

An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 1st Meeting ABP-319241-24

Case Reference / Description	Proposed development of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and connection to the adjacent 220kv Ballyvouskill Substation on lands at Ballyvouskill, County Cork.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	1 st Meeting		
Date	25/07/24	Start Time	11:00am
Location	MS Teams	End Time	11:45am

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Stephen Kay (Assistant Planning Director) Chair
Niall Haverty, Senior Planning Inspector
Raymond Muwaniri, Executive Officer
Lauren Murphy (Executive Officer)

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Stephen Barrett, Director of Tom Phillips & Associates
Greg Casey, Tom Phillips & Associates
Gary Magee, Head of Projects Abo Energy
Joe Jellie, Director Abo Energy

Introduction

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 8th March 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 noted the fact that the subject case was one of two similar cases submitted by the prospective applicants where the prospective applicant's opinion regarding the SID status of the proposal varies. It was therefore proposed to hold a joint pre application consultation meeting for the two projects to facilitate the Boards understanding of the two cases. The other case is Ref. ABP-319771-24 at Flagford, Co. Roscommon.

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 by discussing planning history. They briefly discussed a 2019 Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) facility which comprised of rechargeable battery units contained within up to 39, 40-foot containers on site and the associated development of a substation. This was granted permission by Cork County Council and the planning permission expired in January 2024.

The prospective applicant provided a brief overview of the proposed development which will consist of a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), an Independent Power Producer, a switchgear building, 110kV transformer and other electrical infrastructure. The proposed development is intended to connect to the adjoining Ballyvouskill 220kV ESB station via 110kV underground cables.

The prospective applicant gave a brief overview of the Strategic Infrastructure Development criteria and how it does not relate to their proposed development.

The prospective applicant concluded their presentation by stating that their proposed development would have an energy demand, would not represent a node on the transmission network and has no function relating to the operation of the transmission network. They also noted that the proposed development does not generate electricity.

The prospective applicant gave their opinion that the proposed development does not fall within the scope of Strategic Infrastructure Development and therefore an application should be made directly to Cork County Council.

Discussion:

- The Boards representatives started the discussion by stating that as the Battery Energy Storage System is not listed in the Seventh Schedule and does not comprise high voltage plant, their preliminary view was that it would not be determined to fall within the scope of Strategic Infrastructure Development, in line with previous Board determinations on similar developments. They noted that this was ultimately a matter for the Board to determine.
- With regard to the proposed connection to the existing substation, the Boards representatives noted that the terms 'transformer compound' and 'substation' are both used in the documents/drawings. They questioned if there is any EirGrid/ESB component to the proposed development? The prospective applicant clarified that the transformer compound will be an IPP facility with no EirGrid component.
- The Boards representatives recommended for the prospective applicant to be aware of the proposed Knocknamork Windfarm which is located a proximity to Ballyvouskill. The Boards representatives recommended the prospective applicant to be aware of any effects because of this proposed development such as an Appropriate Assessment Screening issues which may arise. The prospective applicant stated that they are carrying out ongoing discussions with Cork County Council regarding this.
- The Board's representatives noted that the proposed development appears to be located in the townland of Caherdowney, not Ballyvouskill as stated in the submitted documentation and advised the prospective applicant to get the correct townland for the area.
- The Board's representatives noted that the site is very close to the boundary of the Mullaghanish to Musheramore Mountains SPA, for which the hen harrier is the only qualifying interest. It also noted that a drainage

ditch along the northern edge of the site appeared to connect to Kilmeedy Stream, a tributary of the River Blackwater, which is an SAC. It advised that these matters should be considered in AA Screening.

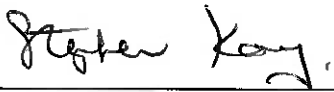
- The Board's representatives noted that EIA Screening may be required, given that the proposal potentially includes private roads and loss of hedgerows.
 - The Board's representatives noted the sloping nature of the site and highlighted the need to manage water during construction works.
 - The Board's representatives noted that the temporary welfare compound is located outside of the red line boundary in the submitted drawings.
 - The Board's representatives advised that the applicant demonstrate that adequate sightlines can be achieved at the site entrance.
 - The Board representatives noted that the current Gortyrhilly Windfarm application is close to the boundary with the site, which also proposes to connect to Ballyvouskill substation. The approved Knocknamork 110kV substation and cable development was also noted. The prospective applicant should have regard to any effects as a result, especially effects on hen harriers and AA issues. The prospective applicant replied that these issues had been discussed with Cork County Council.
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- The Boards representatives concluded the discussion by giving their preliminary view that the proposed development would not fall under Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, however at 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