



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of Meeting 14.PC0233 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting

<b>Case Reference / Description</b>	14.PC0233  Proposed wind farm of 29 (reduced to 24) wind turbines with an output of 90MW (increased to 96MW) in various townlands in South County Longford.		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-application consultation		
<b>1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup>		
<b>Date</b>	17/05/18	<b>Start Time</b>	11 a.m.
<b>Location</b>	Meeting Room 3	<b>End Time</b>	12.40 p.m.
<b>Chairperson</b>	Anne Marie O'Connor	<b>Executive Officer</b>	Kieran Somers

<b>Attendees</b>		
<b>Representing An Bord Pleanála</b>		
<b>Staff Member</b>	<b>Email Address</b>	<b>Phone</b>
Anne Marie O'Connor, Assistant Director of Planning		
Una Crosse, Senior Planning Inspector		
David Curran, Senior Executive Officer		
Kieran Somers, Executive Officer	k.somers@pleanala.ie	01-8737107

<b>Representing the Prospective Applicant</b>		
Eoin O' Mullane, Tobin Consulting Engineers		
Padraig Cregg, 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 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2017 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 sent in comments on the record of this meeting by letter dated the 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2017.

**Presentation by the prospective applicant:**

The prospective applicant provided the Board with an update on the project generally since the time of the previous meeting. It said that it has had regard to the Preferred Draft Approach to the Review of Wind Energy Guidelines published in June 2017, and has reviewed aspects of the proposed development in relation to this. The prospective applicant said that the final turbine layout has now been reduced from 28 to 24 in order to reflect the changes proposed in the draft approach, particularly in relation to visual and noise impacts. It added that this was the principal reason as to why it had not made the planning application to the Board in August 2017 as previously indicated.

The Board was presented with a copy of the development map and briefly recapped on the selection process for the subject site. The prospective applicant outlined how the subject site has been refined down to the three bog sites in question; it added it is satisfied that it has gone through a robust selection process in this regard.

The minimum setback distance from sensitive receptors is now 750 metres. The maximum tip height of the proposed turbines has been increased from 170 metres to 185 metres. The output for each of the proposed turbines would be a nominal 4MW, amounting to 96MW in total. The proposed road layout in respect of the proposed development has also been amended.

Certain elements of the proposed development remain the same as previously indicated to the Board. It is proposed to present two potential substation options for consideration in the planning application. Options will also be outlined with respect to underground/overhead grid connection. In response to the Board's question on the matter, the prospective applicant said that all existing overhead lines in the vicinity of the subject site are 110kV.

The prospective applicant outlined the nature and extent of other infrastructure for the proposed development which includes construction compounds and three meteorological masts (one on each of the three bog sites) which would be up to 120 metres in height. With respect to borrow pit locations, the prospective applicant said that these have been identified since the time of the previous meeting. Amenity access facilities were also referred to by the prospective applicant; it said that it was proposing a further three kilometres in addition to the existing construction road layout which would be available exclusively for amenity purposes. The prospective applicant added that it has had discussions with local community groups with regard to this layout.

With respect to proposed haul routes, the prospective applicant said that it was considering options from either Dublin Port or Galway Port. It confirmed to the Board that haulage routes will not be affected by the increase in turbine height. Only certain roads will be used for access to the subject site; it was confirmed that there is no proposal to use the R398 or any of the local roads. The prospective applicant also advised that it has had discussions with representatives of Longford County Council with regard to haul routes.

The prospective applicant offered an update in relation to previous discussion points with the Board as follows:

- In relation to the potential connectivity with the nearby turlough, the prospective applicant advised that additional boreholes and hydrogeological investigations have been carried out and that it is now satisfied that no connectivity exists between the application site and turloughs in the vicinity.
- With respect to landscape and visual impact assessment, the prospective applicant advised that 50 viewpoints have been selected which will be presented by way of photomontages in the formal planning application. Noting this, the Board enquired as to whether there has been any consultation with the local authority and/or members of the public which highlighted any particular sensitive vantage points in the wider area. The prospective applicant replied that it is satisfied that the viewpoints as selected are

representative and have been chosen in some instances with regard to clusters of dwellings. With regard to consultation with the local authority on this, the prospective applicant said that it had received advice to be cognisant of the current development plan in respect of the selection of viewpoints. Overall, the prospective applicant said that it is satisfied with the criteria which has been followed with regard to the selection process. The Board representatives noted the examples of photomontages presented by the prospective applicant and reminded it to be very clear as to the rationale which has informed viewpoint selection.

- The prospective applicant recapped on the nature and extent of ecological surveys conducted to date. It referenced in particular bird surveys which have been carried out and noted how the subject site has contracted during the course of such surveys. With respect to surveys on other species, the prospective applicant said that these had been extended to include the hinterland of the site; it added that due regard was had to the mobility of specific species. The prospective applicant noted that a total of four winter season surveys have been carried out, as well as three breeding seasons for birds. A walkover of the subject site was carried out in 2016; bat surveys have also been conducted. The prospective applicant said that it had had due regard to the provisions of Scottish Natural Heritage Guidance which require a minimum of two years of surveys. It said that it is satisfied that it is in compliance with these guidelines and that a robust assessment will be provided as part of the formal planning application. In response to the Board's question on the matter, the prospective applicant confirmed that the methodological approach had been peer reviewed. The Board enquired as to whether any other matters had arisen as a result of surveys. The prospective applicant noted that there is significant bird activity in the area owing to the proximity of the site to the Shannon catchment area; it added that this includes water birds most especially when localised flooding occurs. The Board noted that the subject site is located in a complex ecological environment and advised that all methodology and data collection should be robust, and that any conclusions reached in respect of potential impacts must be supported by evidence.
- The Board's representatives recommended that any environmental or construction management plans relevant to the Appropriate Assessment (such as a draft Construction Management Plan) should be submitted as part of the planning application.
- The prospective applicant said that it has written to prescribed bodies on a number of occasions with regard to the proposed development, but that it has had no formal meeting with representatives from the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The Board recommended that the prospective applicant should seek a meeting with the NPWS given the sensitivity of the area in question. With respect to the Office of Public Works (OPW), the prospective applicant said that it has received no formal response from this body, but has had liaison with the local community group which runs the Corlea trackway visitor centre in conjunction with the OPW.
- With respect to local authority consultations, the prospective applicant advised that three meetings have taken place with representatives from Longford County Council. In response to the Board's query, it said that no significant issues have been raised by the local authority at these meetings. In addition,

