



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 1st Meeting ABP-319153-24

Case Reference / Description	Proposed development of 110kV grid connection to facilitate the connection of a proposed Wind Farm to the national grid at Cunlaghfadda and adjacent townlands, Co. Mayo		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	1 st Meeting		
Date	9 th May 2024	Start Time	2:30pm
Location	MS Teams	End Time	3:10pm

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Paul Caprani (Assistant Planning Director) Chair
Karen Hamilton (Senior Planning Inspector)
Ellen Moss (Executive Officer)

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Alan Clancy, MKO
Jade Power, MKO
Robert Kennedy, MKO
Grainne Griffin, MKO
Natalia Stolarska, MKO
John O'Connor, Greensource
Robert Crawford, Greensource

Introduction

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 22nd February 2024, 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 made by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant began their presentation by briefly outlining the meeting agenda.

The prospective applicant provided information about the applicant, Cúnlaghfadda Green Energy Limited, a subsidiary of Greensource Sustainable Developments Limited. They are an innovative Irish renewable energy company that specialises in the development of renewable energy projects. They have over ten years of operational experience and have developed over 150 megawatts of renewable energy projects. The project team includes consultants from

- MKO: Environmental Impact Assessment
- Hydro Environmental Services: Land, Soil and Geology; Hydrology and Hydrogeology
- Fehily Timoney: Geotechnical Engineering
- Triturus Environmental Ltd: Aquatic Survey & Baseline Fisheries Assessment
- Irish Archaeology Consultancy: Cultural Heritage and Archaeology
- Alan Lipscombe: Traffic and Transport;
- Collett & Sons Ltd: Preliminary Route Assessment
- AI Bridges: Telecoms Assessment
- Tli Group: Grid Connection Design

The prospective applicant provided a brief overview of the proposed development which includes:

- 110kV permanent substation,
- 2 underground grid connection cable routes from substation to existing 110kV Castlebar to Cloon overhead line to create a loop in – loop out connection,
- Two number end masts, and
- Temporary Construction Compound.

The prospective applicant presented a site location map of the proposed development site. In this drawing, the study area of the site was presented. The proposed site is located approximately 5 kilometres northwest of Claremorris town in a rural setting. The current land use is primarily private forestry. The proposed site location is in an area zoned as “Preferred Tier 1 Clustered” as per the Mayo Wind Energy Strategy 2011-2022.

The prospective applicant briefly discussed planning policy and noted that the proposed development is highly supported by national and regional planning policies. The proposed development is strongly supported by the Mayo County Development Plan 2022-2028 under the following policies and objectives;

- INO 37 - To facilitate the progression of and implement improvements to the existing electricity networks and facilitate the development of new transmission infrastructure projects in accordance with EirGrid's Implementation Plan Strategy 2020- 2025 (or any superseding strategy) that might be brought forward during the lifetime of this plan ,
- INO 38 - To ensure the provision, where feasible, of electricity cables located underground, and
- INO 39 - To seek the delivery of the necessary integration of transmission network requirements to facilitate linkages of renewable energy proposals to the electricity transmission grid, in a sustainable and timely manner.

The prospective applicant advised that the proposed development would fall within the scope of Section 182A(1) as it is a high voltage line where the voltage would be 110 kilovolts or more.

The prospective applicant presented a separate maps which indicated that the designated site is not located within or contiguous to any designated a Natura 2000 site. The River Moy Special Area of Conservation is to the northeast of the proposed development, and the Lough Carra Special Protection Area is 9.3 kilometres southwest of the proposed development site.

The prospective applicant discussed the proposed contents of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report. Volume 1 would include the Non-Technical Summary and Main EIAR including all figures. The chapters on Air Quality and Climate will be treated as separate chapters in the EIAR. Volume 2 includes the photomontage booklet and Volume 3 would include EIAR appendices.

The prospective applicant discussed the scoping document prepared which has been circulated to Mayo County Council, National Parks and Wildlife Services

(NPWS), National Monuments Service, Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI), Uisce Eireann, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), An Taisce, and Failte Ireland.

The prospective applicant had a pre-application meeting with Mayo County Council in January 2024. They provided a high level overview of the proposed development including policy background, scope of the EIAR and the project timelines to the council.

The prospective applicant has employed a community liaison officer available to provide an interface for the community to address any queries or concerns raised in relation to the proposed development. A project website has been developed to provide information regarding the proposed development to the local community. In Q3 and Q4 of 2023, the prospective applicant consulted with local landowners/residents in relation to baseline surveys and set out details of the proposed project. In Q2 of 2024, the prospective applicant will engage with locally elected representatives, issue a letter to residents within 2 kilometres of the proposed site outlining the nature of the proposed development, advertise details of the development in local media and make door-to-door visits to residents in the vicinity of the proposed project. In Q3 2024, a public exhibition event will be held in the local community hall. As part of community engagement, the prospective applicant has also organised a tour of an operational wind farm.

Discussion:

The Boards representatives began the discussion by questioning if the prospective applicant would be submitting separate application for the substation and grid connection and the wind farm. The prospective applicant advised that the wind farm application would be submitted separately to Mayo County Council as it does not qualify for SID.

The Boards representatives mentioned that they noticed several Tier 1 Designation in the area of the proposed development and advised the prospective applicant to highlight the exact location of the site in the context of the Tier 1 Designation in their application.

The Boards representatives requested details of the proposed timelines for the project's standalone website. The prospective applicant advised it would be live in the coming weeks. The prospective applicant queried if they require a standalone website for the application. The Boards representatives advised that a standalone website is required at application stage.

The Boards representatives queried if the prospective applicant had planned to lodge both the substation application to the Board and windfarm application to Mayo County Council at the same time. The prospective applicant responded that they plan to submit both applications at the same time.

The Boards representatives advised the prospective applicant that if one EIAR is to be produced for both applications, the document should clearly assess the environmental effects of the substation, and the windfarm proposal and also assess the cumulative impacts which could potentially arise from both developments.

The Boards representatives advised that engagement with the NPWS is crucial prior to any application is submitted.

The Boards representatives gave their preliminary opinion that the proposed development falls within the scope of strategic infrastructure but reminded the prospective applicant that 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, and that the prospective applicant can submit any comments they may have in writing or alternatively bring any comments for discussion at the time of any further meeting.



Paul Caprani

Assistant Director of Planning