

An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-318432-23 1st meeting

Case Reference / Description	ABP-318432-23 - Proposed 110kV substation to facilitate connection of the permitted Solar Energy Development on the lands of Tomsallagh, Ferns, Co.Wexford to the National Grid.		
Case Type	Pre-application Consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	09/01/2024	Start Time	14:00pm
Location	Virtually by Microsoft Teams	End Time	14:20pm

Representing An Bord Pleanála

Paul Caprani – Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)

David Ryan – Planning Inspector

Evan McGuigan – Executive Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant

Hannah Reilly – Statkraft

David O'Leary – Statkraft

Caitriona Fox – MWP

Paddy Curran – MWP

Introduction:

The meeting commenced at 14:00pm.

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 10th November 2023, requesting pre-application consultations under section 182E 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 by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant began its presentation with an introduction to the project team.

The prospective applicant provided an overview of the proposed development, which would consist of a 110kV substation and overhead loop-in connection to facilitate the connection of the permitted Tomsallagh Solar Energy development (Planning Reference: 20171275 and An Bord Pleanála reference: ABP-300427-17). The site location of the proposed development is in the townland of Tomsallagh, Ferns, County Wexford – 4.5km northeast of Enniscorthy and 5km south of Ferns.

The prospective applicant provided drawings of site location and a proposed site layout. The proposed substation would be located in the southern part of the permitted Tomsallagh Solar Energy development and situated directly below an existing overhead line. The proposed development would also involve a new road access point.

The prospective applicant stated its belief that the proposed development constitutes a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) and outlined its reasoning by referencing relevant parts of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

Discussion:

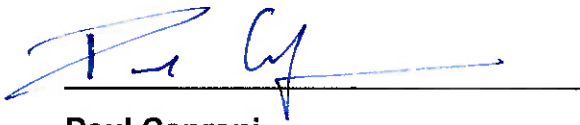
- The Board's representatives stated that based on the presentation from the prospective applicant, it is likely that the proposed development would constitute a SID case – but that ultimately a final decision on this would be made by the Board.
- Following a query from the Board's representatives, the prospective applicant stated that the existing overhead line is 110kV.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to take nearby rivers and watercourses (including River Slaney) into consideration and to carry out robust Appropriate Assessment Screening in relation to the proposed development.

- The Board's representatives outlined that a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) may be required for any future application for the proposed development.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to take cumulative and in-combination assessments and recent changes to Schedule 5 Part 2 of the Planning and Development Regulations (regarding Rural Restructuring) in relation to EIA Screening into account.
- Following a query from the Board's representatives regarding hedgerows, the prospective applicant stated that studies have been conducted for the permitted Tomsallagh Solar Energy development in relation to biodiversity and water quality (amongst others), and that these studies would be re-vetted for the proposed development. It also stated that an NIS would probably be required.
- Following a query from the Board's representatives, the prospective applicant stated that it received planning permission for the Tomsallagh Solar Energy development in 2021.
- The Board's representatives stated that the prospective applicant could submit a sample site notice to the Board's administrative team prior to the lodging of an application for the proposed development to ensure the notices correctly stated specified dates, timelines in which submissions could be made to the Board. The Board's representatives also advised the prospective applicant not to include confidential information in any future application for the proposed development.
- The Board's representatives and the prospective applicant agreed that a second consultation meeting would most likely not be required. The Board's representatives stated that it would be up to the prospective applicant in relation to deciding on whether to close off consultations.

Conclusion:

The record of the meeting will issue in due course and 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 onus is on the prospective applicant to either request a further meeting or formal closure of the pre-application consultation process.

The meeting concluded at 14:20pm.



Paul Caprani

Assistant Director of Planning