



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report ABP-311950-21

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<b>Development</b>	Modification and upgrade of the Dalton 110kV Substation
<b>Location</b>	Townland of Clare (Claremorris), Co. Mayo
<b>Prospective Applicant</b>	EirGrid plc
<b>Planning Authority</b>	Mayo County Council
<b>Type of Application</b>	Pre-Application Consultation under s.182E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended
<b>Date of Site Inspection</b>	None Required
<b>Inspector</b>	Niall Haverty

## **1.0 Pre-Application Consultation**

- 1.1. The Board received a request on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021 from EirGrid plc to enter into pre-application consultation under section 182E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended ('the Act'), in relation to proposed development consisting of the modification and upgrade of the existing Dalton 110kV substation in the townland of Clare (Claremorris), Co. Mayo.
- 1.2. A pre-application consultation meeting was not considered necessary in this instance.
- 1.3. This report provides an overview of the proposed development, relevant precedents and legislative provisions and recommends that the proposed development does not constitute strategic infrastructure.

## **2.0 Site location**

- 2.1. The existing Dalton 110kV substation is located in the townland of Clare, c. 1km east of the town of Claremorris, Co. Mayo and a short distance to the east of the grade-separated junction of the N17 and N60 National Roads. The substation is set back c. 300m to the south of the N60, from which it is accessed. The Westport – Dublin Rail Line is located to the south of the substation site, while the surrounding lands are generally in agricultural use, with residential ribbon development along both sides of the N60 to the east of the site access.

## **3.0 Proposed Development**

- 3.1. The letter submitted by the prospective applicant states that an issue has been identified with regard to the transfer of power across the existing 110kV busbar within the substation. The issue is stated to relate to the capacity of the busbar, with power flows in excess of its thermal rating and the prospective applicant's requirement to maintain compliance with the Transmission System Security and Planning Standards (TSSPS).
- 3.2. The prospective applicant states that the best performing option to resolve the identified issue is a thermal uprate of the existing 110kV busbar and an extension to

the existing control room. More particularly, the proposed development would include:

- decommissioning and removal of the existing 110kV busbar structures and the installation of a 110kV tubular busbar, including a 110kV sectionaliser circuit breaker;
- extension (c. 24 sq m) to the western elevation of the existing control room to accommodate additional protection equipment and cabinets;
- ancillary and associated development, including installation of 2 No. 14m lightning monopoles, renewal and replacement of protection relays and other underground services.

3.2.1. The proposed development is stated to be part of a suite of upgrading works being progressed in the North West to aid in the delivery of future renewable generation and to alleviate some of the constraints on current connected generation.

## **4.0 Prospective Applicant's Case**

4.1. The prospective applicant's case can be summarised as follows:

- The proposed development comprises the replacement and/or enhancement of existing substation apparatus as well as the modest extension of an existing control building. All works will occur wholly within the existing substation compound.
- EirGrid is of the opinion that neither an Environmental Impact Assessment Report nor a Natura Impact Statement will be required to accompany the application.
- While of benefit to the transmission network, the proposed development is essentially an enhancement of the existing substation infrastructure.
- The proposed development would not be of a form or appearance entirely incongruous to the established substation infrastructure.
- The proposed development would not be of strategic economic or social importance to the State or Region.

- The proposed development could comprise exempted development with reference to section 4(1)(g) of the Act, other than the requirement for a modest extension to the existing control room.
- The Board has previously determined, in respect of a number of previous proposals in other locations, that additional equipment which is an enhancement of established transmission infrastructure (substations and their compounds) did not fall within the scope of section 182A of the Act: (VC0040, VC0055, VC0061, VC0101, VC0110, 300928, 301174, VC0109, VC0070, 303148).
- Given the nature, scale and function of the proposed development and its relationship to the existing substation, it does not comprise strategic infrastructure having regard to section 182A. Nor does it meet any other provisions for SID set out in section 37A(2) of the Act.

## 5.0 Relevant Precedents

5.1. The following table outlines the precedents that the prospective applicant considers to be relevant. I have also included a number of other similar cases for proposed development at existing substations.

