

**An
Bord
Pleanála**

Record of 1st Meeting ABP-320975-24

Case Reference / Description	ABP-320975-24		
Case Type	Pre-application Consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	1 st		
Date	20/01/2025	Start Time	14:00 hrs
Location	Virtual	End Time	14:43 hrs

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Staff Members
Sarah Lynch, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Phil Davis, Planning Inspector
Raymond Muwaniri, Executive Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Mairi Henderson, Director, McCutcheon Halley Planning
Muireann Carrol, Planning Consultant, McCutcheon Halley Planning
Owen Zamboglou, Project Manager, Bord Gais Energy
Olivia Holmes, Project Officer, Bord Gais Energy
AJ Brown, Project Manager, Atkins Realis
Deirdre Larkin, EIAR Coordinator, Atkins Realis

Introduction

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 3rd of 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 first meeting 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:

Bord Gais Energy is proposing the development of a 300MW open cycle gas turbine plant, 1 no. emissions stack, 220kV air insulated switchgear electrical substation, electricity transformer, grid connection and above ground gas installation. The site is on agricultural grassland in relatively flat topography, located 3.5km west of Athenry, County Galway. Permission is being sought for 25 years, after which the development may be decommissioned or recommissioned.

Two grid connection routes have been considered for the connection. The grid connection route mostly follows existing roads, but some sections will go through private lands. The grid connection route is still to be finalised. Alternatives are being assessed as the cables need to cross the motorway, so the application may include different options for grid connection route. The development is adjacent to the M17-M18 and M6 motorway and will be visible to passing traffic. Mitigation for nearby residents is being explored. Archaeological surveying and testing are being undertaken as part of the EIAR process.

The development requires oversized loads to be delivered to the site. There are currently 2 route options for site access being explored. A delivery route assessment and TIA will be undertaken, and the CEMP and CTMP will accompany the application. The EIAR will determine the construction route. No significant environmental sensitivities have been identified on initial scoping. The area is grassland and has a low ecological value. There is no known flooding in the area and the nearest residential developments are approximately 830m north of the gas turbine plant. The development will be subject to an IED licence from the EPA. Noise and air emissions will be compliant with legislation and consenting requirements. A land use planning assessment will also accompany the application.


The application is expected to be submitted to the Board by August 2025. It is anticipated that construction will take at least 2 years to complete, the project to be operational by 2028.

Discussion:

- The Board's representatives explained to the prospective applicant that if they are considering more than one option that they will need to request an opinion from the Board on design flexibility. If not, only one option can be submitted with the application. The prospective applicant stated they may request an opinion on design flexibility from the Board.
- The Board's representatives queried why the prospective applicant is going with open cycle instead of closed cycle, and noted that this may have implications under the Climate Change Act.
- The prospective applicant outlined a number of environmentally sensitive issues to be addressed in the EIAR. They have identified environmental constraints in the geological surveys, and geology investigations are ongoing. The Boards representatives noted that the area is karst limestone and a full investigation of potential karst features including caves would be required. The EIAR and ecological surveys will be vital.
- The Board's representatives reminded the prospective applicant to confirm that the haul routes have the capacity for the weight of the delivery loads. They reiterated that if the prospective applicant has 2 options, they need to engage in the design flexibility consultation process.
- The Board's representative advised the prospective applicant to set up a meeting as soon as possible if they are considering design flexibility. The prospective applicant mentioned that more work needed to be done on the routes they are considering.

Conclusion:

The Board's representatives advised that 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Lynch', is written over a horizontal line.

Sarah Lynch

Assistant Director of Planning