



An
Bord
Pleanála

Meeting Minutes ABP-318203-23

Case Reference / Description	Proposed Windfarm development of 9 Turbines, 110kV substation and associated works, located in the townlands of Ballinla, Ballybrittan and Leitrim in the municipal district of Edenderry, Co. Offaly.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	1 st Meeting		
Date	24/11/2023	Start Time	11:00am
Location	MS Teams	End Time	12:05pm

Representing An Bord Pleanála

Paul Caprani (Assistant Planning Director) Chair

Tomas Bradley (Planning Inspector)

Lauren Murphy (Executive Officer)

Representing the Prospective Applicant

Grahame Thornton – MWP

Alice Power – Statkraft

Introduction

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 10th October 2023, requesting pre-application consultations under section 37E 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 their company 'Statkraft'. In this introduction they stated that Statkraft set up in Ireland in 2018 with offices based in Cork and Tullamore, Co. Offaly. The prospective applicant gave a brief overview of Statkrafts global ambition, which is to increase its portfolio of wind power assets to 6,000 MW and solar power assets to 2,000 MW by 2025.

The prospective applicant stated that Statkraft Ireland are the developer and applicant for the proposed Ballinla Windfarm. Malachy Walsh and Partners (MWP) are responsible for carrying out the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and planning application for the proposed development. MWP are also responsible for the engineering design of this proposed development.

The prospective applicant presented a site location map of the proposed development which is to be situated in a rural area of east Co. Offaly. The proposed site will be located approximately 4km west of the town of Edenderry and 24km east of Tullamore. The proposed development is located in the townlands of Ballinla, Ballybrittan and Leitrim. The proposed land consists of coniferous forest and agricultural land. The Grand Canal is located adjacent to the northern boundary of the site of the proposed development.

The prospective applicant presented details on the preliminary layout for the proposed development site. The main project components mentioned are 10 wind turbines with a proposed blade tip height of 185m. A 110kV substation is also expected to be located on the proposed site. The prospective applicant stated that the application is in the preliminary phase of design. This proposed development, when submitted to the Board was proposed to have a 9 turbine layout which has since changed to a proposed 10 turbine layout, all which will still be located within the proposed site.

The prospective applicant discussed the off-site components of the proposed development, this will consist of a turbine component haulage route which has an existing Turbine Delivery Route (TDR) using regional and local roads. The

prospective applicant stated that there will also be a further separate application submitted to An Bord Pleanála for a proposed 110kV underground cable which will follow local roads.

The prospective applicant discussed the proposed site arrangements for this development. It stated that a local road transects the middle of the proposed development site, this local road links L5006 in the east with the R400 to the west. Two access locations off this local road will provide access to both the northern and southern sections of the proposed site. The Applicant also discussed the proposed project time frame. If this development is considered strategic infrastructure, an application will be submitted in Summer 2024, and the construction period if approved by the Board, will be carried out over a period of 18-24 Months.

The prospective applicant discussed the work completed to date in relation to this proposed development. It has completed constraints mapping in the proposed development area and the Environmental Impact Assessment scoping report. The applicant has also completed ecological surveys on site and ornithology surveys have been carried out over the last two years to progress this development as much as possible. It stated that the final site layout design is in the stages of being finalised while regular consultations and agreements are being carried out with current landowners. The prospective applicant stated that the noise impact assessment report is underway, and it is currently identifying noise sensitive locations.

The prospective applicant discussed community engagement to date. It has begun door to door interactions with residents which allows the residents to raise any questions or concerns they might have in relation to the proposed development.

The prospective applicant stated that it is not intending to utilise borrow pits on site as there is no rock available on the proposed site to use during the construction phase of this project. All materials required for the construction of the turbines will be imported from quarries in the surrounding areas. It stated that they currently intend to carry out forestry felling as part of turbine construction to adhere to the required spacing between turbines and the forestry area.

Discussion

- The Board's representatives noted that the prospective applicant believes that their proposed development falls under the definition of Strategic Infrastructure Development. However, on the basis that the final turbine number layout has not been confirmed, the Board's representatives requested the prospective applicant to provide a more definitive layout.
- The Board's representatives recommended the prospective applicant consider requesting another pre-application meeting as it is noted that the application is in the early stages.
- The prospective applicant advised to clarify the rated minimum and maximum output of the turbines also at the next meeting in order to find closure of this pre-application stage.
- The Board's representatives enquired if the prospective applicant has consulted with the relevant statutory bodies in relation to the proposed development. The prospective applicant stated that they are yet to consult with any statutory bodies and are aiming to get consultation letters out to statutory bodies as soon as possible.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to meet with Offaly County Council and other statutory bodies such as the National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) to get their opinion on the proposed development. The Board's representatives recommended they also meet with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) in relation to the haulage routes which will be used during the construction phase of the proposed development.
- The Board's representatives queried the number of landowners in relation to the proposed development site. The prospective applicant stated that in the northern section of the proposed site, there are 2 landowners. The southern

section of the proposed site is partially owned by 1 private landowner and Coillte. The prospective applicant stated that there are 2 residential houses located within the site and both are consenting landowners associated with the project. The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to ensure they use the best international practice in relation to noise impact assessment.

- The Board's representatives recommended the inclusion of information about the transportation of construction material, and in particular traffic movements, in the assessment of cumulative impacts.
- The Board's representatives queried if a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will be submitted as part of the application to the Board, the prospective applicant stated that they are yet to finalise the Appropriate Assessment Screening.
- The Board's representative asked that if during the removal of coniferous trees for the construction of the proposed development there was a proposed location set out for replanting. The prospective applicant stated that they have not yet identified land for this purpose, but they are going to rely on a felling licence for this aspect of the development.
- The Board's representatives recommended the prospective applicant include bat surveys in the EIAR.
- The Board's representatives asked the prospective applicant to elaborate on their public consultations to date. The prospective applicant stated that they have engaged with residents within a 1.6km radius to the proposed development site. A dedicated Community Liaison Officer has been appointed in the local area to engage with the residents.
- The prospective applicant enquired about whether the substation, located on the proposed development site would require a separate application. The Board's representatives clarified that this substation is classified as ancillary development of the windfarm and, therefore, can be submitted under the one

application. The Board's representatives further clarified that a grid connection to the national grid must be undertaken as a separate pre-application consultation under the provisions of S182E of the Act.

- The prospective applicant queried about the steps of formally closing a pre-application consultation request, the Board's representatives provided them with information on the process.

Meeting concluded at 12:05pm.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Caprani', is written over a horizontal line.

Paul Caprani

Assistant Director of Planning