



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report ABP-300589-18

### Development

Alterations to previous history case 08.VA0011 comprising extension to substation compound to accommodate single 50MVAr shunt reactor, extension to fence, extension of access road, revision to landscaping and all associated works

### Location

Knockanure, Trien, County Kerry

### Planning Authority

Kerry County Council

### Applicant(s)

EirGrid

### Type of Application

Section 146B of P&D Act, as amended

### Date of Site Inspection

2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2018

### Inspector

Kevin Moore

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This report deals with a request from EirGrid that the Board exercise its powers under section 146B of the Planning and Development Acts 2000, as amended, to alter the terms of an Approval made under Section 182B of the Acts to works comprising an extension to a substation compound to accommodate a single 50MVA<sub>r</sub> shunt reactor, an extension to a fence, an extension to an access road, and revisions to landscaping and all associated works at an existing substation site at Knockanure, Trien, County Kerry.

## 2.0 Legislative Basis

2.1 Section 146B (1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, allows a person who intends to carry out a strategic infrastructure development to request the Board to alter the terms of that approved development. Under sub-section 2 the Board must then decide, as soon as is practicable, whether to do so would constitute a material alteration in the terms of the development. If it decides that it would not be material, then under section 146B (3)(a) it must alter the approval accordingly.

2.2 On 8<sup>th</sup> February 2018, the Board decided that the proposed alterations to the Knockanure substation constitute a material alteration to the terms of the development approved by the Board under application reference 08 VA0011. The provisions of section 146B(8) of the Planning and Development Act were invoked.

2.3 Following this decision, the applicant:

- deposited a copy of the information relating to the request with Kerry County Council requesting that it be made available for inspection or purchase,
- sent notice of the request and a copy of the request to prescribed bodies set out in forwarded schedule stating that submissions or observations may be made to the Board, and
- published notices in two newspapers circulating in the area in which the development is located, stating that a request to alter the terms of the development had been made to the Board, that the request is available for inspection or purchase and that submissions or observations could be made to the Board.

## 3.0 Planning History

ABP Ref. PL 08.VA0011

The Board granted approval for the Knockanure substation in November 2012. This comprised:

- the construction of a Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) 220/110 kV electrical station (substation) within a compound of approximately 6,319 square metres, with associated site development and landscaping works,
- the construction of an extension to the existing AIR Insulated Switchgear (AIS) 110 kV (Trien) electrical Station in the townland of Trienearagh, and
- the construction of a new 110 kV overhead line (OHL) / Underground Line (UGC) circuit between the existing Trien Station and a windfarm at Cloghboola.

The main substation and overhead transmission structures have been constructed.

## 4.0 Site Location and Description

- 4.1. The site of the proposed alteration is located in the townland of Trien, approximately 8km south-east of the town of Listowel and some 2.5km north-east of the village of Duagh in in north County Kerry. There is an existing substation at this location (Knockanure substation) where development has been undertaken in accordance with ABP Ref. PL 08.VA0011. This consists of a fenced compound area, two buildings and outdoor transmission equipment. The site is bounded to the north, east and west by agricultural lands. The substation compound is accessed from a local road to the south.

## 5.0 Proposed Development

- 5.1. The proposed amendment would comprise:
- An extension of the approved substation compound footprint to the east by approximately 1950m to accommodate the provision of a single 50 MVAR shunt reactor. The reactor would comprise 3 no. shunt reactance coils, each approximately 3 metres in diameter and 10 metres high. Other associated substation equipment would include:
    - 220 kV switch gear comprising 3 no. cable sealing ends, 3 no. surge arresters, 3 no. coupling capacitors, 3 no. combined CT/VTs and 3 no. support insulators;

- a cable/switchgear interface within the existing 220 kV GIS building to facilitate cable connection of the new reactance coils to the existing switchgear;
  - pipe ducting and block ducting for electrical control cables, and
  - an extension of the earthgrid works.
- An associated extension to the existing 2.6m high palisade perimeter fence to encompass the substation extension, and the erection of an inner security fence around the reactance coils;
  - An extension to the substation's internal access road of approximately 30 metres;
  - 4 no. associated lightning protection rods, each 15m high;
  - Associated revisions to the landscaping plan approved under VA0011 in order to facilitate the proposed extension; and
  - All other associated site development works and site drainage.

5.2 The existing site is sloped and it is proposed to locate the new shunt reactor immediately to the east of the existing substation buildings. Construction of the alteration would include earthworks and the reuse of excavated material to construct embankments around part of the site.

5.3 The lands associated with the substation are in the ownership of ESB Networks. It is the statutory Transmission Asset Owner (TAO) and it would be carrying out the construction.

5.4 The applicant has submitted in its application cover letter that, from a technical perspective, the proposed reactor is of critical importance to the secure and reliable operation of the transmission grid in the area. It is further submitted that it is considered the altered development would have no environmental impact (including any impact on any Nature 2000 site, or on the proper planning and sustainable development of the area), over and above those of the approved development.

