



An
Bord
Pleanála

Recording of Meeting 05.PC0228 2nd meeting

Case Reference / Description	05.PC0228 Proposed wind farm at Meenbog, Lismullyduff and surrounding townlands, Co. Donegal.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	2 nd		
Date	28/04/17	Start Time	11 a.m.
Location	Meeting Room 1	End Time	12.55 p.m.
Chairperson	Anne Marie O'Connor	Executive Officer	Kieran Somers

Attendees		
Representing An Bord Pleanála		
Staff Member	Email Address	Phone
Anne Marie O'Connor, Assistant Director of Planning		
Suzanne Kehely, Senior Planning Inspector		
Kieran Doherty, Senior Executive Officer		
Kieran Somers, Executive Officer	k.somers@pleanala.ie	01-8737107

Representing the Prospective Applicant		
Jimmy Green, McCarthy Keville O'Sullivan		
Pat Roberts, McCarthy Keville O'Sullivan		
Neil O'Brien, Planree Ltd		

The meeting commenced at 11 a.m.

The Board referred to its previous meeting with the prospective applicant held on the 17th October, 2016 and asked if the prospective applicant had any comments to make on the record of this meeting. The prospective applicant replied that it had no comments to make.

The Board also referred to the meeting it had with representatives from Donegal County Council on the 27th March, 2017. The Board allowed the prospective time to peruse the record of this meeting.

Project Update:

The prospective applicant provided the Board with updates on the proposed development as follows:

- New assessments have been carried out and are on-going generally.
- A meeting was held with representatives from the local authority prior to the Board's meeting with it. The prospective applicant said that the local authority representatives had required more details on the road proposals involved. The prospective applicant said it had a methodology prepared in respect of this aspect of the proposed development.
- The prospective applicant said that it had been focusing on engagements with stakeholders and local residents over the past few months. It informed the Board that a Residential Visual Impact Assessment had been carried out with views taken from various properties. A total of three pamphlets have been circulated in the area and a public consultation evening was held in Ballybofey in February. Following on from this, additional pamphlets were distributed over a two-kilometre radius. The prospective applicant also advised that a website has been set up in respect of the project. Photomontages from the

aforementioned Residential Visual Impact Assessment have been put up on this site. A further public consultation evening is planned, but has not been formally arranged yet. Noting this, the Board enquired as to whether any new issues had arisen in the course of public consultations to date. The prospective applicant said that there were no new issues.

- The prospective applicant advised that there has been liaison between it and the Loughs Agency, as well as other relevant Northern Ireland bodies.

Ecology:

The prospective applicant presented a Briefing Document to the Board which it had previously presented to representatives from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The prospective applicant referred to the Board's decision to refuse permission on case reference number 05.PA0040. The prospective applicant said that it had taken on board the reasons and considerations given for refusing permission and would seek to ensure robust surveys and data for the new planning application. The prospective applicant said that a particular focus had been placed on birds and bats so as to ensure full compliance with relevant guidelines.

The prospective applicant said that it would be relying on data compiled from the previous planning application which would be supplemented and augmented by further surveys and data having especial regard to the Scottish Natural Heritage Guidance. With regard to habitats generally, the prospective applicant said that there would be an adherence to Best Practice Guidelines. The prospective applicant said that it would seek to minimise impacts on peatland habitats as well as having regard to sensitive watercourses. It said that more work had been done with respect to invasive alien species on the subject site; adding that an additional survey would be conducted prior to the lodging of a planning application.

The prospective applicant said that walkover surveys had been carried out with regard to otters and badgers. Bat surveys have also been carried out to relevant standards. It commented generally that there is not much bat activity on the subject site.

With regard to the Freshwater Pearl Mussel, the prospective applicant said that a comprehensive survey has been conducted as far as Lough Eske. It said there was no evidence of this species in the catchment area; it clarified to the Board that the catchment area in question is in respect of the cable route and not the wind farm. The prospective applicant stated that the cable will be running over the Meenbog River in this area and will not require any interventions with respect to watercourses.

The Board's representatives mentioned the issue of fisheries with particular regard to the Meenbog River which has been raised by both the local authority and Inland Fisheries Ireland. The prospective applicant said that a standard suite of mitigation measures would be adhered to in respect of watercourses.

With regard to additional fauna, the prospective applicant said that there was nothing to suggest that the subject site was of major significance.

Ornithology:

The prospective applicant said that there have been many additional surveys carried out since the previous planning application, and followed the advice in the Scottish Natural Heritage Guidance.

With respect to the Hen Harrier, the prospective applicant advised that no breeding Hen Harrier has been recorded on the site since 2014. It said that discussions have taken place between it and representatives from the NPWS. With respect to proposed mitigation measures, the prospective applicant said it is satisfied with its approach which would ensure that there will be no net loss of Hen Harrier habitat. Generally, the prospective applicant commented that an extensive amount of survey work has been carried out with vantage points mapped and everything documented in terms of the viewshed analysis. Having regard to the breeding season, the prospective applicant said that survey work is up to date and on-going.

