An Bord Pleanála

Record of Meeting
05.PC0228

Case Reference / Description	05.PC0228 Proposed wind farm at Meenbog, Lismullyduff and other townlands, Co. Donegal.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	Meeting with Local Authority		
Date	27/03/17	**Start Time**	2 p.m.
Location	Offices of Donegal County Council	**End Time**	3.50 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 Somers, Executive Officer	k.somers@pleanala.ie	01-8737107

Representing Donegal County Council		
Paul Kelly, Senior Executive Planner,		
Garrett Doherty, Senior Executive Engineer Roads, Stranorlar and Ballybofey Municipal District		
Brendan O'Donnell, Senior Engineer/Divisional Manager, Roads		
Martin O'Donnell, Executive Engineer, Water Services		
Johnny McGettigan, Senior Executive Engineer, Water		
Hugh Alexander, Waterworks Inspector		

The meeting commenced at 2 p.m.

The Board said that the meeting with the local authority was an information-gathering exercise from its point of view, pursuant to section 37C(4) of the Act whereby the Board can consult with any person it considers may have information relevant to the purposes of the consultation under section 37B. A record of the meeting would be taken which would be made public at the closure of the pre application consultation process. The record of the meeting will be forwarded to the local authority in the first instance for any comments it might wish to make on this.

The Board set out the nature of the pre-application process generally and the three criteria it must have regard to under the provisions of Section 37A(2) (a), (b) and (c). The Board said that its remit at this point in time is to determine whether or not the proposed development constitutes strategic infrastructure; it is not a function of the pre-application consultation process to reach conclusions on the particular planning merits of a case.

The Board's representatives mentioned that, as part of the pre-application consultation process, it can impart advice to the prospective applicant on issues that might inform the Board's decision-making process. The Board stated that one meeting had taken place with the prospective applicant (held on the 17th October, 2016), and that it had been informed that the prospective applicant had also met with the local authority.

The constituent elements of the proposed development, which is the subject of the pre-application case, were set out by the Board and it also referred to the short agenda it had prepared for this meeting.

The local authority provided the Board's representatives with an update on a recent decision of the High Court to quash the Ministerial Direction relating to the proposed 2014 Variation Number 2 of its County Development Plan. The local authority advised that this particular variation was proposed to be introduced in order to exclude certain Fresh Water Pearl Mussel catchment areas from the areas open to consideration for wind farms, in addition to introducing a set-back of ten times the tip height for turbines from sensitive receptors. The local authority informed the Board that, in light of the quashing of the said Ministerial Direction, Variation Number 2 was now effectively adopted and this would shortly be published on its website.

Noting the previous decision to refuse permission for case reference number 05.PA0040, the Board's representatives provided the local authority with a short synopsis of the revised scheme which is the subject of the current pre-application consultation case as follows:

- Reduction in number of turbines from 49 to 36, with a revised layout and within a smaller site area.
- Repositioning of many of the turbines within the site.
- Amendment to the access road layout.
- Reduction in the number of borrow pits and construction compounds.

The Board said that the prospective applicant has advised that more detailed bird surveys will inform the Natura Impact Statement (NIS) and ecological assessments. The prospective applicant had also advised the Board that consultations with stakeholders had commenced.

The Board summarised some of the key points which were discussed with the prospective applicant and asked the local authority if it had any comments to make generally.

The local authority raised the following issues:

Water/ Drainage:

- The proximity of reservoirs in the vicinity of the proposed development and the potential for water pollution from contaminated surface water runoff due to works on higher ground; and reduction in water supply due to culverts and reduced recharge. Particular reference was made to Lough Mourne which serves the Stranorlar area. The planning authority stated that the Lough Mourne reservoir is the responsibility of Irish Water; it was not aware if the prospective applicant had consulted with Irish Water.
- The potential impact on the Mourne Beg river (which is important for fisheries) arising from the construction of culverts and the potential for bog slides.
- The potential impacts on group water schemes/water mains and tributaries in the area generally, and the need to protect pipes and water quality. For example, a group water scheme for dwellings close to the proposed location of turbine numbers 21 and 30 and to the Gleneely/Lismullyduff reservoir.