5.5 Further details submitted with the application include detailed drawings, a Planning and Environmental Considerations Report, a Screening for Appropriate Assessment Report, a Flood Risk Assessment Report, and a Drainage and Services Report.

## 6.0 Observations

- 6.1 Following the circulation of the request from the applicant to the prescribed bodies as requested in accordance with section 146B(8), two observations were received by the Board.
- 6.2 Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII) notes that the proposed development would access the local and regional road network. Further to this, a number of operational issues were highlighted relating to routing of abnormal load deliveries, the need to consult with the Roads Authority on haul routes affecting national roads, and the need for an assessment of all structures on the national road network relating to the haulage/delivery route.
- 6.3 The Health Service Executive recommended that any alterations to the terms of the development comply with all legal limits and ensure that all necessary control measures using the best available technology are undertaken during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases of the development.

## **7.0 Assessment**

### **7.1 Introduction**

7.1.1 I note the existence of Knockanure substation, a development that was subject to approval from the An Bord Pleanála under ABP Ref. 08.VA0011. The Board will note that the application for the substation itself was not subject to environmental impact assessment. It is submitted that the proposed alteration, forming an extension to the substation and being subservient in scale, form and extent to the existing substation development, is not a type of development set out in Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 requiring environmental impact assessment. The requirement for EIA is, therefore, not mandatory.

### **7.2 The Question of Whether the Material Alteration is likely to have a Significant Effect on the Environment**

#### **Potential Environmental Effects**

7.2.1 I consider the potential significant effects on the environment arising from the proposed amendments relate to the landscape and visual impact and the impact on the nearby Lower River Shannon SAC arising from the construction works.

7.2.2 Having regard to the location of the proposed alteration, the establishment of the Knockanure substation immediately adjoining the proposed site for the alteration, and the intended integration of the alteration with this established substation development, I am of the opinion that there are no other likely potential significant environmental effects on population and human health, biodiversity, land, soil, water, air, climatic factors, material assets and cultural heritage.

#### **Landscape and Visual Impact**

7.2.3 In terms of landscape impact, I again note the existence of Knockanure substation. I consider the proposed alteration would be understood as forming part of the complex of structures at this location and would not introduce components that would undermine the established landscape character.

7.2.4 I note that the proposed alteration, as with the established substation, would be visible within a range of protected northerly views on the south-western side of the River Feale as set out Kerry County Development Plan. These views are continuous on a ridge on the R555 extending to Duagh village. While the alteration would be within these views, I acknowledge that they would be at a distance across the valley, that they would be set within the context of the adjoining substation, and would be partially screened by natural topography and screening vegetation.

7.2.5 Overall, while the proposed alteration would have local impact by way of increased visibility of additional substation structures in the immediate vicinity of the substation site, it could not reasonably be determined to result in any significant environmental effect on the landscape character or visual amenity of the area.

#### **Impact on the Lower River Shannon SAC**

7.2.6 I note the site of the proposed amendment is located just north of the Gortanimerisk Stream, located approximately 50 metres at its nearest point from the proposed development. I acknowledge the proximity of the River Feale which forms part of the Lower River Shannon SAC, which lies 1km from the site at its closest location to the site. This SAC has a range of water-dependent qualifying interest habitats and species. The Gortanimerisk Stream flows to the River Feale. Potential indirect impact arising for the Natura 2000 site results from the potential transmission of pollutants to the nearby watercourse that links with the SAC.

7.2.7 I note the construction methodologies to be employed and the proposed utilisation of the dedicated surface water drainage network in use by the established substation development. The drainage network has been designed with excess capacity. The system collects runoff from impermeable areas and provides pre-treatment in the form of a silt trap and oil separator. The runoff is then attenuated and treated in primary and secondary settlement/attenuation ponds, before discharging to a constructed wetland for tertiary treatment. The proposed alteration would include the extension of this network to encompass the compound extension. The attenuation pond serving the existing facility has been designed with a surplus capacity of 30 m<sup>3</sup> and the proposed development is estimated to require a volume of 6.6m<sup>3</sup> for



attenuation. The existing settlement pond has been designed with a surplus capacity of 31m<sup>3</sup>. 21m<sup>3</sup> of storage is required following the proposed development. Surface water would, thus, be subject to full treatment before reaching the Gortanimerisk Stream.

7.2.8 It is submitted that it is reasonable to conclude that the proposed amendment would not be likely to have any significant effect on the Lower River Shannon SAC, in view of that site's conservation objectives. As a consequence, it is reasonable to conclude that on the basis of the information on the file, which I consider adequate in order to issue a screening determination, that the proposed development, individually or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have a significant effect on this European Site, or any other European site, in view of the site's Conservation Objectives, and a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment is not therefore required.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

7.3.1 With due regard to the considerations on environmental impact set out above, I consider that one could not reasonably determine the proposed alteration to merit environmental impact assessment.

7.3.2 Having regard to the above, I recommend that the Board makes a determination under section 146B(4) of the Planning and Development Act that the making of the alteration to which this request relates would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment or European Sites in the wider area.

