



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of 4th Meeting 26.VC0102

Case Reference / Description	VC0102 Proposed electricity interconnector between Ireland and Wales from Great Island, Co. Wexford.		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	4 th		
Date	31/01/20	Time	11.10a.m. – 12.30p.m.

Attendees
Representing An Bord Pleanála
Anne Marie O'Connor, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Una Crosse, Senior Planning Inspector
Ellen Morrin, Senior Administrative Officer
Kieran Somers, Executive Officer
Representing the Prospective Applicant
Daniel Garvey, Arup
Tom Brinicombe, Greenlink
Paul Hickey, Greenlink

Introduction:

The Board referred to its previous meeting with the prospective applicant held on the 14th May 2019 and the record of this meeting. The Board enquired as to whether the prospective applicant had any comments it wished to make on the record of this.

The prospective applicant replied that it had no comments to make aside from noting the fact that the reference to Round Tower should more properly read as Martello Tower.

Presentation by the prospective applicant and Discussion:

Project Update:

- The prospective applicant provided the Board with an update on the project since the time of the previous meeting. It said that the project is in the fourth round of PCI and will remain a PCI project notwithstanding Brexit. The prospective applicant said that it is currently running a tendering process with respect to the cables and converter station elements. A preferred bidder is expected to be identified by March 2020. The prospective applicant also advised that a grid connection has been secured in Wales and that a connection agreement with Eirgrid is in place for the Irish side.
- With respect to the Welsh side of the project, the prospective applicant reported that there is positive feedback generally and that it is having on-going engagements with six landowners. Both marine applications (Pembroke and Great Island) have been submitted and consultations have been closed. Responses from stakeholders and individual parties are currently being considered.
- In relation to landfall areas on both the Irish and Welsh side, the prospective applicant said that it is seeking to minimise effects on habitats and sensitive areas. On the Welsh side of the project, the prospective applicant said that it is working closely with the relevant authorities and that signed land agreements are being secured. The CPO process in this particular jurisdiction commenced in January 2020 and is on-going.

- The prospective applicant said that the design of the project is now finalised and that the EIAR is undergoing final review, as is the NIS.

Foreshore Licence and other consents:

- With respect to the Foreshore Licence application on the Irish side, the prospective applicant advised that an application was lodged circa July/August 2019; consultations on this concluded in January 2020. The prospective applicant confirmed that an EIAR was included as part of the Foreshore Licence application. The Board's representatives noted this and enquired as to whether transitional arrangements had been discussed with the Department. The prospective applicant replied that discussions have taken place in this regard, but not in great detail. The prospective applicant added that the said licence will go through under the existing regime and that it expects it to be issued by July 2020. It also confirmed that the said licence will extend to the 12-nautical-mile limit and that relevant assessments will extend to the median line.
- The Board's representatives requested that a schedule of consents required for the project be included as part of the planning application. The Board said that an explanation as to the nature and remit of these various consents would also be useful. The Board also requested a list of consents being sought on the Welsh side of the project. In relation to the Foreshore Licence aspect, the Board asked that the relevant case reference number be provided so that the reporting inspector/Board might be appraised as to the progress of the licence.

Legal Jurisdiction:

- With regard to the matter of jurisdiction apropos the foreshore, the prospective applicant said that the legal advice it has received is that the consenting regime should conclude at the high-water mark and that the assessment of impacts should address all cumulative effects. The Board referred to the approach taken on the east west interconnector case and said that it will further consider the matter. It indicated that one further meeting in the instant

pre-application consultation process might be in order following discussions with the SID division of the Board.

Environmental Impact Assessment

- The prospective applicant advised the Board's representatives of the fact that it has received legal advice on two matters since the time of the previous meeting. With respect to the matter of an EIAR, the prospective applicant said that the legal advice it has received is that the subsequent planning application will be more robust if an EIAR is included.
- With regard to the climate chapter of the EIAR, the prospective applicant said that this will include beneficial effects arising from the proposed development. It also undertook to check that the said chapter references the Climate Action Plan. The Board noted this and advised the prospective applicant to take a holistic look at all impacts and effects arising from the proposed development, both positive and negative.
- The Board requested that a schedule of mitigation and monitoring measures be submitted as part of the EIAR.

Appropriate Assessment

- The prospective applicant said that discussions with the NPWS have generally been positive and that the NPWS is satisfied regarding effects of the proposed development on the reef habitat. The Board's representatives noted this and stated that a key consideration is that there is no adverse effect on the integrity of the reef habitat. The prospective applicant replied that its understanding is that no loss of the habitat will result. It confirmed that the NPWS is a prescribed body in relation to the foreshore licence application and that it is awaiting its definitive view on this aspect. A further meeting in this regard is scheduled for March 2020. The prospective applicant also confirmed that consultations with the NPWS have taken place with respect to the onshore elements of the project.

Consultations and community gain:

- With regard to the subsequent planning application, the Board said that it would have to consider if transboundary consultations might be required. The prospective applicant noted this and said that the EIAR to accompany the planning application will assess transboundary effects as well as cumulative effects.
- With respect to consultations, the prospective applicant reported that discussions are on-going with local fishing representatives and with the Port of Waterford. In relation to the local community, the prospective applicant advised that a public event took place prior to the end of 2019. It said that issues such as disruption to local roads and effects of EMF emissions had been discussed at the public event. The Board recommended that details of the nature and extent of all consultations should be set out in the planning application.
- Consultations have also taken place with Inland Fisheries Ireland regarding a stream crossing.
- The prospective applicant said that community gain proposals are currently being finalised for two locations, namely Ramsgrange and Baginbun. The Board's representatives noted this and suggested that such proposals should be specific and set out in a concise stand-alone document which might be appended to the planning report. The Board reminded the prospective applicant that, in the event of a grant of planning permission, the Board would most likely attach a community gain condition.

Other matters:

- With regard to the specific location for the proposed converter station, the prospective applicant advised that it expects a decision on this in due course. With respect to visual effects arising from this element of the proposed development, it said that such effects have been further assessed since the time of the previous meeting.

- In relation to the landfall location for the proposed cable at Baginbun Beach, the prospective applicant said that there will be no direct interaction with the beach in question. It also said that an undertaking will be given that no works will occur in this location during the summer months of July and August. With respect to roadside parking which is to be provided by the widening of the road, the prospective applicant confirmed that this aspect will be included in the planning application. It added that this element will be part of the public road.
- The prospective applicant advised that discussions are on-going with the relevant local authority with regard to the matter of road reinstatement. It also said that coastal erosion will be addressed in the planning application and EIAR and added that there are no engineering concerns being raised with respect to this.
- In response to the prospective applicant's query on the red line boundary for the subject site, the Board's representatives requested that a proposal be forwarded to it for consideration. The prospective applicant said that it would send this on after the instant meeting.
- A list of relevant bodies to notify of the planning application will issue with its formal SID determination.
- The prospective applicant indicated its current intention to lodge the planning application with the Board circa April/May 2020. In response to the prospective applicant's query regarding likely timeline on a decision, the Board's representatives said that this may be dependent on a number of factors such as the complexity of the case, the level and extent of public participation and the possible requirement to hold an oral hearing. The Board emphasised that any planning application made to it should be as complete as possible so as to avoid any request for further information.

Conclusion:

With regard to the matter of advice on the Board's jurisdiction vis-à-vis offshore development and the red line boundary, the Board stated that a further meeting in the pre-application consultation process may be required.

The record of the instant meeting will issue in the meantime.

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