



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 1st Meeting ABP-321580-24

Case Reference / Description	ABP-321580-24 - Proposed Development comprises a 110kV Substation and Cable Connection.		
Case Type	Pre-application Consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	1 st		
Date	24/02/2025	Start Time	11:00 hrs
Location	Virtual	End Time	11:40 hrs

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Staff Members
Una Crosse, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Hugh O'Neill, Senior Planning Inspector
Raymond Muwaniri, Executive Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant
Michelle Price, Senior Associate Planner, RPS Tetrtech
Seamus Fay, Planning Team, RPS Tetrtech
Peter Henry, RES Group
Jenna Folkard, RES Group

Introduction

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 19th of December 2024 requesting pre-application consultations under Section 182E 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 prospective applicant outlined the proposal which comprises a cable connection and substation to serve a consented Battery Energy Storage System (BESS). The presentation is on file. The prospective applicant anticipates submitting the application in Q2 of 2025.

The proposed development would not equal or exceed any quantity, area or other limit specified in the classes under Schedule 5 of the Regulations, and therefore a mandatory EIAR not required. Voluntary screening having regard to schedule 7 and 7A has been undertaken. An Ecology Impact Assessment was undertaken which demonstrates the land is of low ecological value. The site is not within any statutory or non-statutory designated sites but is hydrologically linked to Ballyhoe Lough 1km to the north. The design includes a buffer to drainage ditches and Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) for cables under the drain to the southeast. There are no special landscape area designations, however 2 designated views are within 5km of the site. Photomontage has been prepared, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment has also been undertaken, and additional planting will be provided. Access arrangements proposed were outlined and transport assessments were carried out demonstrating that the impact of traffic due to construction and operation can be mitigated. It is intended to submit a Construction Traffic Management Plan. An archaeological impact assessment has been prepared, and a geophysical survey has been undertaken. The site is not within any identified flood risk area. An Acoustic Impact Assessment was undertaken, and noise levels are predicted to be well below daytime, evening, and nighttime limits. No cumulative effects predicted.

Discussion:

- The Board's representative queried why the new compound is located remotely, as opposed to being an extension contiguous to the existing 110kV Substation. In response the prospective applicant stated it was designed in this manner to address the technical requirements of the consented BESS.
- The Board's representative also queried why the application/redline boundary included the consented BESS 110/38kV substation compound, and if there were any concerns that elements of the proposal would significantly exceed the visual impact of the consented BESS. The prospective applicant stated that they can review the extent of the redline boundary, and photomontages will be made available to show visual effect.
- The Board's preliminary view is the proposed development constitutes Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID), in accordance with legislation given the voltage of the substation and associated grid connection.
- The prospective applicant noted that the substation would be tail-fed and in response the Board's representatives stated that the preliminary view provided was based on the voltage of the proposed new substation and associated cabling rather than its function on the system.
- The prospective applicant enquired about the new PDA and if a BESS over a certain capacity would constitute SID. The Board's representatives outlined that were not in a position to advise specifically on this matter but noted the provisions of, the as yet uncommenced, Section 115(2) of the Planning and Development Act 2024.
- The prospective applicant outlined their up to date position on appropriate assessment and the screening exercise which had been carried out.
- The Board's representatives referred the prospective applicant to the Water Framework Directive (WFD). The water body to the northwest of the site is a designated arterial drainage channel under the 1945 Arterial Drainage Act. The prospective applicant was advised to include consideration of the WFD.

- The prospective applicant was advised to review the application boundary and the rationale for the inclusion of the previously consented elements of the proposed compound.
- Reference was made to objective ref: INF OBJ 38 of the current Meath County Development Plan and reference therein to a 30m buffer. Consideration of the inclusion of adequate detail in an application stage preliminary Construction Environmental Management Plan, to demonstrate protection of surface waters and hedgerows was also advised.
- The Board's representative advised the perspective applicant to provide adequate details of the proposed crossing of the drain to the south by HDD or otherwise, and to review consideration of badgers in their Ecological Assessment.

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