7.3.3 Further to the submission from TII, the Board will note that the proposed development would be subject to the requirements of the approval under 08.VA0011. The conditions attached with this approval include Condition 2 relating to the provision of a Construction Environment Management Plan. This condition expressly sets out requirements to be met in relation to timing, routing and delivery of abnormal loads, as well as ongoing monitoring during the construction phase. Compliance with this condition should adequately address the issues raised by TII.

## 8.0 Recommendation

8.1 I recommend that the Board alter approval Ref. No. 08.VA0011 made under section 146B(3) of the Planning and Development Acts 2000-2011 in the manner and for the reasons set out below.

**REQUEST** received by An Bord Pleanála on the 21<sup>st</sup> day of December, 2017 from EirGrid plc under section 146B of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, in respect of a strategic infrastructure development described as a Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) 220/110 kV electrical station (substation) within a compound of approximately 6,319 square metres, with associated site development and landscaping works in the townland of Trien, Listowel, County Kerry.

### **PROPOSED ALTERATIONS:**

- An extension of the approved substation compound footprint to the east by approximately 1950m to accommodate the provision of a single 50 MVar shunt reactor. The reactor would comprise 3 no. shunt reactance coils, each approximately 3 metres in diameter and 10 metres high. Other associated substation equipment would include:
  - 220 kV switch gear comprising 3 no. cable sealing ends, 3 no. surge arresters, 3 no. coupling capacitors, 3 no. combined CT/VTs and 3 no. support insulators;
  - a cable/switchgear interface within the existing 220 kV GIS building to facilitate cable connection of the new reactance coils to the existing switchgear;
  - pipe ducting and block ducting for electrical control cables, and
  - an extension of the earthgrid works.

- An associated extension to the existing 2.6m high palisade perimeter fence to encompass the substation extension, and the erection of an inner security fence around the reactance coils;
- An extension to the substation's internal access road of approximately 30 metres;
- 4 no. associated lightning protection rods, each 15m high;
- Associated revisions to the landscaping plan approved under VA0011 in order to facilitate the proposed extension; and
- All other associated site development works and site drainage.

**WHEREAS** the Board made a decision to approve, subject to conditions, the above-mentioned development by order dated the 14<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2012,

**AND WHEREAS** the Board has received a request to alter the terms of the development, the subject of the approval,

**AND WHEREAS** the Board considered that the proposed alterations would result in a material alteration to the terms of the development, the subject of the approval,

**AND WHEREAS** having regard to the extent of the changes proposed, the Board decided to invoke the provisions of section 146B(8)(a) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, to invite submissions or observations in relation to the matter,

**AND WHEREAS** having considered all of the documents on file and the Inspector's report, the Board considered that:

- (i) the making of the proposed alteration would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment or on any European site, and
- (ii) the making of the proposed alteration would be acceptable in terms of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

**NOW THEREFORE** in accordance with section 146B(3)(b) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, the Board hereby alters the above-mentioned decision so that the approved development shall be carried out in accordance with the plans and particulars received by An Bord Pleanála on the 21<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2017.

### **MATTERS CONSIDERED**

In making its decision, the Board had regard to those matters to which, by virtue of the Planning and Development Acts and Regulations made thereunder, it was required to have regard.

### **REASONS AND CONSIDERATIONS**

In coming to its decision, the Board had regard to:

- (a) The planning history of the site including the scope and nature of the approved development under An Bord Pleanála planning reference 08.VA0011, under which development of the nature proposed by the amendment was considered acceptable in principle,
- (b) The nature and extent of the development in question,
- (c) The location of the development within an established electrical station compound,
- (d) The limited interaction between the proposed construction works and the natural environment,
- (e) The absence of any indication that the amenities of the area or of property in the vicinity of the site would be adversely affected by the proposed alteration,

- (f) The documents on the subject file and the submissions and documents on the approved development file 08.VA0011, and
- (g) The report of the Inspector.

The Board considered the potential environmental impacts that might arise due to the proposed alteration, taking into account the information available from the approved development file (08.VA0011), the documents submitted by the applicant in relation to the proposed amendment, and the Inspector's report. Having regard to the characteristics of the proposed alteration, the planning history of the site, the limited environmental impacts associated with the proposed amendment and the characteristics of the receiving environment, the Board was satisfied that the proposed alteration would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment, and that completion of an environmental impact assessment was not required in respect of the alteration sought.

The Board considered the Appropriate Assessment Stage 1 Screening Report submitted with the application, as well as the relevant information submitted and assessments carried out on the approved development (08.VA0011), and the Inspector's reports on the subject file. The Board completed a screening exercise in relation to the potential impacts of the proposed alteration on European sites, having regard to its nature and scale and to the receiving environment, and concluded that the proposed alteration, in itself or in combination with other plans or projects, would not be likely to have a significant effect on any European site.

The Board concluded that the making of the alteration would not be likely to have significant effects on the environment, and furthermore that the making of the proposed alteration would be acceptable in terms of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

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Kevin Moore  
Senior Planning Inspector

26<sup>th</sup> April 2018