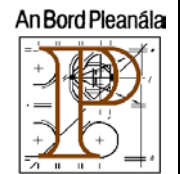


# Record Of Meeting



|  |  |                           |             |
|--|--|---------------------------|-------------|
| <b>Case Reference/ Description</b>                           | 19.PC0209<br>Proposed Wind Farm at Cloncreen, Co. Offaly         |                           |             |
| <b>Case Type:</b>  | Section 37B of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended |                           |             |
| <b>1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting:</b> | Meeting with Offaly County Council                               |                           |             |
| <b>Date:</b>   | 17 <sup>th</sup> May 2016  | <b>Start Time:</b>        | 2.30pm      |
| <b>Location:</b>   | Offices of Offaly County Council                                 | <b>End Time:</b>          | 3.15pm      |
| <b>Chairperson:</b>  | Anne Marie O'Connor,<br>Assistant Director of Planning           | <b>Executive Officer:</b> | Síle Bannon |

## Attendees:

### Representing An Bord Pleanála

Anne Marie O'Connor, Assistant Director of Planning

Stephen O'Sullivan, Senior Planning Inspector

Síle Bannon, Executive Officer

### Representing Offaly County Council

Andrew Murray, Senior Planner, Planning Section

Brendan O'Brien, Assistant Planner, Planning Section

Caroline Dempsey, Administrative Officer, Planning Section

Charles McCarthy, Senior Engineer, Roads Section

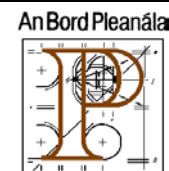
Ed Kelly, Acting Senior Executive Planner, Planning Section

Joe Dooley, Acting Executive Engineer, Environment and Water Services

John Mitchell, Acting Senior Executive Engineer, Roads Section

Tom Shanahan, Senior Engineer, Environmental and Water Services

# Record Of Meeting



## Introduction

The representatives of An Bord Pleanála and Offaly County Council were introduced.

The Board stated that it is currently engaged in pre-application consultations in accordance with section 37B of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, with Bord na Móna in relation to the proposed wind farm at Cloncreen, Co. Offaly.

The Board's representatives set out the background to the pre-application consultations, the purpose of which is to determine if the proposed development is strategic infrastructure development, and for the Board to advise the prospective applicant on what considerations relating to proper planning and sustainable development of the environment may have a bearing on the Board's decision in relation to an application.

A copy of the record of this meeting will be sent to the planning authority and the issues discussed at this meeting will be presented to the prospective applicant at a further meeting. The pre-application consultation file, including the record of this meeting, will become available following closure of the pre-application consultation process.

The Board informed the Council that it has met with the prospective applicant once to date, in November 2015, and that the proposed development consists of 25 turbines of a height of up to 170 metres and an output of 75 megawatts.

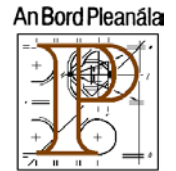
## Purpose of the meeting

The Board stated that the purpose of the meeting was to ascertain the views of the Council in relation to the proposed development, how it fits within the context of the Offaly County Development Plan 2014 – 2020, the Wind Energy Strategy for the county and whether it had any concerns or issues it would like to raise with the Board.

The Board felt that a meeting with the Council would be useful in this particular case due to the potential for cumulative impacts from wind farm developments in the area of the proposed development, with particular reference made to Mountlucas Wind Farm (planning register reference number 09/453 and appeal reference number PL.19.237263) and Yellow River Wind Farm (SID application reference 19.PA0032).

The local authority stated that it has met with the prospective applicant to discuss the proposed development, and that the proposed wind farm layout now consists of 21 turbines, with the reduction in turbine numbers arising from consultations with the Council and the public.

# Record Of Meeting



## Issues Discussed

The following issues were raised by the Council and discussed with the Board's representatives:

### *Offaly County Council Development Plan 2014 - 2020*

- The site lies within the wind development zone in the CDP and is considered to be appropriate for wind farm development.
- The CDP includes a buffer zone for wind development of a minimum of 2km from Town and Village Cores, European designated sites, including Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA), and national designations, Natural Heritage Areas (NHA).

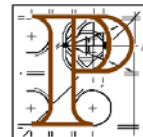
### *Cumulative Impact Assessment*

- Cumulative impact is the issue that concerns the Council the most in relation to the proposed development.
- In addition to the Mountlucas and Yellow River Wind Farms, the prospective applicant should also consider the Maighne Wind Farm, which is currently at application stage with An Bord Pleanála (Board reference 19.PA0041), in its application.
- Particular regard should be had to the potential cumulative impact of the Mountlucas Wind Farm on residents located between the two sites, to the west of the proposed development, and located along the road to the north of the proposed development. Shadow-flicker and noise enveloping are amongst the issues that should be examined.
- The new EIA Directive should be considered when the application is being prepared and assessed.

