



Case Reference / Description	26.VC0102 Proposed electricity interconnector between Ireland and Wales from Great Island, Co. Wexford.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	2 nd		
Date	20/09/18	Start Time	11 a.m.
Location	Meeting Room 3	End Time	12.25 p.m.
Chairperson	Phillip Green	Executive Officer	Kieran Somers

Attendees		
Representing An Bord Pleanála		
Staff Member	Email Address	Phone
Phillip Green, Assistant Director of Planning		
Una Crosse, Senior Planning Inspector		
Kieran Doherty, Senior Executive Officer		
Kieran Somers, Executive Officer	k.somers@pleanala.ie	01-8737107

Representing the Prospective Applicant		
Daniel Garvey, Arup		
Tina Raleigh, Greenlink		

The meeting commenced at 11 a.m.

Introduction:

Noting that the previous meeting with the prospective applicant took place on the 8th December, 2016, the Board noted that it had received comments from the prospective applicant in relation to the CER guidance document and also further information in relation to the project generally which was submitted prior to the instant meeting. The prospective applicant confirmed for the record that it has not forwarded any further plans and particulars to the Board since the time of the previous meeting.

For the purposes of the record, the Board noted that the powerpoint presentation submitted for the instant meeting would form part of the public file following the closure of consultations. The Board also emphasised the need for clarity as regards who would be making the planning application. The prospective applicant replied that this would be Greenlink Limited. It agreed to subsequently clarify this in writing to the Board upon receipt of the record of this meeting.

The Board noted that the applicant has sought to commence the PCI permit granting process and that the PCI Unit of the Board must (based on the views of the relevant statutory bodies) indicate as to whether the project is of sufficient maturity to proceed in this regard.

Presentation by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant outlined the proposed agenda for the meeting and said that the nature of the proposed development has not fundamentally changed since the time of the previous meeting. The current status of the proposed development was set out by the prospective applicant. It noted that the instant project has been included as a Project of Common Interest (PCI) by the EU and that financial support has been obtained from the Connecting European Facility (CEF). The Board was also advised that a connection agreement to the National Grid network in the UK has been established and that the project is currently being evaluated by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (formerly the CER). Noting this, the Board said that, as part of the strategic infrastructure pre-application process, it would likely meet with other bodies such as the relevant local authority, NPWS and CRU. The Board also said that it would be useful if the implications of Brexit in relation to the project could be teased out.

With regard to the limits of its own jurisdiction vis-à-vis offshore development, the Board referred to its consideration of the previous east west interconnector project which included an assessment of impacts to the 12-nautical-mile limit. It also noted that there might be implications in this regard if there are any amendments made to current legislation, particularly relating to the marine environment.

The prospective applicant said that route assessments and project scoping are on-going and that its current target for lodging the planning application is circa Quarter 1 2019. As regards on-going consultations, the prospective applicant reported that two public consultations have taken place to date and that meetings have also been held with bodies such as Wexford County Council (in particular with the roads department) and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). There is also active engagement in progress with the relevant authorities in Wales.

In a general context, the Board advised the prospective applicant of the need to present in this pre application consultation a defined and specific project and to be as clear as possible in relation to the nature and extent of the proposed development; it added that this was especially important from a public participation perspective and in assisting the Board in considering potential effects of the development, scope and type of environmental assessments required and associated procedural obligations. Noting this latter point, the prospective applicant presented the preferred route for the proposed cable which it said had also been presented at the two public consultations held to date.

The prospective applicant said that offshore surveys, which are due to commence shortly, will determine the landfall point for the proposed development either at Boyce's Bay or Baginbun Beach. Apart from a manhole for access, no structures are proposed at the shore. The onshore cable route will follow the regional roads for the most part and will run underground; the prospective applicant added that the only residential area in the vicinity of the proposed route would be the village of Duncannon. The prospective applicant noted that Campile Estuary would be one of the main environmental constraints with respect to the proposed route. Three proposed route options into the converter station to the north of the onshore route are still undergoing consideration with a number of engineering issues arising.

The prospective applicant enquired as to whether alternatives with respect to the proposed route could be presented as part of the planning application. The Board replied that this approach would not be ideal and could prove to be problematic especially if an EIAR were required in respect of the proposed development. The prospective applicant advised that it is proposed to present a number of alternative designs in the planning application for the design and configuration of the proposed converter station. The configuration is dependent on the provider. The Board advised that full design details of the alternative designs would be required.

The prospective applicant said that the proposed development would be described to the 12-nautical-mile limit. It noted that any foreshore consent application would have to be submitted to the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. The Board, for its part, noted that any such application would have to be considered under the auspices of the separate PCI process.

The prospective applicant presented proposed photomontage viewpoint locations; it said that it has identified ten of these in total to date. The Board suggested that regard be had to the Wexford County Development Plan and protected views which are listed in this and to how views to and from any archaeological sites might be affected.

In response to the prospective applicant's query on the matter, the Board said that it had not yet come to an opinion as to whether an EIAR would be required. In the event of the proposed development not coming under a class requiring the production of an EIAR, the prospective applicant enquired as to whether an EIAR could be submitted as part of the planning application in any case. The Board replied that this could be done. In such a scenario, the Board confirmed that it would not then have to screen for EIA. The Board also noted for the record that a process will commence in 2019 whereby an applicant can request a screening opinion from the relevant local authority; it added that any such screening opinion given by a local authority can, in turn, be referred to the Board. The Board also reminded the prospective applicant of various requirements (including the Department's website portal) in the event of an EIAR being submitted.

In relation to appropriate assessment, the Board said that if Stage 2 is found to apply to any part of the project (such as offshore development), then it applies to the entire project as a whole. The Board also reminded the prospective applicant to be cognisant of secondary, indirect and cumulative effects as well which might need to be included in any appropriate assessment analysis; it also emphasised the importance of using correct language and terminology as well as the desirability for a robust approach as regards biodiversity/ecological assessments.

In response to the Board's query on the matter of ownership of the proposed converter station site and the potential for a CPO process, the prospective applicant said that its intention is to lease the land for the proposed converter station; it added that it would be in a position to confirm this by the time of a further meeting with letters of consent being provided from landowners with the application itself.

Conclusion:

Notwithstanding the PCI status of the project, the Board emphasised the importance of clearly setting out the need for the project in any planning application and alternatives considered. In response to the prospective applicant's query, the Board said that it was too early yet to advise the PCI unit whether the project is of a sufficient maturity to commence the PCI permit granting process. Going forward in the instant strategic infrastructure pre-application process, the Board said its preference would be for the project to be further refined so that it can report to the SID division of the Board and also engage with other agencies such as the NPWS and the CRU. Responding to this latter point, the prospective applicant said that it should be in a position to finalise details such as the onshore landfall, the onshore cable route and the location for the proposed converter station in the next few weeks. It said that it would forward these particulars to the Board once they are available. Noting this, the Board said that it would possibly arrange meetings with some prescribed bodies such as Wexford County Council, the NPWS and the CRU.

The record of the instant meeting will issue in the meantime and the Board will seek to arrange a further meeting with the prospective applicant in due course.

The meeting concluded at 12.25 p.m.

Phillip Green

Assistant Director of Planning