



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 1st Meeting ABP-321564-24

Case Reference / Description	ABP-321564-24		
Case Type	Pre-application Consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	1 st		
Date	12/02/2025	Start Time	10:00 hrs
Location	Virtual	End Time	11:00 hrs

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Staff Members
Una Crosse, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Tomas Bradley, Senior Planning Inspector
Raymond Muwaniri, Executive Officer
Sinead White, Executive Officer
Nichola Meehan, Senior Executive Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Colm Staunton, Halston Environment & Planning Ltd
Stephen Kelly, Halston Environment & Planning Ltd
Nigel Reams, Director, Lumcloon Energy
Paul Collins, Lumcloon Energy
Jake Bracken, Advisor, Lumcloon Energy

Introduction

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 23rd of December 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:

The detailed presentation, which is attached to the file, outlines that Red Admiral is part of the Lumcloon Energy Group which specialises in innovative and scalable clean energy and low carbon solutions, applying a practical approach to advancing transformative clean energy projects in Ireland.

Red Admiral DC are in the process of developing a Data Centre which will source its primary power from a collocated flexible Decentralised Energy Resource (DER).

The Data Centre will be located on a 48ha site and includes six storey data halls, each measuring 225m length, 65m width and 22m height. The proposed site is located in the townlands of Kiltotan and Collinstown, Oldtown and Farthingstown, County Westmeath.

The DER will be installed across 192ha and comprises of; (a) Solid Oxide Fuel Cell Power System with a capacity of 160MW, the technology generates electricity using natural gas from the gas grid available at the site. (b) Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) with the capacity of 250MW, will act as an enabler to optimise the DER power system and provide carbon free system services. (c) Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Installation with a capacity of 120MW, the development will contain solar PV panels on ground mounted frames. (d) Grid Connection, the data centre will be connected to the high voltage 220kV electricity network via the Castlelost Gas Insulated Substation (GIS) available at the site. The DER has been designed to replace conventional standby diesel generators and will optimise the use of these assets based on minimising the carbon impact and supporting the national grid by reducing curtailment of renewable energy resources.

The development lands comprise agricultural pastures with some tillage, and the landform in the wider area is characterised by flat to low rolling terrain typical to the Midlands. There are no Natura 2000 sites close to the proposed site, and the lands are not prone to flood risk.

Discussion:

- The Board's representatives preliminary view, from the elements outlined, would be that the Data Centre, the BESS and the Solar PV elements of the overall development would not comprise Seventh Schedule development and would not, on this basis, constitute Strategic Infrastructure Developments (SID). Any application/s for these elements would go to the local authority. It was noted that the Planning and Development (Amendment) Act 2018 - Communications and Data Infrastructure had not, at the time of this meeting been commenced.
- In respect of the Decentralised Energy Resource and specifically the Solid Oxide Fuel Cell Power System, the prospective applicant provided additional detail in respect of its function at the meeting and outlined, that based on revised calculations it would have a heat output of approximately 107MWth (Megawatt Thermal) which is considerably below the Seventh Schedule threshold of 300 MW. The prospective applicant also considered the BESS heat output cumulatively with the Fuel Cell but this would only provide an additional 44MWth, again considerably below the 300 MW threshold. The solar farm has no heat output.
- On this basis the Board's representatives provided a preliminary view that as the threshold of 300 MW, as set out in the Seventh Schedule, would not be met, or exceeded, that the subject proposal would not constitute SID.
- The prospective applicant elaborated on the electrical requirements for the Decentralised Energy Resource and the provision of transmission infrastructure in particular. The 120MW generation from the DER will connect to a new 220 kV substation which is proposed to be privately

owned. This will be connected to the existing Castlelost 220kV GIS Substation.

- It was outlined that the 220kV substation is proposed to have a tail-fed connection to the national grid, and when there is excess generation, this substation can take the energy and route it into the national grid. If the grid is under pressure, the site's own generation will serve the campus.
- The Board's representatives advised that the transmission infrastructure comprising the 220kV substation may constitute SID. The prospective applicant explained that the High Voltage lines will not be part of the transmission system. Energy will come in underground to the new electrical node on the HV Electricity Grid, and head east to Maynooth as tail-fed generation.
- The prospective applicant stated the substation is technically not a new node on the network as it is tail-fed and will remain in private ownership. The Board's representatives outlined that if the voltage meets or exceeds 110kV, the SID determination is not affected by whether the connection is loop in or loop out, state owned or private infrastructure. Once it meets or exceeds 110kV, the development would fall under Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.
- The prospective applicant was advised that they may wish to consider seeking a request for pre-application consultations for the transmission infrastructure under Section 182E. The Board's representatives stated that where developments include both Seventh Schedule and electricity infrastructure that an application could be lodged under Section 37E of the Act.

- The prospective applicant noted that they anticipate lodging the planning application mid-2025 and enquired if the introduction of the new Planning and Development Act 2024 will affect their application. The Board's representatives stated that any application would be considered under the relevant legislation applicable at that time.

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.



Una Crosse

Assistant Director of Planning