- The local authority noted that there are many dwellings in the Meenbog area which are serviced by their own boreholes, and an assessment of potential impacts should be carried out.

Grid connection:

- The Board confirmed to the local authority that, as part of works for the proposed development, the grid connection, which is proposed, would roughly follow the public road which included a significant length of the National Primary Route N15 and other sections of the Local Road network.
- The local authority commented that local roads in this area were single carriageway roads of quite poor quality (essentially a bog rampart) and also raised concerns with regard to the existing water main which runs beneath the surface.
- As a minimum requirement, a separation between any such cables facilitating a grid connection and the existing water main would be requested by the local authority. Laying cables on top of a water main was identified as highly problematic as such a practice can then impede any repair work to be carried out in the future.
- The local authority also raised concerns with regard to the long-term effects of trenching on the road in question. It mentioned that it had raised such matters in relation to the previous application (i.e. case reference number 05.PA0040). It was suggested that alternative options should be considered by the prospective applicant.
- The local authority also indicated that the presence of high voltage electricity cables along the N15 would represent a major restriction to future maintenance and upgrading of this route and would be unacceptable to the local authority.
- The Board's representatives pointed out that following the O'Grianna High Court decision an applicant for development is now required to include any proposed grid connection in its EIS and the competent authority (local authority or Board) is required to carry out EIA having regard to this.
- The local authority also noted that there is currently a Section 5 referral before the Board in respect of whether the provision of an electricity cable from Drumnahough and Lenalea Wind Farms to Clogher substation is or is not development or is or is not exempted development (case reference number 05E.RL3500).

Transportation:

- The local authority stated that it has requested the prospective applicant to restrict all haulage to the designated haulage route and not rely on any alternatives in this respect.
- Concern was raised in relation to an arch bridge over the River Finn which is only capable of accommodating one vehicle at a time. Although remedial works have been carried out on the south-side of the bridge, there is no funding currently available for the north-side (Castlefin side). It was stated that the transportation of turbines cannot be accommodated by the bridge until such time as remedial works on the north-side have been carried out.
- The local authority said that the regional road has good structural capacity for the transportation of materials, but expressed concerns in relation to the local

road and the effects such traffic movements might have on it. It added that it had previously requested the prospective applicant to carry out a structural analysis of the local road in question. Overall, the local authority said that any realignment works carried out by the prospective applicant to facilitate development should be done to a standard required by it and would like to see evidence of compliance as part of any proposal. It also said it would wish to see adequate (site specific rather than schematic) drainage arrangements provided in relation to road works.

Proposed layout:

- The local authority said that it had advised the prospective applicant that its concerns relating to layout, visual amenity, and designated views, and shadow flicker are detailed in its submission in relation to the previous application and remain pertinent despite the reduced number of turbines.
- A shadow flicker and landscape assessment would be required to comment further.

Other Issues:

- No specific issues were raised in relation to Appropriate Assessment. It was noted that the Lough Eske watercourse feeds a habitat for the freshwater pearl mussel.
- The local authority advised of the recent addition of a number of Protected Structures to its record of Protected Structures, which included a number of bridges in the vicinity of the site.
- The potential impact of turbines on radio signals in the county was raised as an issue, particularly the telemetry signals from Barnesmore.
- With regard to the Northern Ireland Planning Service, the local authority said it was not aware of any recent consultations between the prospective applicant and the NIPS. It also said it was not aware of any new issues raised by the relevant Regional Planning Authority.

Conclusion:

It was agreed that the record of the instant meeting will be forwarded by the Board to the local authority seeking any comments or additions to the record it might wish to make. The Board then proposes to hold a further meeting with the prospective applicant, at which time the said record will be made available to it for information purposes.

The meeting concluded at 3.50 p.m.

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Anne Marie O'Connor

Assistant Director of Planning