one meeting has been held with representatives from Roscommon County Council which primarily focused on proposed haul routes; this is also the case with regard to Westmeath County Council.

The prospective applicant provided the Board with a summary of public consultations which have been held to date. It said that the most recent meeting with the local community engagement group took place in November 2017 and that an update meeting with county councillors was held in March 2018. The prospective applicant also informed the Board that on-going work has been carried out by the project's community liaison officer with respect to the revised layout. A meeting with a number of community groups also took place in March 2018. Responding to the Board on the matter, the prospective applicant said that it has a clear understanding of the concerns of members of the public with regard to the proposed development. It said issues that have been raised include noise, shadow flicker, effects on groundwater and on private wells.

The Board's representatives reminded the prospective applicant of the amended EIA Directive 2014 and, in particular, the information to be contained in the EIAR as set out in Annex IV. The Board emphasised the importance of documenting the EIA process undertaken and advised the prospective applicant generally of the requirement to register the EIAR on the Department's portal in advance of the planning application should the forthcoming regulations have commenced. The Board also requested that a schedule of EIA mitigation measures be set out in a stand-alone appendix as part of the planning application.

### **Procedures:**

Procedures in relation to the making of a formal planning application were given by the Board as follows:

- An application can only be lodged after formal notice has been received by the prospective applicant from the Board.
- The application must be made by way of full completion of an application form to the Board.
- The Board requires as a minimum that the public notice of the application would be in two newspapers circulating in the area to which the proposed development relates, one of which should be a national newspaper. A site notice in accordance with the protocols set out in the Planning and Development Regulations must also be erected. The date of the erection of the site notice is to be inserted; otherwise it should contain the same information as the newspaper notices and should remain in place for the duration of the period during which the public can make submissions to the Board.
- The documentation relating to the application is to be available for public inspection at the offices of the relevant planning authority and the offices of

An Bord Pleanála. In this regard, the requirements in terms of the number of copies of the documentation to be lodged with the relevant planning authority and the Board is as follows:

- Planning Authority – 5 hard copies and 2 electronic copies.
- An Bord Pleanála – 3 hard copies and 7 electronic copies.
- The Board also requires the prospective applicant to provide a stand-alone website containing all of the application documentation. The address of this website is to be included in the public notice.
- The public notice of the application is to indicate that the application documentation will be available for public inspection after 5 working days from the date of the publication of the notice so as to ensure that the documentation is in place for such inspection.
- The time period for the making of submissions by the public is to be at least seven weeks from the date the documents become available for inspection (not from the date of publication of the public notices). The Board requires that the public notice must indicate the deadline time and date for the making of submissions to the Board. It was agreed that the prospective applicant would advise the Board's administrative personnel in advance of the details of its proposed public notice and that any further definitive advice on same including confirmation of dates/times could be communicated at that stage.
- The service of notice of the application on any prescribed bodies must include a clear statement that the person served can make submissions to the Board by the same deadline as specified in the public notice.
- The service letter on the planning authority with the necessary copies of the documents should be addressed to the Chief Executive and should also alert the authority to the Board's requirement that the application documentation be made available for public inspection/purchase by the planning authority in accordance with the terms of the public notice (copies of any newspaper/site notices should be provided to the planning authority). It is the Board's intention that all of the application documentation will remain available for public inspection during the currency of the application.
- The depositing of the application documentation and the making of the application to the Board should take place immediately after the publication of the notice and the completion of the service requirements. The application documentation should include a copy of all letters serving notice of the application on prescribed bodies and the local authority, copies of the actual newspaper notices as published and the site notice.

- The fee for lodging an application is €100,000. The fee for making a submission in respect of an application is €50 (except for certain prescribed bodies which are exempt from this fee). There is an existing provision enabling the Board to recover its costs for processing any application from the applicant. In addition, it was pointed out that the legislation also enables the Board direct payment of costs or a contribution towards same to the planning authority and third parties.
- The Board also drew the prospective applicant's attention to the fact that the forthcoming Regulations to transpose the 2014 EIA Directive may require applicants to register EIA development on a central portal on the Department's website prior to lodging an application for planning permission. An acknowledgement from the Department in this latter regard will be required to accompany the planning application to the Board if the application is made after the commencement of these Regulations.

**The sequencing of the making of the application was summarised as follows:**

1. Publish newspaper notices.
2. Serve copy of relevant documents on bodies/persons required to be notified of the application. Deposit required number of copies with relevant planning authority.
3. Deposit required number of copies of application documentation with An Bord Pleanála and make an application to it.

**Conclusion:**

The prospective applicant advised the Board of its current timeline which provides for lodgement of the planning application in July 2018. Noting this, the Board said that it would issue the record of the instant meeting and that it would then be a matter for the prospective applicant to seek closure of the pre-application process and the formal SID determination of the Board.

The meeting concluded at 12.40 p.m.

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