



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting 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	2 nd Meeting		
Date	6 th June 2024	Start Time	11:00am
Location	MS Teams	End Time	11:50am

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Paul Caprani (Assistant Planning Director) Chair
Tomas Bradley (Planning Inspector)
Ellen Moss (Executive Officer)

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Graeme Thornton, MWP
Alice Power, Statkraft
David O'Leary, 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 Statkraft, provided information in relation to the application Statkraft entered the Irish market in 2018 and since then has almost tripled its workforce and tripled its development portfolio. In Ireland, Statkraft develops, owns, and operates renewable energy projects across the technologies of onshore wind, offshore wind, solar, battery storage and grid services. The company's global ambition 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 introduced the project team and their role in the project:

- Alice Power, Project Manager Statkraft Ireland.
- Malachy Walsh and Partners (MWP) are completing the EIAR and planning application
- Graeme Thornton MWP, EIA Lead
- Shane Howard MWP, Engineering Design Lead

The prospective applicant provided information on the site location. The site is approximately 4 km west of the Edenderry town boundary and 24km east of Tullamore. The proposed wind farm is within the townlands of Ballinla, Ballybrittan and Leitrim in the municipal district of Edenderry, Co. Offaly. The land consists of coniferous forests and agricultural land. The Grand Canal is adjacent to the northern boundary of the proposed development.

A local road transects the proposed development site. The road links the L5006 in the east with the R400 in the west. The two access locations of the local road would provide access to the northern and southern sections of the site.

The prospective applicant provided a description of the proposed development. The proposed development will consist of eight wind turbines with a blade tip height of 185 meters, hardstand areas and access roads, a 110-kilovolt substation on the wind farm site and a met mast. The proposed development would also include works on

the turbine component haulage route and along 110-kilovolt underground cable grid connection.

The prospective applicant advised that it expects to submit the application to the Board at the end of summer/September 2024, and construction of the proposed development will take 18-24 months.

The prospective applicant advised of changes to the proposed development discussed at the previous consultation meeting, held on November 24th, 2023. The previous meeting had a preliminary layout of ten turbines. After a preliminary landscape and visual impact assessment, an 8-turbine layout was decided upon. A 500-meter buffer to the Grand Canal has been incorporated into the layout, which has required the removal of two turbines from the original ten-turbine layout. The proposed turbines current minimum and maximum output for the site is 7 megawatts to 7.2 megawatts, resulting in a potential output of 56 – 57.6 megawatts for the proposed 8 turbine project. The prospective applicant noted that by the time of construction, a more powerful generator may be available that could reduce impacts and increase MW output.

The prospective applicant advised that consultations have been undertaken with statutory bodies and other relevant organisations. The prospective applicant requested meeting with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII), however, it has not received a response to date. The prospective applicant has requested a meeting with Offaly County Council and are waiting for confirmation for a date for this meeting.

The prospective applicant advised on the work completed to date. It advised that the constraints mapping has been completed, the EIAR Scoping report has been completed, Initial site surveys are complete as part of the EIAR process (including bat surveys), the final layout has been decided, and the first round of on the ground

consultation (door to door) with local residents has taken place. The prospective applicant advised it has a basic website up and running with the view to include more information prior to submitting the application.

The prospective applicant advised that subject to the screening report, a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) will not accompany the application.

Discussion:

The Board's representatives began the discussion querying if the proposed development is in a preferred area for the development of windfarms. The prospective applicant advised that the proposed location is a preferred area in the statutory development plan, however, the Grand Canal area is not preferred and therefore the removal of two turbines resulted in a 500 metre buffer to the canal.

The Board's representatives queried what the 500m is based on. The prospective applicant responded that the Offaly County Council development plan does not have any distance buffers for the Grand Canal, the preliminary LVIA proved potential impacts on the Grand Canal. The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to query the landscape impact with Offaly County Council.

The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to include a statement on landscape planning policy in the development plan, in addition to information contained in any EIAR.

The Board's representatives recommended the prospective applicant continue to try get feedback from the NPWS. The prospective applicant advised that they had contacted the NPWS and are awaiting a response. The Board's representatives

recommended all efforts to engage should be fully documented in any documentation submitted.

The Board's representatives noted the prospective applicant's approach to screening for Appropriate Assessment and considered whether a development screened in or out a matter for the prospective applicant to demonstrate through the documentation submitted to the planning application.

The Board's representatives gave their preliminary opinion that based on the development of eight turbines, the proposed development falls within the scope of strategic infrastructure but reminded the prospective applicant that the final decision lies with the board.

The Board's representatives also noted that any further reduction in turbines through the applicant's iterative design process would be a material issue in the consideration of whether the development constitutes strategic infrastructure given the threshold for wind farms and the prospective applicant may need to reengage if that occurred.

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.

The Meeting concluded at 11:50.

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

Paul Caprani

Assistant Director of Planning