



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP 306140-19

Development	Construction of a 110 kV substation, bay, electrical cable connection and associated works at Gorman 220 kV substation.
Location	Causetown, Co Meath
Prospective Applicant	Scottish Power Renewables (UK) Ltd
Planning Authority	Meath Co. Council
Date of Site Inspection	February 18 th , 2020
Inspector	Breda Gannon

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. On November 25th, 2019, a request was received by An Bord Pleanála to enter into pre-application discussions with respect to the proposed development under section 182E of the Planning and Development Act, as amended.
- 1.2. The Board's representatives met with the prospective applicant on March 3rd, 2020.
- 1.3. The prospective applicant formally requested closure of the pre-application consultation process on June 9th, 2020.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1. The site is located within the townland of Causetown, Stackallen. Co Meath. It is located on the west side of the L3411 and north of the N51 connecting Navan and Slane. The site is located in an area of undulating rural countryside, with ribbon development along the local road network. Outside of the substation site the primary land use is agriculture. Navan lies c 5km to the southwest and the River Boyne lies to the south. Navan airfield is located to the west of the site.
- 2.2. The new substation would be located close to the north-eastern corner of the existing Gorman substation compound and would be linked to the permitted energy storage facility via a high voltage underground cable. Access to the site would be via the existing 220kV grid connection compound.

3.0 Proposed Development

The development as described in the prospective applicant's original submission of November 25th, 2019 comprised the following elements:

- A new 110kV bay within the existing Gorman 220 kV substation, the proposed method of connection for which would be tail-fed.
- An underground electrical cable from the substation for circa 480m along an existing lane to client substation.
- The on-site client substation and electrical components within the grid connection compound at the Gorman Energy Storage Facility (ESF) to the south east of the Gorman substation to include the following:

- Auxillary transformer
- Lightning mast
- Distribution Network Operators control room
- Interface kiosk
- Modular sub-station building
- Grid compliance equipment
- Flow control devise and
- Metering circuit breaker.

The submission is supported by the following drawings.

- Appendix A - Site location map
- Grid Connection Infrastructure (Dwg No. 03785D2316-01)
- 110kV Grid Compound Plan and Elevations (Dwg No 03785D2312-03)
- Proposed infrastructure within the existing Gorman substation (Dwg No 03785D2312-01)

4.0 Further Submission

4.1. On June 9th, 2020 the prospective applicant submitted revised proposals, including a revised layout. The amendments to the design, which are stated to have been agreed with EirGrid, include the following:

- a new remote substation adjacent to the existing Gorman substation,
- the bay location within the substation is relocated further north to align with the position of the new remote substation to reduce cable lengths,
- the connection will involve an 'under the fence connection (HV cable will be buried).

4.2. The submission is supported by the following drawings:

- Infrastructure Layout (Dwg No. NEO00480_0191_A Figure 1)
- Remote Substation Compound (Dwg No 03785-RES-SUB-DR-EE-001)

- Remote Substation Compound Elevation (Dwg No 03785-RES-SUB-DR-EE-002)

5.0 Prospective Applicants Submissions to the Board

- The proposed development is not listed in Schedule 7 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, and is therefore not considered to be strategic infrastructure. The characteristics of the proposed development further indicate that it is not strategic infrastructure:
- It has been confirmed by EirGrid that the Gorman BESS facility will not become a new node on the network and will fall under the existing Gorman 220/110kV station node.
- The proposal lies within one local authority and there are no implications for any other planning authority.
- It does not lie within any designated areas.
- It is intended to provide connection solely to the Gorman Energy Storage Facility and is therefore not considered to be of strategic economic or social importance on a national or regional level and would not contribute substantially to the National Spatial Strategy.
- The substation and cable proposed are not a critical link for other strategic developments in the area.
- It contains a relatively small footprint and does not allow for possible expansion.
- All equipment proposed is standard and meets EirGrids functional requirements.

6.0 Planning History

- 6.1. **Reg Ref No LB/171475** – Planning permission granted by Meath Co Council on July 13th, 2018 for an energy storage facility to provide services to the national grid system on a 2.8 ha site, comprising battery containers, combined power conversion system and transformer units, associated electrical infrastructure, fencing, access

track, CCTV, ecological beneficial landscaping and associated ancillary development on 13th July 2018. Construction has not yet commenced on the facility which would be located on a greenfield site to the southeast of the Gorman sub-station.

7.0 Strategic Infrastructure – Legal Provisions

7.1. Under section 182A (1) of the 2000 Act (inserted by section 4 of the 2006 Act) where *a person, (the ‘undertaker’) intends to carry out development comprising or for the purposes of electricity transmission, (hereafter referred to in this section and section 182B as ‘proposed development’), the undertaker shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, an application for approval of development under section 182B and shall apply to the Board for such approval accordingly.*

7.2. Section 182A(9) states that in this section *‘transmission’ in relation to electricity, shall be construed in accordance with section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999 but, for the purposes of this section, the foregoing expression, in relation to electricity, shall also be construed as meaning the transport of electricity by means of-*

(a) a high voltage line where the voltage would be 110 kilovolts or more, or

(b) an interconnector, whether ownership of the interconnector will be vested in the undertaker or not.

