



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting

26.VC0111 1st meeting

Case Reference / Description	26.VC0111 / Proposed development of a 110kV Substation at Rosspile, Co. Wexford		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	07/12/17	Start Time	11.05 a.m.
Location	Meeting Room 3	End Time	12.30 p.m.
Chairperson	Phillip Green	Record Taker	Orla Moloney

Attendees		
Representing An Bord Pleanála		
Staff Member	Email Address	Phone
Phillip Green, Assistant Director of Planning		
Mairead Kenny, Senior Planning Inspector		
David Curran, Senior Executive Officer		
Orla Moloney, Administrative Assistant		

Representing the Prospective Applicant	
Trevor Byrne, Senior Engineer	Fehily Timoney & Company
Jim Hughes, Planning Lead, Associate Director	Fehily Timoney & Company
Peter Kavanagh, Director	Highfield Energy
Donal Keogh, Project Engineer	Highfield Energy

The meeting commenced at 11.05 a.m.

Introduction

The representatives of An Bord Pleanála (The Board) welcomed the prospective applicant and the teams were introduced.

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant requesting pre-application consultations and advised the prospective applicant that the instant meeting essentially constituted an information-gathering exercise for the Board; it also invited the prospective applicant to outline the nature of the proposed development and to highlight any matters it wished to receive advice on from the Board.

The Board mentioned general procedures in relation to the pre-application consultation process as follows:

- The Board will keep a record of this meeting and any other meetings, if held. Such records will form part of the file which will be made available publicly at the conclusion of the process.
- A further meeting or meetings may be held in respect of the proposed development.
- Further information may be requested by the Board and public consultations may also be directed by the Board.
- The Board may hold consultations in respect of the proposed development with other bodies.
- The holding of consultations does not prejudice the Board in any way and cannot be relied upon in the formal planning process or any legal proceedings.

In respect of the written record of any meetings held, the Board confirmed to the prospective applicant that it may comment on this in writing or at any subsequent meetings held. The Board does not amend its own record, but any comments made would also form part of the public record. The pre-application consultation file is available for public inspection once the consultations are closed.

The Board stated that the main purpose of the instant meeting was to seek further information from the prospective applicant in order to inform its determination as to whether or not the proposed development might constitute strategic infrastructure.

Presentation by the prospective applicant

The prospective applicant gave a presentation on the proposed development.

The prospective applicant intends to seek consent for a solar farm development (estimated capacity of 85MWp) on a site of 170 hectares. This requires the construction of an 110Kv substation and associated compound on a 0.38 hectare site to facilitate grid connection. A grid connection agreement obtained provides for connection by way of a new 110Kv station looped into the Great Island-Wexford 110Kv circuit. The substation will comprise two separate fenced compounds, both connected to the public road by a new access track. The transmission system compound will be transferred to Eirgrid.

The prospective applicant outlined legislative provisions. The prospective applicant indicated that the Planning Acts are unclear as to whether 110kV substations fall within the meaning of Section 182A and identified a need to focus on the long title of the 2006 SID Act. The substation is solely to facilitate a single private solar development and is not of economic or social importance to the state or region.

It was noted at the meeting that the development subject of the request for strategic infrastructure determination by the Board was that of the substation and whether it constituted development for the purposes of transmission rather than the development of the solar farm.

Project Design

In terms of the project design, the Board asked the prospective applicant to elaborate on the detail of the specific design. The prospective applicant stated that the design shown in drawing labelled 'proposed design' was a standard EirGrid design using Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) instead of Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) which would be less visually intrusive than using AIS. The prospective applicant went on to discuss the requirement for steel angle masts for this project. The presence of existing structures on site is one of the reasons for site selection.

Public consultation and community benefit

The Board asked the prospective applicant to give further details of the Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (RESS) guidelines mentioned in the community benefit section of the presentation. The prospective applicant gave a background on the RESS guidelines stating that, as part of the ambition to decrease the dependence on the use of fossil fuels through development of renewable energy sources such as solar, the new RESS is working towards Ireland's 2020 renewable electricity targets. The draft Guidelines indicate a requirement for community investment at a rate of €2/MWh.

The Board indicated that one information evening may not be sufficient public consultation having regard to the number of residential properties in the area.

Technology Details

The prospective applicant explained that a step up transformer would be used in this project with a non-group process, which has been approved by EirGrid. The Board questioned whether there was in built spare capacity within the design of the substation to expand the proposed development should future demand arise or whether the proposed design is the final design. The prospective applicant stated that the electric plant has a rating that can only carry a certain amount of power (95MWp). The generator thermal capacity has around 100MWp but will be a 95MWp connection. The Board raised the question of whether there would be any other related projects. The prospective applicant responded that to their knowledge there are no other planned developments under consideration in this area, which might be associated with this substation.

Environmental Assessment and Scoping, SID screening

The prospective applicant requested that the Board take into account that the development would not trigger a requirement for EIA. The Board indicated that the requirement for EIA is not a determining factor in relation to whether the development is determined to be SID. The Board noted that the substation appeared to be intended to be part of the Eirgrid transmission system. The prospective applicant indicated that the proposal would use the existing transmission line without altering or extending it and referred also to the wider policy and the need to promote renewables.

The Board made the prospective applicant aware that a screening report for Appropriate Assessment would be required if the proposed project is deemed strategic infrastructure.

The Board questioned whether the prospective applicant had ownership of the land where the proposed project is to take place, the prospective applicant informed the Board that the land was subject to a lease agreement of thirty years.

Planning Application Programme

Timescales of the project were discussed, the prospective applicant indicated that they plan on submitting the application in early 2018. A discussion ensued in relation to the possible status of the proposed project including the possible need for lodgement of separate applications to the planning authority and the Board. The processing of comparable projects was discussed.

Conclusion

The prospective applicant was advised that the reporting inspector will draft a report and recommendation for the Board's consideration. If the Board is of the preliminary opinion that the proposed development would constitute strategic infrastructure development, then at least one further meeting would be required. Application procedures and other matters relating to issues that may have a bearing on the Board's decision would be addressed at such a meeting.

The Board will revert to the prospective applicant in due course if such a further meeting is required. If it determines that the proposed development is not SID, then such a decision will be conveyed by way of formal letter.

The meeting concluded at 12.30 p.m.

Phillip Green

Assistant Director of Planning