Appropriate Assessment:

The prospective applicant said that a separate screening document and Natura Impact Statement will be lodged as part of the planning application. The prospective applicant referred to some of the European Sites in the vicinity which will be the subject of Stage 2 Assessment. A 15-kilometre radius was employed in terms of screening and regard was also had to site connectivity.

Responding to the Board's query on migratory pathways, the prospective applicant said that surveys and monitoring found no evidence of migratory pathways over the subject site. It also said that there is no evidence of any water body in the vicinity being used as a feeding ground by migratory birds.

Noting this and reference to other such assessments, the Board's representatives emphasised the need for robust assessment and documentation with regard to the planning application generally. It added that it would be very important that there be no gaps in information presented in this regard and said that there is a need for precision with regard to all findings from desk and field surveys. Particular attention was drawn to the requirements for surveying and analysis set out in the Scottish Natural Heritage Guidance, and to the reason for refusal in respect of the previous planning application.

The Board asked if any specific comments had been made by representatives from the NPWS. The prospective applicant replied that the NPWS had placed an emphasis on robust assessment with regard to the Hen Harrier. It said the NPWS was particularly concerned that there be no net loss of Hen Harrier habitat.

Donegal County Council Record:

The prospective applicant made comments on this record as follows:

- In respect of water/drainage and reference made to Lough Mourne, the prospective applicant said that infrastructure would not be significant in nature and extent in this location as to minimise any effects on water quality.

- With regard to boreholes for dwellings in the Meenbog area, the prospective applicant said that the assessment it would employ a 'worse case scenario' of assuming that all residential dwellings have their own wells.
- In relation to the grid connection and the laying of cables to facilitate this, the prospective applicant said that it would avoid laying cables on water mains.
- With regard to the local authority's concerns in relation to the presence of high voltage cables along the N15, the prospective applicant said that it would have regard to this and it would be assessed in the planning application.
- With respect to transportation and the local authority's concerns regarding the impact of traffic on the arch bridge running over the River Finn, the prospective applicant said that it was aware of the local authority's plans with regard to remedial works for this structure. The prospective applicant suggested that the funding issue in relation to completion of these works could potentially be the subject of a special development contribution.
- With regard to drainage arrangements to be provided in relation to road works, the prospective applicant said this matter would be addressed in the planning application.
- With regard to the proposed layout of the development and shadow flicker and landscape assessment, the prospective applicant said these would form part of the planning application.
- In relation to the addition of a number of Protected Structures to the local authority's record of Protected Structures, the prospective applicant said it would be cognisant of this.
- In relation to the potential impact of turbines on radio signals in the county, as raised by the local authority, the prospective applicant said that this forms part of its constraints study.
- In relation to engagement with the Northern Ireland Planning Service, the prospective applicant commented that it is engaging with the relevant individual bodies.

2014 Variation Number 2:

The prospective applicant said that it was aware of that Variation No.2 of the County Development Plan to restrict windfarm development is now in place. It also noted that the new Donegal County Development Plan is at draft stage.

The prospective applicant noted that 19 of the 36 turbines under consideration would comply with the terms of Variation No.2, and that it is considering making an application for these 19 turbines only as a possible first phase.

Responding to the Board's question on this, the prospective applicant clarified that such a 19-turbine proposal would not involve a revised layout. It also noted for the record that the said 19 turbines would still qualify as SID as the proposed output would exceed 50 megawatts.

Other Matters:

The Board referred to the 2014 EIA Directive which is due to come into effect on the 16th May, 2017. It noted that there are no regulations as of yet for transposing the provisions of this into Irish Law. It advised the prospective applicant to be cognisant of the requirements of the 2014 Directive.

With regard to the design process generally, the Board reminded the prospective applicant to document the process in the EIS/EIAR as comprehensively as possible, providing a clear rationale for all design decisions.

The Board also reminded the prospective applicant to be consistent with respect to the tree-felling areas. It also advised that the removal of hedgerows should be fully assessed and added that there should be clarity as to how much vegetation would require to be removed.

Responding to the Board's question on the matter, the prospective applicant said that a comprehensive geotechnical survey has been carried out in relation to ground stability.

The prospective applicant also clarified that the proposed development is sited in the Meenbog Townland but would be called the Carrickaduff Wind Farm as it is sited on Carrickaduff Hill.

Conclusion:

The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant that they would be giving an informal presentation to the SID division of the Board in respect of the proposed development. The Board's representatives indicated that they would be in a position to relay any views obtained from the SID division of the Board and that this might best be done by way of a further short meeting with the prospective applicant.

General application procedures can also be given at the time of the next meeting. The prospective applicant indicated it would then formally seek closure of the pre-application consultation process thereafter.

The meeting concluded at 12.55 p.m.

Anne Marie O'Connor

Assistant Director of Planning