

An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 1st Meeting ABP-318208-23

Case Reference / Description	110kV grid route connection to the national grid for Shronowen Windfarm, Co. Kerry		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	1 st Meeting		
Date	15/12/2023	Start Time	11:00am
Location	Virtually	End Time	11:45am

Representing An Bord Pleanála

Stephen Kay (Chair)

Pauline Fitzpatrick (Inspector)

Lauren Murphy (Executive Officer)

Representing the Prospective Applicant

Aisling Layden, Jennings O'Donovan & Partners

Aoife O'Leary, EMPower

Breena Coyle, Jennings O'Donovan & Partners

Charles Sawyer, Statkraft

Michael O'Connor, EMPower

Introduction

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 11th October 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 began the presentation with a brief introduction to EMPower. Founded in 2015, EMPower is a Dublin based international energy developer primarily focused on the development of wind and solar PV assets. The vision of EMPower is to expand energy sectors by utilising green power, they aim to be a market leader in renewable energy development. EMPower aims to promote low cost and low impact energy options that help increase long term energy security and promote sustainable jobs in rural areas. They currently have 800MW of onshore wind and solar PV projects under development in Ireland. In the coming decade EMPower's goal is to increase their renewable energy portfolio to 10GW across Europe, including wind, solar and battery storage plants.

The prospective applicant gave a brief overview of the windfarm development which was approved by the Board in August 2022 (ABP ref. 309156). This development will consist of 10 wind turbines with a blade tip height of 150 metres, internal wind farm underground power and communications cables, the upgrading of existing access tracks and one 110Kv loop-in substation.

The prospective applicant stated the consented grid connection consists of a 225 metre 110Kv cable connection from the 110Kv wind farm substation to the existing 110Kv transmission line due east of the windfarm site. The proposed 225 metre cable will be trenched underground, crossing the local road and travel through a field to the location of two new steel lattice tower structures on the transmission line. The prospective applicant stated that an alternative 110Kv grid connection route was considered in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report accompanying the windfarm application but planning permission was not sought for same.

The prospective applicant presented a drawing outlining the red line boundary of the consented wind farm application, and turbine locations.

The prospective applicant provided a drawing which indicated the proposed location of the consented grid connection route.

The prospective applicant provided a drawing of the consented substation and grid route. The permitted site boundary, the internal cable route to substation, the 110kV underground cables and the existing over headline are outlined.

The prospective applicant stated the planning permission for the alternative 110kV grid route considered in the original Environmental Impact Assessment Report is now being sought. This consists of a 5.5km tail fed 110kV underground cable primarily via public roads from Shronowen Wind Farm substation to permitted Drombeg substation (ABP ref 305106) to the south-west of the proposed windfarm. The substation is within the site for which a solar farm has been permitted (ABP ref. 302681). It is to comprise of a 110kV, 4 Bay, C Type electricity substation with loop in infrastructure to tie into the existing 110kV overhead Transmission line.

The prospective applicant stated EirGrid and ESB are the two system operators which confirmed that Shronowen Wind Farm will receive a 110kV grid connection offer. The proposed Grid connection has the potential of being selected as the 'System Operator Preferred Connection Method'.

The prospective applicant presented a drawing outlining the location of the permitted wind farm, proposed grid route, the water crossing course, the permitted substation, and the location of possible Horizontal directional drilling. Access route 1 and 2 were marked out on this drawing.

The prospective applicant provided details of access routes 1 and 2 to the Drombeg substation.

The prospective applicant provided an image which showed where Horizontal directional drilling (HDD) may be required.

The prospective applicant presented a drawing and explained typical 110kV trench details. They stated due to parts of the road being in poor condition it will need to be reinstated.

There will be approximately 8 no. 110kV cable duct joint bays located along the route. These joint bays will be approximately 6 metres long and around 2 metres depth.

The prospective applicant provided a comparison of the already permitted loop-in substation compared to the now proposed tail fed substation. They both have the same footprint, but the plant and equipment are somewhat different.

