



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting 14.PC0233 2nd meeting

Case Reference / Description	14.PC0233 Proposed wind farm of 29 wind turbines with an output of 90MW in various townlands in South County Longford.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	2 nd		
Date	29/05/17	Start Time	11 a.m.
Location	Meeting Room 3	End Time	12. 10 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		
Una Crosse, Senior Planning Inspector		
David Curran, Senior Executive Officer		
Muiriosa Cassells, Executive Officer		

Kieran Somers, Executive Officer	k.somers@pleanala.ie	01-8737107
Representing the Prospective Applicant		
Siobhan Tinnelly, Project Manager, Tobin Consulting Engineers		
Stephen Dowds, Planning Advisor, Stephen Dowds Associates		
Michael Gill, Project Manager, Bord na Mona Powergen Ltd		
Sean Creedon, Planning and Environmental Manager, Bord na Mona Powergen Ltd		

The meeting commenced at 11 a.m.

Introduction:

The Board referred to its previous meeting with the prospective applicant on the 17th November, 2016 and the record of this meeting. The Board enquired if the prospective applicant had any comments to make on this record. The prospective applicant replied that it had previously provided the Board with a point of clarification in respect of this meeting, namely, that had consulted with representatives of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) and that such consultations are on-going.

The prospective applicant referred to the proposed agenda for the instant meeting which it had forwarded to the Board and addressed item 1 relating to a summary of the proposed development. The prospective applicant noted for the record that the proposed number of turbines for the development is 28 (previously, the number was 29). The prospective applicant said that the new turbine layout has been circulated to stakeholders and relevant prescribed bodies for information. The prospective applicant said that the reason for the omission of one turbine is on account of a previously derelict dwelling (on the Derryadd site) which is now being reinstated by the owner. As this was close to the location of the turbine in question (i.e. less than 650 metres), it was felt prudent to omit the turbine in question.

The prospective applicant reported that work on all ancillary elements of the proposed development is on-going. With respect to the NPWS, the prospective applicant noted that it had submitted further information to this body in relation to ecological methodology as requested; it added that no response to date has been received from the NPWS.

The prospective applicant repeated its view that the proposed development would constitute strategic infrastructure having regard to the new proposed layout of 28 turbines and the proposed output which would be 90 megawatts approximately.

The prospective applicant gave an update on the infrastructure of the proposed development as per item 2 of the agenda. Noting that three separate bog sites are involved, the prospective applicant said that access for abnormal load transport (i.e. turbines) would be via the M6 and the exit would be via the N63 and, subsequently, along the R392. There is interconnectivity within the subject site as regards the three bogs. Responding to the Board's query on the matter, the prospective applicant said a port had not yet been decided upon in relation to delivery of the turbines. With regard to possible transport constraints in and around Lanesborough, the prospective applicant said that it is still reviewing options with Longford County Council and Roscommon County Council. A consultations document has also been submitted to Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) and consultations are on-going with that particular body.

The prospective applicant said that two options will be presented in the formal planning application with regard to whether the grid connection will be underground or via overhead lines.

The prospective applicant advised the Board that there will be a total of three meteorological masts in respect of the proposed development – one for each of the bogs. The height of these will be up to 120 metres having regard to the expansive nature of the subject site. Responding to the Board's query, the prospective applicant said that the tip height of turbines would be up to 170 metres.

In relation to item 3 of the agenda (issues raised at previous pre-application consultation meeting), the prospective applicant reported that extensive surveys and assessments have been carried out with respect to the matter of any possible groundwater connectivity with ground water dependant terrestrial ecosystem, particularly the neighbouring turlough. It said that the potential for connectivity appears to be very low generally, but noted for the record that a number of boreholes will be established in order to facilitate groundwater surveys; this, it added, will establish the groundwater baseline environment. The Board's representatives advised that there should be sufficient robust data presented with any formal planning application to demonstrate this point.

The prospective applicant reported that consultations are on-going with representatives from Longford County Council, Roscommon County Council and Westmeath County Council. It said that it had a recent meeting with Longford County Council on the proposed development and also advised that Westmeath County Council had expressed no major concerns with proposed haul routes.