### *Layout & Design*

- The local authority stated that during its consultations with the prospective applicant it had said that the Cloncreen site is more suited to fewer but larger turbines than those at the Mountlucas Wind Farm, and with the reduction in the number of turbines from 25 to 21, the prospective applicant seems to have taken this point on board. The Council has yet to see a turbine design but it would prefer to see a rotor length to hub height ratio of 2:1.
- The layout of the turbines has also developed from the Council's initial consultations with the prospective applicant into a more grid like layout, similar to that of the Mountlucas Wind Farm.
- The local authority cautioned that it had not yet viewed the layout on site.

# Record Of Meeting



## *Photomontages*

- The local authority has advised the prospective applicant in relation to photomontage locations. Some of the suggested locations are those that were used for the Mountlucas Wind Farm and would assist in showing the cumulative impacts of the proposed development, as well as using views from schools or nearby locations if the proposed development is obstructed.
- Additional views from the Edenderry area and Croghan Hill were also advised.

## *Public Consultations*

- The local authority is aware that the prospective applicant has held public consultation meetings at 3 locations, Ballyfore, Edenderry and Clonbullogue, and carried out 400 door-to-door consultations. A Community Engagement Forum has also been formed.
- With regard to consultation with the Irish Parachute Club in Clonbullogue, the local authority stated that the prospective applicant would be familiar with the issues concerned from dealing with the Mountlucas Wind Farm application. The prospective applicant may wish to refer to international guidance with regard to the buffer area around the parachute club.

## *Wind Farm Guidelines*

- The issue of new wind farm guidelines was raised by the local authority, to which the Board responded that it will take into consideration the guidelines that are in place at the time the Board is making a decision on an application.

## *Roads and Access*

- The proposed haul and transport routes will be similar to those used during the construction and development of the Mountlucas Wind Farm. A similar approach to the road surveys carried out pre and post construction at Mountlucas Wind Farm should be suitable for the proposed development.
- Works may be required at roundabouts and junctions, particularly in the Tullamore area. The local authority suggested alternative trailers should be considered for transporting the turbines, which may reduce the need for road works.
- It is understood that concrete and gravel for the proposed development would be sourced in the Tullamore area, but this should be set out in the application for the proposed development.
- The existence of the peat rail system across the site was raised by the Board but the local authority is unaware if it would be suitable for use.

## *Flood risk / Water Quality*

- Increase risk of flooding is not considered likely due to the flat peatland nature of the proposed site and the fact that there is not expected to be a major impact on the site.
- There may be an improvement in the water quality arising from the proposed development compared to the existing peat excavation activity.

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## *Community Gain*

- The local authority would like to see a similar condition as applied by the Board on the Mountlucas Wind Farm, and intends to recommend a similar community gain condition to that in relation to the Yellow River Wind Farm relating to community funding, near neighbour and greener home schemes.
- The prospective applicant has stated that it would liaise with the Community Engagement Forum in relation to community gain.

## *Appropriate Assessment / European Site Designation*

- The site location is less sensitive than areas to the west of the county. Appropriate assessment is not expected to be as significant an issue as at other locations.
- The issue of bird flight paths was raised by the Board in the context of Lough Boora. The local authority understands that the prospective applicant will be carrying out a scoping exercise on water bodies adjacent to the proposed site but it was unaware of distances to the proposed site that were being examined. It further stated that the bogs in the area were not rewetted, but that there may be whooper swans to the north of the county. The bird surveys prepared by the prospective applicant will assist in considering this issue.

## *Reinstatement Works and Public Access*

- There has been no reinstatement works at the cutaway bog on the site of the proposed development.
- Open access to the proposed development could be included as a condition, similar to that of the Mountlucas Wind Farm. There is also an internal railway between the Mountlucas Wind Farm and the proposed development which could provide linked public access between the sites.

## *Planning History on Site / in the Area*

- The existence of the quarry on the site was discussed. The prospective applicant has indicated to the local authority that it may be used as a borrow pit during construction. This should be included in the application and described in the EIS.
- There is an existing 120 metre monitoring mast on the proposed site, which may increase in height. There is also a licence from the Environmental Protection Agency for an ash repository close to the proposed development, although it is outside the site boundary.
- There is a current planning application with Offaly County Council for a fish farm at the Mountlucas Wind Farm, and attention was also drawn to the nearby Edenderry Power Plant.

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## *Timelines*

- The Board advised that it is unaware of any timelines regarding the lodgement of an application for the proposed development and that this would be dictated by the prospective applicant.
- The Board advised that it is meeting the prospective applicant later this week for what is expected to be the last meeting, and that the timelines may be clearer after that meeting.

The Council had no further issues it wished to raise with the Board.

## **Conclusion**

The Board thanked the Council for facilitating the meeting. The meeting concluded.

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**Anne Marie O'Connor**  
**Assistant Director of Planning**  
**May 2016**