ABP Ref.	Development Description	Decision Date	ABP Decision
306908	Proposed development of a 110kV control room at the existing Trien 220/110 kV electricity substation and all associated site works	2020	<b>Not SID</b>
306383	220kV Shunt Reactor and associated equipment within the existing Ballyvouskill 220/110 kV Electricity Substation	2020	<b>Not SID</b>
303838	110 kV bay to connect to the existing busbar at Dunmanway 110 kV substation, Co. Cork.	2019	<b>Not SID</b>
303148	Installation of series capacitors at three existing 400 kV electrical substations at: Dunnstown, Co. Kildare; Carrowdotia South, Co. Clare; and Ballynaheskeragh, Co. Galway.	2019	<b>Not SID</b>
301876	Refurbishment and upgrade of a 220/110kV Air Insulated Switchgear Electrical Substation and	2018	<b>Not SID</b>

	associated works at the existing 220/110 kV Maynooth Electrical Substation		
301174	Three STATCOM devices at three existing sites: Substation at Ballyvouskill, Co. Cork, 220/110kV station at Ballynahulla, Co. Kerry; and 110kV station at Thurles, Co. Tipperary.	2018	<b>Not SID</b>
300928	Development of a 110kV Gas Insulated switchgear (GIS) Electrical substation and associated works at the existing 110kV Kilbarry Electrical substation, Co. Cork.	2018	<b>Not SID</b>
VC0110	Proposed development at the existing Galway 110kV substation, Ballybrit, Co. Galway.	2017	<b>Not SID</b>
VC0109	Proposed provision of a new reactor at the existing Knockanure 220 kV substation, Knockanure, Co. Kerry.	2017	<b>Not SID</b>
VC0101	Proposed new gas insulated switchgear (GIS) building and new control room at the existing Inchicore 220kV substation.	2016	<b>Not SID</b>
VC0070	Installation of reactors at Poolbeg 220/110kV electricity substation.	2013	<b>Not SID</b>
VC0068	Proposed reconfiguration of existing 220kV busbar, new or extension to existing control building and new substation access road at Aghada 220kV substation, Co Cork.	2013	<b>Not SID</b>
VC0061	Redevelopment of existing 110kV electricity substation, Ardnacrusha, Co. Clare.	2011	<b>Not SID</b>
VC0055	Redevelopment of existing 400kV electricity substation, Moneypoint, Kilrush, Co. Clare.	2011	<b>Not SID</b>
VC0040	Construct an indoor 110kv station within existing boundary of Finglas 220kv station, transfer of circuits and decommissioning of old substation, Finglas, County Dublin.	2010	<b>Not SID</b>
VC0012	Installation of new 250 MVA 220/110 kV transformer in Finglas Station and extend both 220kV busbars in Finglas Station, Co. Dublin.	2007	<b>Not SID</b>

## 6.0 Legislative Provisions

### 6.1. Planning and Development Act 2000, as Amended

6.1.1. Section 2(1) of the Act defines 'strategic infrastructure' as including, *inter alia*:

“any proposed development referred to in section 182A(1)”

6.1.2. Under subsection 182A(1) of the Act, where a person (the 'undertaker') intends to carry out development comprising or for the purposes of electricity transmission, the undertaker shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, an application for approval of the development under section 182B and shall apply to the Board for such approval accordingly.

6.1.3. Subsection 182A(9) states that:

“... '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.”

### 6.2. Electricity Regulation Act 1999, as Amended

6.2.1. The following definitions, as set out in section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999, as amended, are noted:

- **'Transmission':**

“...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, from one substation to another or to or from any interconnector or to final customers but shall not

include any such lines which the Board<sup>1</sup> 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.”

