. The prospective applicant advised that the red line boundary shown in the presentation is the Environmental Impact Assessment study area and some elements may be refined. The Boards representatives advised that the application boundary is submitted to the Board prior to seeking closure of the pre-application process.

- The Boards representatives asked the prospective applicant to clarify the number of masts which will be included as part of the development of the proposed 220kV line which was clarified as 5-6 masts with 4 double circuit pylons located on the site.
- The prospective applicant clarified that since the 1st pre application meeting they have since been in discussions with EirGrid. The prospective applicant advised that they no longer propose to connect to Moneypoint substation, and that a new on-site substation is now proposed.
- Following a query from the Boards representatives the prospective applicant clarified that the Landscape and Visual Assessment Viewpoints will be submitted, in the correct scale in accordance with the guidelines set out for visualisation of wind farms.
- The Boards representatives referenced the NIS being prepared, noting the hydrological connection from the proposed development site to the Cloon River and the Lower River Shannon Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002165) and advised the prospective applicant to ensure that their surveys follow best practice guidelines and that sufficient data relevant to the SAC qualifying interests is collected to ensure a thorough assessment can be carried out. In particular, a robust Water Quality Management Plan would be required given the presence of freshwater pearl mussel in the Cloon river downstream of the proposed development site.
- Following on from a query raised by the Boards representatives the prospective applicant advised that the proposed NIS and the BEMP will include mitigation measures to ensure negative impacts from the proposed development are minimised/avoided.
- In response to a query on other species or habitats within or surrounding the proposed development site, not yet addressed including salmon and otters, the prospective applicant clarified that whilst electro fishing has not been undertaken, fish habitat studies indicate a good population of brown trout rather than salmon. In relation to otters, no evidence has emerged of same within the site, but they may use tributaries within the area.
- The Lesser Horseshoe Bat (LHSB) roost within the site was discussed with the prospective applicant clarifying that this roost is a maternity roost and not a

winter hibernation route and the nearest LHSB SAC Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is also a maternity roost which leads the prospective applicant to believe that there is minimal connection between both. The prospective applicant also advised that they are in consultation with the National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) in relation to the proposed LHSB Conservation Plan.

- The prospective applicant clarified that there have been a number of bat species identified, which will be addressed in the biodiversity chapter of the EIAR submitted with the planning application.

The prospective applicant advised that there is fragmented raised bog located on the proposed development site. The prospective applicant advised that they have carried out peat probing surveys on site with the deepest peat depth noted as 6.8 metres. A Peatland Management and Enhancement Plan is being prepared to identify areas on the proposed development site which are suitable for peat deposition and enhancement.

- Following on from a query raised by the Boards representatives, the prospective applicant stated that they do not have the exact dimensions of the proposed onsite 220kV substation but noted that the tallest proposed building compound is approximately 18 metres tall and that they would have transformers located on site.
- The prospective applicant clarified that there will be no blasting carried out during the construction phase of the proposed development however there will be piling required at the location of one turbine.
- The prospective applicant advised that the proposed development site is located approximately 16km from Shannon Airport and is located on the periphery of their zone of interest, but they have still engaged with both AirNav or Shannon Airport.
- The Boards representatives advised the prospective applicant to consider the proposed development within the context of the wider policies and objectives in the County Development Plan.
- The prospective applicant confirmed that a Battery Energy Storage System is not proposed as part of the proposed development.

- The Boards representatives noted that the Board have previously accepted applications incorporating both the wind energy and grid connection proposals under s.37, however the final decision on the most appropriate way to present the application was for the prospective applicant informed by their own advisers. It was clarified that to submit an application for the grid connection under Section 182B would require separate consultations are undertaken under Section 182E.
- The Boards representatives also referenced the impending transposition of the Renewable Energy Directive (RED III), which limits the Boards ability to seek further information necessitating that the application is robust.

Conclusion:

The Board's representatives advised that the record of the instant meeting will be issued to the prospective applicant following the closure of the meeting and that on receipt of the record the prospective applicant can submit any comments it may have in writing which would be attached to the file. The Board would await the applicants request to either seek another meeting or request closure of the process and following the closure request that a determination would be made by the Board following receipt of the Inspectors report.

The Meeting concluded at 3:40pm.



Una Crosse

Assistant Director of Planning