Drumbeg substation is currently under construction. There is an existing bay available at this substation and if permission is granted the proposed development will connect into H1 as shown on the drawing.

The prospective applicant discussed the Environmental Impact Assessment carried out. All aspects of the EIA will need to be considered as part of this proposed development. This includes, Biodiversity and Ornithology, Soils, Geology, Hydrology and Hydrogeology, Noise, Electromagnetic Interference, Archaeology and Cultural Heritage, Landscape and visual amenity and interactions between factors.

The prospective applicant discussed the area in relation to European sites. The Bunnaruddee Bog (National Heritage Area), Lower River Shannon (Special Area of Conservation) and Moanveanlagh Bog (National Heritage Area & Special Area of Conservation) are all in proximity of this proposed development.

The prospective applicant gave a brief overview of the legislative and planning policy context to take into consideration in relation to this proposed development. They gave an overview of the requirements under section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

The prospective applicant provided a conclusion to the presentation. They are of the opinion that the proposed development does not qualify SID under Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000.

Discussion:

- The representatives of the Board enquired about the access route displayed in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) submitted for the windfarm application. The prospective applicant confirmed that it corresponds with access route 1.
- The prospective applicant stated that Access Route 1 is currently under construction as part of the construction of the Tullamore Solar Farm development.
- The Boards representatives queried when the prospective applicant intends to identify the access route for the proposed development. The prospective applicant stated that the aim is for the decision to be made in Q1 of 2024. The prospective applicant is working closely with EirGrid regarding the preferred route.
- The Boards representatives queried if the prospective applicant intends to submit an Environmental Impact Assessment Report in relation to this proposed development application. The prospective applicant stated that they may consider an EIAR as the focus on the EIAR submitted with the windfarm application was on the windfarm.
- The Boards representatives queried the estimated completion time in relation to Drombeg substation currently under construction. The prospective applicant stated that it is expected to be completed at some point in 2024, as they are in the advanced stages of construction.
- The prospective applicant stated that they believe the Ballylongford windfarm cabling is connecting via Access Route Two into the substation. The Boards representatives queried if the Ballylongford windfarm is under construction. The prospective applicant stated that construction has not commenced.
- The Board's representatives queried if the prospective applicant have had consultations with Kerry County Council in relation to the works which will be

required along the public roads. The prospective applicant stated that a preliminary report has been prepared, and the next step is to consult with Kerry County Council as to how the roads are to be reinstated.

- The Board's representatives also recommended that discussions may be needed with Uisce Eireann, as some of their infrastructure may be affected by the works. The prospective applicant stated that they have not yet had any discussions with Uisce Eireann.
- The Boards representatives queried if the prospective applicant has had any discussions with prescribed bodies in relation to this proposed development. The prospective applicant stated that they have not yet liaised with any of the prescribed bodies as they are at a preliminary stage of the application. The boards representatives recommended to liaise with these prescribed bodies before submitting the application. The prospective applicant stated that one of the early stages they carry out in relation to the Environmental Impact Assessment Report is EIA scoping. They will consult with all statutory bodies in relation to the proposed development.
- The Boards representatives recommended that the prospective applicant ensures all areas are covered in the EIAR and that it is satisfied that cumulative impacts with existing and permitted development is robustly assessed.
- The Boards representatives raised the matter of hedgerow removal and EIA screening. The prospective applicant stated very little hedgerow excavation will be needed for the proposed development.
- The Boards representatives stated that a traffic management plan would be required as part of this proposed application.
- The Boards representatives queried if the newly proposed substation within the permitted windfarm site has the same footprint to the previously permitted

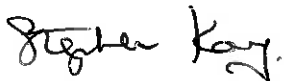
substation. The prospective applicant confirmed that they have the same footprint. They differ in terms of internal layout.

- The Board provided their preliminary opinion that this proposed application is likely to fall under Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, however, the final decision lies with the Board.

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 11:45am



Stephen Kay

Assistant Director of Planning