- **‘Electric plant’:**

“...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 a consumer”

- **‘Electric Line’:**

Section 2(1) of the 1999 Act, as amended, states that ‘electric line’ has the meaning assigned to it by section 4(1) of the ESB (Electronic Communications Networks) Act 2014. The definition set out in s. 4(1) of the 2014 Act is as follows:

“...any line which is used solely or amongst other things for carrying electricity for any purpose and as including—

(a) any support for any such line, that is to say, any structure, pole or other thing in, on, by or from which any such line may be supported, carried or suspended,

(b) any apparatus connected to or associated with any such line for the purpose of carrying electricity or electronic communications services, whether such apparatus is owned by the Board or by any company referred to in section 2 or by a company which has been provided access or services referred to in section 3, or

(c) any wire, cable, tube, pipe or similar thing (including its casing or coating) which is used for the purpose of carrying electricity or electronic communications services and which surrounds or supports or is

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<sup>1</sup> For clarity, references to the ‘Board’ in this instance relate to the Electricity Supply Board.

surrounded or supported by, or is installed in close proximity to, or is supported, carried or suspended in association with, any such line.”

## 7.0 Assessment

7.1. As noted above, ‘strategic infrastructure’ is defined as including development comprising or for the purposes of electricity transmission, with ‘transmission’ defined as either:

- The transport of electricity by means of a high voltage line of 110 kV or more, or an interconnector.
- The transport of electricity by means of a transmission system (a system of high voltage lines and electric plant used for conveying electricity from a generating station to a substation, from one generating station to another, from one substation to another or to or from any interconnector or to final customers, including interconnectors but excluding distribution system lines).

7.2. Based on the information contained in the prospective applicant’s cover letter, it is clear to me that the existing Dalton 110kV substation can be considered to form part of the electricity transmission system for the purposes of the Planning Act. I also note in this regard that the Dalton substation is included on the Transmission System map provided on the EirGrid website<sup>2</sup>.

7.3. The proposed development consists of works of a relatively minor nature at the existing Dalton substation, including the replacement of the existing busbar, replacement of protection relays and services, installation of lightning monopoles and construction of a small extension to the existing control room. The stated purpose of the proposed development is to upgrade and enhance the existing substation in order to facilitate greater connectivity of renewable energy generation to the grid and alleviate existing constraints on the network. Based on the information submitted, it appears that there will be no change to the nature or operation of the existing substation or the existing transmission system in the area as a result of the proposed development.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.eirgridgroup.com/site-files/library/EirGrid/EirGrid-Group-Transmission-Map-January-2020.pdf>



- 7.4. As outlined in Section 5 above, the Board has previously determined a considerable number of requests for pre-application consultation in relation to proposed improvement/refurbishment/upgrade works at existing substations. Generally, the Board has determined that such development at existing substations does not fall within the scope of section 182A of the Planning Act and consequently that a planning application should be made in the first instance to the local planning authority.
- 7.5. The current request before the Board, like the previous cases referenced above, relates to proposed works at an existing substation. The proposed development in this instance is minor in scale and extent and will have no impact on the nature of operation of the existing transmission system. In this regard, I consider that the proposed works to improve the reliability and operation of the existing substation (for example, the replacement of the busbar) are works that would generally be of a type and scale that would reasonably be undertaken as part of the system operator's routine maintenance and upgrade regime. I note the prospective applicant's assertion that the proposed development, with the exception of the proposed extension to the existing control room, could comprise exempted development with reference to section 4(1)(g) of the Act. The proposed extension to the control room is stated to be c. 24 sq m and is intended to house electrical cabinets and protection equipment, again for the purposes of enhancing and upgrading the operation of the existing substation.
- 7.6. Having regard to the limited nature, scale and purpose of the proposed development, the fact that it relates to works to an existing substation that are entirely within the existing substation compound, and noting previous determinations by the Board in respect of similar requests for pre-application consultation, I consider that it would not constitute strategic infrastructure. I conclude, therefore, that it does not fall within the scope of s. 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, necessitating the making of an application directly to the Board.

## **8.0 Recommendation**

- 8.1. I recommend that EirGrid plc be informed that the proposed development, consisting of the modification and upgrade of the existing Dalton 110kV substation in the

townland of Clare (Claremorris), Co. Mayo, as set out in the plans and particulars received by An Bord Pleanála on the 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021, 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 in the first instance to Mayo County Council.

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**Niall Haverty**

**Senior Planning Inspector**

**17<sup>th</sup> December 2021**