

An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting
ABP-317988-23

Case Reference / Description	110kV Substation and Loop-in connection associated with an approved Solar PV Development located at Stokesquater, Painestown, Killary, Ricetown, Castletown K.P., Navan, Co Meath.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	1 st Meeting		
Date	30/11/2023	Start Time	11:00am
Location	MS Teams	End Time	11:35am

Representing An Bord Pleanála

Stephen Kay, Chair

Deirdre MacGabhann, Planning Inspector

Lauren Murphy, Executive Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant

Alexander Brem, Statkraft

Jane O' Connor, Statkraft

Caoimhe O'Connor, MWP

Aine Ryan, MWP

Ian Bronson, MWP

Introduction

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 7th September 2023, requesting pre-application consultations under section 182A 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 introduction to the project team and a brief overview of the meeting agenda.

The prospective applicant provided a brief description of the proposed site location. The proposed site will be situated in Ricetown, County Meath. This site is situated 12km south of Navan, 12km Northeast of Ardee, 14.5km Southwest from Kells and 22.5km southeast from Drogheda. The nearest villages to the proposed site are Lobinstown and Castletown, County Meath.

The prospective stated that the proposed development will comprise a 110kV substation and a loop in connection to serve the approved Solar PV development in County Meath. This solar farm development will have the energy capacity to power approximately 20,000 homes. The proposed 110kV substation will be connected to the National grid by looping into Meath Hill-Gorman overhead powerlines above the proposed site via grid connection cabling.

The prospective applicant presented a drawing of the proposed site layout, indicating the location of two masts where the proposed development will loop into the overhead cables.

The prospective applicant gave an update on the progress to date with the proposed application. They stated the Engineering Design has been complete, along with the Environmental Impact Assessment Screening which is almost completed. The prospective applicant stated that they have concluded that they will not need to submit an EIAR (Environmental Impact Assessment Report) as part of this application. They also stated that the proposed development site is of low ecological value (comprising agricultural land). The prospective applicant stated the landscape photomontages of the proposed development are in preparation. They have identified a flood zone risk on the proposed development site, where sustainable urban drainage design measures will be introduced to prevent flooding.

The prospective applicant presented a habitat mapping drawing. This drawing showed the location of the proposed development and ecological factors which surround the site such as, a drainage ditch, arable crops, and wet willow woodland.

The prospective applicant presented a noise contouring map of the proposed development site and surrounding areas. The studies show that during the operational phase of the development noise at 14 noise monitoring locations would be between 22-30dB. They have also carried out a study of the noise impact during construction phase of the proposed development, and this study predicted maximum noise levels at the identified receptors to be 52dB during construction.

The prospective applicant provided an update on where they stand in relation to consultations. They have appointed a Community Liaison Officer, who will be able to provide updates and answer queries which may arise from members of the local community. The prospective applicant has already informed Meath County Council of the proposed development and are currently awaiting feedback.

The prospective applicant gave their opinion that they believe the proposed development of the 110kV substation falls under Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

The prospective applicant gave a brief overview of the next steps they intend to take which include finalising all reports, site notices and newspaper notices. They hope to lodge an application to the Board on receipt of determination regarding this pre application consultation.

Discussion:

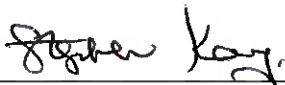
- The Boards representatives asked the prospective applicant if they specified a location for the proposed substation in their solar farm application to Meath County Council. The prospective applicant stated they left out a portion of the red line boundary in this application to Meath County Council but did include in the application that a substation would be required.
- The Boards representatives asked the prospective applicant to clarify if the red line boundary presented is the solar farm boundary. The prospective applicant clarified that this red boundary line is outside of the solar farm boundary.

- The Boards representatives questioned the distance of the noise receptors located south of the proposed development site. The prospective applicant stated they are unsure of the exact distance but that the separation was approximately 500-600 metres.
- The Boards representatives gave their preliminary view that this application would fall under Strategic Infrastructure Developments, however, the final decision lies with the Board.
- The Board's representatives asked if the prospective applicant plans to use the same construction roads that were used for the development of the solar farm. The prospective applicant confirmed that they intend to utilize the same access roads for the construction and operational phases of the proposed development.
- The Board representatives asked the prospective applicant if they had considered all the issues that were raised in the original application for the solar farm submitted to Meath County Council. In response, the prospective applicant stated that they have addressed the issues that emerged during the application including in their Appropriate Assessment screening process. Regarding flooding, the prospective applicant stated that the site is located in Flood Zone C.
- Regarding appropriate assessment, the Board's representatives noted that in the event that the drainage of the site relied on the drainage infrastructure for the permitted solar farm then it might trigger the requirement for Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment.
- The Boards representative recommended that the prospective applicant should indicate the substation development and the solar farm development in their photomontages submitted as part of the application for the purpose of cumulative impact assessment.
- The prospective applicant stated that their original timeline to submit the application to the Board was in quarter four of 2023. The Boards representatives assured the prospective applicant that once they receive a

copy of this meeting record, they can request a formal closure of the pre application consultation.

- The Boards representatives queried if they have been in contact with Inland Fisheries Ireland in relation to the proposed development. The prospective applicant stated that Inland Fisheries Ireland are not relevant to this proposed development as there is no drainage to direct water sources.

The Meeting concluded at 11:35am



Stephen Kay

Assistant Director of Planning