



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-318274-23 1st Meeting

Case Reference / Description	ABP-318274-23 - Proposed development of Oriel offshore wind farm, located off the coast of Co. Louth. (Design Option)		
Case Type	Marine pre-application consultation under Section 287A		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	09/11/2023	Start Time	12:05pm
Location	An Bord Pleanála	End Time	12:45pm

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Ciara Kellett, Director of Planning (Chair)
Stephen Kay, Assistant Director of Planning
Jimmy Green, Senior Planning Inspector
Maeve Flynn, Ecologist
Eugene Nixon, Consultant
Marcella Doyle, Senior Administrative Officer (online)
Cora Cunningham, Senior Executive Officer
Evan McGuigan, Executive Officer (online)

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Garrett Connell, Parkwind and Oriel Windfarm Limited
Richard Church, Parkwind and Oriel Windfarm Limited
Mairead Hogan, ESB

Valerie Brennan, RPS
Cathriona Cahill, RPS

Introduction

The meeting commenced at 12:05pm.

The Board's representatives referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant requesting pre-application consultations in relation to section 287A (Design Options) and invited the prospective applicant to outline the nature of the proposed design option element of the development and to highlight any matters it wished to receive advice on from the Board. The Board's representatives mentioned procedures in relation to the pre-application consultation process as follows:

- The Board will keep a record of this meeting. 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 prospective applicant should note that a separate Board opinion will issue in respect of 287B of the Act and that records relating to this will not be available for public inspection until an application for permission is made to the Board.
- At the conclusion of the pre-application process under section 287A, the case file including the record of the meeting held and the report of the reporting Inspector detailing the issues arising in the consultation, will be forwarded to the Board. The Board will issue an opinion under section 287B as to whether it is satisfied that it is appropriate that the proposed application be made and decided before the prospective applicant has confirmed certain details of the application.
- The holding of consultations does not prejudice the Board in any way and cannot be relied upon in the formal planning process or any legal proceedings.

Presentation by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant stated that there are five elements of the proposed development for which it is seeking design flexibility under section 287A. These elements were outlined in its letter to the Board on 19th October 2023.

The first detail is in relation to the exact location of each offshore wind turbine and the offshore substation. The prospective applicant stated that a layout of the wind turbines and substation would be presented in an application for the proposed development and that it would propose a 50m limit of deviation for each turbine and the substation. The prospective applicant's reasoning for flexibility in this instance is due to the identification of variable ground conditions across the foundation sites. It submitted that ground conditions such as boulders could result in a requirement to move foundations and that the proposed radius of deviation would be sufficient to identify alternative locations. It also submitted that this issue – along with the other four details – would be addressed in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR).

The second detail is in relation to the final height of offshore infrastructure. The prospective applicant stated that wind turbine hub heights would vary within the range of 145 to 152m above the lowest astronomical tide across the windfarm, due to the specific height of each foundation. It stated that a preferred wind turbine model and monopile foundation design has been selected. It also stated that the height of each foundation would be determined as part of a construction contract and would be specific to the water and ground conditions at each foundation location.

Therefore, the height of the foundation would be the determining factor in the final hub height of each wind turbine.

The third detail is in relation to the offshore export and inter-array cables. The prospective applicant submitted that the length of the cables would be subject to the final route and burial depth. It stated that preferred routes for the inter-array cables and the export cable have been identified following geophysical surveys, but that the routes and level of burials are subject to change due to the potential for unexpected ground conditions and obstructions on site, such as boulders.

The fourth detail is in relation to the location of the landfall transition joint bay. The prospective applicant stated that the transition joint bay would be required to connect the offshore export cable to three onshore land cables and that it currently has two options regarding its location. The first option is close to the beach at Dunany and the second option is in an agricultural field adjacent to the beach. The prospective applicant stated that the final location for the transition joint bay would be determined by the electrical and thermal properties of the offshore cable, and that this would only be confirmed following the execution of cable manufacture and supply contracts.

The fifth detail is in relation to the onshore substation. The prospective applicant stated that a substation design would be presented in an application for the proposed development, but that amendments to the final design for the type and siting of equipment within the two substation compounds could be required. The prospective applicant submitted that these amendments could be required because contracts for the construction of the substation cannot be finalised in advance of consent, equipment suppliers and installation contractors may have variations in the dimensions and layout of specific equipment, and advances in technology may amend size, location and equipment in relation to the substation compound.

Discussion:

The following matters were discussed:

- The Board's representatives stated that based on the presentation from the prospective applicant, its letter from 19th October 2023 and the recently issued circular from the Department regarding section 287A – it is likely that these requests for design flexibility would be considered reasonable, but that ultimately a final decision on this would be made by the Board.
- A discussion was held between the Board's representatives and the prospective applicant regarding the limit of deviation for the offshore wind turbines and offshore substation. Following a query from the Board's representatives, the prospective applicant stated that both it and its engineers are confident that the 50m distance would be sufficient but clarified that the 50m deviation is considered to be the centre point of the turbine. The Board's

representatives advised the prospective applicant to provide clear drawings regarding this issue.

- Following a query from the Board's representatives, the prospective applicant stated that both it and its engineers are happy with the 145-152m range in relation to the wind turbine hub heights.
- Following a query from the Board's representatives in relation to the inter-array and export cable routes, the prospective applicant stated that it is aware of a shipwreck in the vicinity of the proposed development and that the area's archaeological potential would be assessed and taken into consideration.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to clearly explain in the EIAR what it intends to do should it encounter obstacles in relation to the inter-array and export cable routes, and discussions referred to the general construction methodologies that could be required in relation to the provision of the project, all of which would be set out within any future EIAR.
- Following a query from the Board's representatives in relation to the location of the transition joint bay, the prospective applicant submitted that there would be no changes regarding public access should the beach option be chosen. The prospective applicant also submitted that farmers would be able to continue to work on land should the agricultural field option be chosen.
- The prospective applicant stated that drawings in relation to the transition joint bay options are being prepared.
- The prospective applicant stated that photomontages in relation to the onshore substation would be provided.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to ensure that it is satisfied with the figures and measurements that it uses in these requests, considering the current lack of specific regulations and guidelines.
- The Board's representatives asked the prospective applicant if it had considered including construction ports element of the proposed development in its request for design flexibility. The prospective applicant stated that it had considered including this detail but decided not to pursue it. It further stated that it has assessed the maximum distance from which it could transport material from and that an Operations and Maintenance facility is being considered as part of the proposed development.

- A discussion was held between the Board's representatives and the prospective applicant in relation to next steps once consultations are closed off. The prospective applicant queried what the estimated timeline would be in terms of the issuing of an opinion on the case. The Board's representatives stated that they would hope to issue an opinion as soon as is practicable.

Conclusion:

The record of the meeting will issue in due course and the prospective applicant can submit any comments it may have in writing to the Board.

The meeting concluded at 12:45pm.



Ciara Kellett

Director of Planning