The prospective applicant also stated that consultations are on-going with bodies such as the NPWS, the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and the Office of Public Works (OPW). With respect to the Board's previous advice to consult with the OPW regarding the subject site's proximity to Corlea trackway visitor centre, the prospective applicant said it had not yet received a response from that body. It added that it will contact the OPW in due course again.

With regard to bird surveys, the prospective applicant reported that these are now complete and that it has two years of data compiled; it clarified to the Board that all such studies follow the Scottish Natural Heritage Guidance. The prospective applicant noted evidence of the Hen Harrier in the far north of the site and the Woodcock in a wooded area outside of the site. It said it will further advise the Board on this matter once additional data has been compiled. The Board pointed out that this would be a key consideration with regard to any planning application. It also noted that there are a number of water bodies in close proximity to the subject site, including the River Shannon, and the potential for flight paths between the water bodies. The prospective applicant replied that no flight paths had been identified in the area of the proposed wind turbines.

The prospective applicant confirmed that there is a consultant ecologist employed with regard to the proposed development. The Board, for its part, suggested that a third party independent review peer might also be of considerable benefit to the project. The potential for impacts on bird species, including flight paths, was identified by the Board as an issue in the consideration of any further planning application.

In respect of item 4 of the agenda (consultations), the prospective applicant said that it has consulted with a wide variety of interested parties and stakeholders. A follow-up meeting is scheduled to take place with Roscommon County Council shortly. The prospective applicant reported that a number of information days and public consultations have been held to date and that an email account is available for any public queries arising. Members of the public have also been facilitated with visits to the Mount Lucas wind farm site and, generally, there were 5,000 guided tours of this particular site in 2016. There is also a quarterly newsletter and a community engagement forum (with specialist consultations facilitated) has been set up. Noting this, the Board enquired as to what issues were coming up in relation to the project. The prospective applicant replied that generally these related to the progress of the project as well as planning issues such as visual impact and shadow flicker. With regard to the matter of visual impact, the Board invited the prospective applicant to elaborate on how visual assessment is being carried out given the site's extensive nature. The prospective applicant said that 30 viewpoints had been selected and that photomontages would be prepared in relation to these. Route screening analysis is also being carried out along the Royal Canal.

Responding to the Board's question, the prospective applicant advised that the closest sensitive receptor to one of the proposed turbines is 650 metres. The prospective applicant also said that its landscape specialists are aware of nearby sensitive receptors and points of interest in the general area. With regard to viewpoints, the Board noted the proximity of the River Shannon and suggested that some of these viewpoints might also be taken from that particular water body. The

Board advised the prospective applicant to be cognisant of any historical sites or protected sites in the general vicinity of the subject site. Responding to the Board's query, the prospective applicant also confirmed that, in respect of archaeology, some testing had been done on site as well as desktop studies.

The prospective applicant referred to a proposed amenity plan for the site which would facilitate connectivity from the subject site to other nearby amenity features such as the Royal Canal and the Corlea trackway; this it said would generally facilitate physical elements such as walkways, cycleways and also visits to the subject site. The prospective applicant also referred to the Mid-Shannon Wilderness Plan which is part of the current Longford County Development Plan. The prospective applicant also confirmed that car parking would also be provided as part of this proposal.

With regard to item 6 of the agenda (planning and policy), the prospective applicant said that it was seeking to understand where the instant project might fit with regard to the new EIA Directive which has effect from the 16th May, 2017. It noted that it had previously conducted its own scoping exercise in relation to the proposed development. The Board's representatives said that that an application could only be progressed under the provisions of the previous Directive if a formal scoping opinion had been given by the competent authority (i.e. the Board in this case). Generally, it advised the prospective applicant to seek to accord with the provisions of the new Directive (52/14/EU).

Conclusion:

The prospective applicant said that its current intention is to lodge the planning application circa August 2017. Noting this, the Board's representatives said they may seek to hold meetings with both Longford County Council and Roscommon County Council. A third and final meeting could then be arranged with the prospective applicant.

Lastly, the prospective applicant advised that it will have a project specific website in relation to the instant development. It noted also the requirement for a dedicated website for any planning application lodged with the Board under strategic infrastructure and said this would have a distinct address as is required. The Board reminded the prospective applicant that such a website must remain live for the duration of the planning application and cannot be altered in any way unless with the prior consent of the Board.

The meeting concluded at 12.10 p.m.

Anne Marie O'Connor

Assistant Director of Planning