

**PL92.245874**

## **Memo For Board regarding Consideration for EIA Sub-threshold Development**

EIA requirements derive from EU Directive 85/337/EEC (as amended by Directive 97/11/EC) on the effects of certain projects have on the environment. The primary objective of the EIA Directive is to ensure that projects which are likely to have significant effects on the environment are subject to an assessment of their likely impacts. Ireland has set mandatory thresholds for each of the projects classes in Annex II. The approach adopted by Ireland in setting the thresholds for each Annex II project class where wind turbines are categorised, are set at substantially lower levels than comparable Annex I thresholds in the Directive, the need for sub-threshold EIA is limited.

The requirements to carry out an EIA where the Board may consider that the proposed development would be likely to have significant effects on the environment. The Board in it's letter of Direction is concerned the cumulative impacts and combined capacity of the proposed turbine and the previously permitted turbine on the adjoining land served by the same entrance and would serve the same grid connection with a combined capacity of 4.9MW may warrant an Environmental Impact Assessment under the EU Directive.

*Characteristic of the Project:* The cumulative development, includes one proposed wind turbine and one permitted turbine at the subject location, in total two turbines at Gortnatassy West with a shared access and shared grid connection, both of which were permitted under the earlier appeal reference PL23.243357. As the combined capacity of both turbines is under 4.9MW, and the combined number of turbines is 2, this is below both EIA thresholds of Annex II.

*Location of the Project:* The general area has no conservation sensitivity or designation, it is not a SAC, SPA or NHA, and it is not a designated area of high amenity. The Landscape Character Assessment / Designation describes the general area as Low to Medium Sensitivity. The receiving environment is undulating agricultural fields, which has been designated as preferred for wind turbine developments under the provisions of the current county development plan.

*The extent of the Impact:* The cumulative development is unlikely to impact on local fauna, hydrogeology or underlying soils and stability, and the mitigation measures presented in the planning application are considered to be adequate as indicated in

my report of 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2016. The general area is a rural area and it is not densely populated. The access/ service road, to the permitted and proposed wind turbines will be shared by both developments, and the traffic associated with the construction of the turbines is short-term and will have no longterm or on-going environmental concerns for the area.

In terms of the Grid Connection it is proposed to use the same grid connection as the permitted turbine granted under PL23.243357, it will connect directly to the infrastructure, therefore the cumulative impact of the grid connection relating to the current proposal, is not, in my opinion, a material consideration, and the cumulative impact is unlikely to result in significant effects to the environment.

Although the permitted development of one turbine at this location would double, having the addition of one extra turbine at this location is unlikely to cause significant environmental effects to warrant an Environmental Impact Assessment of this particular case because of the overall limited scale of both developments and nature of the recovering environment, will not result in significant changes to the environmental conditions, and in the longterm the impacts are reversible as the structures can be removed. I consider to the cumulative impact of both turbines at the subject location is cause unlikely to cause significant environmental effects to warrant an Environmental Impact Assessment

In considering this memo I had regard to the relevant legislation and the Department of Environment's publication *Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance for Consent Authorities regarding Sub- Threshold Developments (2003)*.

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Caryn Coogan

Inspectorate

30/5/2016