Section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999, as amended defines ‘transmission’ as follows:

“transmission”, in relation to electricity, means the transport of electricity by means of a transmission system, that is to say a system which consists, wholly or mainly, of high voltage lines and electric plant and which is used for conveying electricity from a generating station to a substation, from one generating station to another, or to or from any interconnector or to final customers but shall not include any such lines which the Board may, from time to time, with the approval of the Commission, specify as being part of the distribution system but shall include any interconnector owned by the Board’.

It defines '*distribution*' as:

"The transport of electricity by means of a distribution system, that is to say, a system which consists of electric lines, electric plant, transformers and switch gear and which is used for conveying electricity to final customers.

It defines '*electric plant*' as:

"any plant, apparatus or appliance used for, or for the purposes connected with, the generation, transmission, distribution or supply of electricity other than –

- (a) An electric line
- (b) A meter used for ascertaining the quantity of electricity supplied to any premises, or
- (c) An electrical appliance under the control of the consumer.

8.0 **Assessment**

- 8.1. The pre-application consultation relates to a proposal to provide a new 110kV bay and substation and an underground cable to connect the permitted energy storage facility to the national grid at the existing Gorman substation at Causetown. Co Meath. The original proposal was to provide a 'tail-fed connection' which was subsequently altered to an 'under the fence connection' in agreement with EirGrid. The substation will be placed close to the north-eastern corner of the Gorman substation and will contain standard equipment in accordance with EirGrid's functional specifications. The substation would be considered 'electrical plant' as defined above. Section 182A (9) of the Act sets threshold of 110kV in order for a high voltage electricity line to be considered strategic infrastructure. No threshold is set in respect of a substation.
- 8.2. The Board has determined numerous pre-applications in relation to substations and cable connections under section 182E involving additions, expansions and amendments of electricity substation infrastructure. The Board has determined that the provision of 110 kV tail-fed substations and grid connections do not constitute strategic infrastructure as they do not constitute a node on the transmission system (VC 0053, VC0086, VC0096). In the case of a loop in/loop out connection, which entails all power being entirely diverted into the substation and back out again, with

the new substation in effect becoming a new node on the transmission line, the Board has concluded that the development is strategic infrastructure (301646, 302516, 304743.) While I am not aware of any previous proposals which involved an 'under the fence connection' the prospective applicant, on the advice of the Board, engaged with the EirGrid who have confirmed as per details submitted in June 9th 2020:

'Gorman BESS facility will not become a new node on the network. It will fall under the existing Gorman 220/110kV station node and it is not envisaged that this proposed infrastructure will have any impact on the wider network. If there was a fault or issue on the new grid infrastructure proposed, this would only affect the Gorman BESS facility as design and control systems prevent wider impacts on other circuits'

- 8.2.1. Due to lack of clarity in the interpretation of section 182A and its requirements regarding developments of this nature the Board has exercised some discretion and used the broad defining of the Strategic Infrastructure Act 'developments of strategic importance to the State' and the criteria contained in section 37(a)(2) to determine such matters (although not specifically cited in regard to cases coming forward under section 182A).
- 8.2.2. The proposed development would add infrastructure into the existing Gorman substation. The substation, in itself, would not qualify as being of economic or social importance to the State in a strategic sense. The development, which it is to serve, namely a battery energy storage facility does not of itself constitute strategic infrastructure (not listed under the 7th Schedule). The proposed development which is proposed to serve a specific development, would not be capable of substantially contributing to the fulfilment of any of the objectives of the National Planning Framework or the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy for the Eastern and Midland Region. The development would not have a significant effect on the area of more than one planning authority.
- 8.2.3. Having regard to the stated purpose, nature and scale of the proposed development and location within the existing substation compound, to the stated purpose of the 2006 Act as set out in the long title and to the general description and scale of strategic infrastructure development set out in section 37A(2), I conclude that the

proposed development consisting of the construction of a 110 kV substation, underground cable and associated infrastructure at the existing 220kV Gorman substation, does not fall within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.

9.0 Recommendation

- 9.1. I recommend that Scottish Power Renewables (UK) Ltd be informed that the proposed development consisting of a new 110 kV substation, underground cable and associated infrastructure within the existing Gorman 220 kV substation compound, Causetown, Co. Meath as set out in the plans and particulars received by An Bord Pleanála on November 25th, 2019 as amended by the further plans and particulars received on June 9th, 2020 does not fall within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, and that a planning application should be made to Meath Co. Council in the first instance.

Breda Gannon
Senior Planning Inspector

26th, June 2020