



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of 1<sup>st</sup> Meeting ABP-320745-24

<b>Case Reference / Description</b>	Wind Farm Comprising of 17. No Wind Turbines, Associated Infrastructure and Grid Connection with Potential Output of 75 to 95MW of electricity located within the townlands of Ballincurra, Ballinlee South, Ballingayrour, Ballinbea, Knockuregare, Ballinlee North & Camas South approximately 18km southwest of Limerick City & 4km west of Bruff, Co Limerick		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-application consultation		
<b>1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> / 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Meeting		
<b>Date</b>	25/10/2024	<b>Start Time</b>	11:00am
<b>Location</b>	MS Teams	<b>End Time</b>	11:55am

### Representing An Bord Pleanála

Una Crosse, Assistant Planning Director (Chair)

Colm McLoughlin, Senior Planning Inspector

Lauren Murphy, Executive Officer

Ellen Matthews, Administrative Assistant

### Representing the Prospective Applicant

David McDonnell, Ballinlee Green Energy

Patrick McCoubrey, Ballinlee Green Energy

Nadine Walsh, Ballinlee Green Energy

Harry Harbison, Ballinlee Green Energy

Aileen O'Connor, MWP

Caoimhe O'Connor, MWP
Ken Fitzgerald, MWP

## Introduction

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 5<sup>th</sup> October 2024, requesting pre-application consultations under section **37B** 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 introducing the project team comprising representatives from Malachy Walsh & Partners (MWP) and Ballinlee Green Energy, forming part of the parent company Greensource Renewables.

The prospective applicant provided a description of the proposed development, referring to the turbine layout, overall export capacity, foundations and hardstand areas, access tracks, interconnecting electrical cables, on-site electrical 110kV substation, temporary construction compound, meteorological mast, borrow pits, spoil management areas and underground grid-connection cable to the Killonan electrical substation near Limerick city.

The prospective applicant presented images including an indicative draft wind farm layout drawing, turbine delivery route, the grid connection route and the site context relative to the wind energy strategy contained in the Limerick County Development Plan. The prospective applicant referred to the range of assessments and surveys commenced or completed for the project, with reference to an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS) being prepared for the project. The extent of community engagement undertaken to date and planned for the project was outlined, including public events, a dedicated project website, newsletters and door-to-door canvassing. Based on the legislation and planning policy, the prospective applicant is of the opinion that the proposed development falls within the scope of Strategic Infrastructure Development under section 37E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

## **Discussion:**

- The Board's representatives began the discussion by providing advice regarding the process of advancing the pre-application consultation process with and without seeking design flexibility. The prospective applicant confirmed that at this stage they wished to proceed without design flexibility.
- The Board's representatives questioned whether the prospective applicant intended to include the wind farm, grid connection and substation within a single application, which the prospective applicant confirmed to be their intention. The Board's representatives also advised regarding the process should design flexibility be sought for the electrical infrastructure, including the grid connection.
- The Board's representatives noted that careful consideration for the height and siting of the turbines would be required for the project given the landscape character of the area with photomontages from a range of sensitive locations, including cultural features, such as elevated areas to Lough Gur ACA.
- The Board's representatives enquired as to the consideration of the turbine delivery route. The prospective applicant advised of their ongoing engagement with landowners along the turbine delivery route.
- The Board's representatives referenced the potential loss of hedgerows and trees associated with the proposed access, as well as the need for replacement trees and hedgerows or other biodiversity enhancement areas being provided.

- The Board's representatives referenced the extent of archaeological areas of interest within the study area and the need to address the potential effects on same.
- The Board's representatives noted that there are a number of bridge crossings, including a river crossing, and asked the prospective applicant to elaborate on their intended approach for these crossings, with the prospective applicant outlining their intention to use a clearspan design. The Board's representative advised of the need for a clear methodology for same to be provided.
- In terms of habitats within the study area, the prospective applicant advised that the site mainly consists of agricultural grassland, with some rocky outcrops, while peat had not been encountered.
- Following a question from the Board's representatives, the prospective applicant clarified the proposed location of the on-site borrow pits.
- The prospective applicant clarified that they have consulted with Gas Networks Ireland regarding the gas pipeline and they will be adhering to their set back requirements.
- The extent of forestry to be felled was queried and the prospective applicant outlined that there may be one turbine located within an area of commercial forestry are, but that this had not yet been finalised.
- The prospective applicant clarified that it was their intention to consult with the Planning Authority following their first pre-application consultation meeting with the Board.

- The extent of ecological surveys, including bird surveys, was queried by the Board's representatives, as well as any findings arising. The extent of surveys being undertaken, as well as continuing to be undertaken were outlined by the prospective applicant.
- The distances of the proposed turbine locations to residential receptors was discussed.
- The prospective applicant queried the approach of proposing a turbine delivery route via the permitted but not yet opened Foynes Road by means of an alternative TDR.
- The Board's representatives concluded the discussion by advising the prospective applicant of their preliminary view that the proposed development would fall within the scope of Strategic Infrastructure Development, but noted that the ultimate decision regarding this is a matter for 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 pre-application consultation process. The Board's representatives advised that the record of the meeting will be issued in the meantime 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.

The Meeting concluded at 11:55



**Una Crosse**

**Assistant Director of Planning**