



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP 311992-21

Development	Electrical development associated with a proposed battery energy storage system and synchronous condenser.
Location	Lands within Lough Ree Power Station, Lanesborough, Co Longford.
Planning Authority	Longford County Council
Type of Application	Pre-application consultation
Prospective Applicant	ESB
Inspector	Mairead Kenny

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. The Board received a request on 18 November 2011 from ESB to enter into pre-application consultations under Section 182E of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) in relation to the electrical development associated with a proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and Synchronous Condenser (Sync Con) to be developed at Lough Ree Power Station.
- 1.2. ESB has submitted in parallel the pre-application consultation related to similar development at West Offaly Power Station (ABP-311993).

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1. The site of the proposed development is located within the Lough Ree Power (LRP) Station at Lanesborough. The power station has ceased operating and is to be demolished. The plan for the overall site is to use it for the development of new grid services.
- 2.2. The overall site is of stated area of 14.3 ha and lies at the eastern banks of the Shannon upstream of Lough Ree. On site structures are described as being typical of a power station and including fuel storage, handling areas and associated plant, the generating station itself and ancillary services including water treatment, offices and the like. The established character is described as industrial.

3.0 Proposed development

- 3.1. The proposed development is described as forming a minor part of an overall project and in particular to comprise connections for future development to access the national grid.
- 3.2. The development which is to be carried out over a 10-year period is described as:
 - Demolition of the existing station and associated buildings and reinstatement and securing of the site including the provision of boundary fences.
 - The development of new grid services within the reinstated site comprising a BESS and a Sync Con.

- All associated ancillary development including grid connections comprising underground cables connecting the proposed units to the electricity transmission network by way of electrical substations. Also proposed are boundary gates, landscaping etc.
- 3.3. The prospective applicant states that a detailed layout is being developed in relation to the proposed development. Subject to the outcome of the pre-application consultation the proposed development will be subject of a single planning application.
- 3.4. The **relevant aspect of the proposed development for this pre-application consultation is the grid connection**. The infrastructure which can be considered to fall under the scope of section 182 (B) will comprise:
- BESS grid connection to include a new 10/33kV grid transformer, surge arresters, current transformers, voltage transformers and a HV circuit breaker bay - all to be located within the BESS substation compound.
 - Sync Con grid connection to include a new 10/33kV grid transformer within the Sync Con compound.
 - 110 kV underground cables between the proposed BESS units and the proposed Sync Con units and bays within the nearby permitted 110 kV GIS substation compound.
- 3.5. While it is stated that draft layouts for the BESS and Sync Con developments are shown on the attached drawings with indicative options shown for the underground cable routing and the associated electrical plant, the exact location of these works are stated to be subject to change during detailed design but will be broadly similar.
- 3.6. The proposed grid services are described as facilitating an increased level of renewable electrical generation on the grid by being available as a backup electrical supply and providing stability to the grid during high demand hours.
- 3.7. The purpose of the electrical works described is stated to be purely to facilitate the connection of the proposed BESS and Sync Con developments to the national grid. The prospective applicant states that this electrical plant and its associated grid infrastructure does not constitute transmission infrastructure as it does not form a

part of the national grid but rather provides on-site connections between items of electrical plant.

4.0 Planning History

- 4.1. Reg. Ref. 19201 relates to a development including a new 110 KV GIS substation. Permission was granted by Longford County Council in May 2020.
- 4.2. ABP-302597 relates to refurbishment of the 110 kV overhead line which terminates at the substation at Lanesborough. Permission was granted in March 2019.

5.0 Planning Precedent Cases

- 5.1. The applicant has not referenced any particular precedent cases. I present a sample below of cases raising similar issues and which I consider are relevant.

An Bord Pleanála Ref: ABP-311031-21

- 5.2. Killeena Stability Limited requested a decision from the Board as to **whether or not the development of a 220kV underground cable and on-site GIS building to facilitate the operation of a synchronous compensator** compound and associated ancillary equipment is or is not SID.
- 5.3. The Inspector noted that the proposed cable would only serve the synchronous compensator. It was also noted that the purpose of the synchronous compensator relates to delivering inertia and that it draws a small amount of power from the grid and would be classified as a demand rather than a supply connection. Following consideration of the criteria under section 37A (2) the Inspector considered that the proposed development is not SID.
- 5.4. The case was decided by the Board in accordance with the above recommendation on 21 October 2021.

An Bord Pleanála Ref: ABP-310828-21

- 5.5. Statkraft Ireland Limited requested a decision from the Board as to **whether or not the proposed installation of a synchronous compensator compound and ancillary equipment** is or is not SID. The subject development included a 220kV substation and connection to the existing Belcamp 220kV substation in Dublin 17.

5.6. The Inspector noted the purpose of the synchronous compensator in delivery of inertia and that it is not a source of power but rather adjusts and stabilises conditions on the grid. It serves a purpose which is an ancillary service to the grid. As the HISC does not generate electricity, it would not lead to the conveyance of electricity from a generating station to a substation or from one generating station to another. Therefore, the HISC does not fall within the definition of “transmission” as set out in the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999 or “energy transmission” as referred to in Section 182A. Regarding the substation and cable connections it was accepted that these were ancillary to the Sync Con. Following consideration of the criteria under section 37A (2) the Inspector determined that the proposed development is not SID.

The case was decided by the Board in accordance with the above recommendation on 21 October 2021.

An Bord Pleanála Ref: ABP-310256-21

5.7. The Board decided on 10 September 2021 that the proposed development of an **underground cable and on-site 220kV substation to facilitate the operation of a synchronous compensator compound** at Windgates, Co. Kildare is not SID.

5.8. The nature of the development, the Inspector’s report and the decision of the Board raise issues similar to ABP-311031-21.

An Bord Pleanála Ref: ABP-302647-18

5.9. The pre-application consultation related to a proposal for a 110kV/ 220kV cable and transformer, control container and electrical housing to facilitate the operation of battery storage units and rotating stabilisers at Glencloosagh, Co. Kerry.

5.10. The Board decided in March 2019 that the subject development is not SID.

An Bord Pleanála Ref: ABP-30236-18

5.11. This relates to equipment which was deemed to be ancillary for the purposes of connecting a proposed BESS to the national grid at Poolbeg, Dublin 2.

5.12. In keeping with the Inspector’s recommendation, the Board decided that the proposed development does not comprise SID.

6.0 -Prospective applicant's case

6.1. The basis for the determination by the Board under section 3 of the application cover letter is:

- The purpose of the electrical works is purely to facilitate connection of the proposed BESS and Sync Con developments to the National Grid. The electrical plant and its associated grid infrastructure do not constitute transmission infrastructure as it does not function as part of the national grid but relates to on-site connections between items of electrical plant.
- The proposed electrical works do not satisfy any of the criteria set out under section 37(A)(2) as their sole purpose is to connect the proposed synchronous compensator/energy storage facilities to a previously approved substation.
- The Board has previously assessed and considered numerous cases of similar nature and determined that those developments did not constitute SID.
- The proposed electrical works required to connect the proposed BESS and Sync Con sites to the existing substation and any other future works of this nature within the LRP site do not constitute strategic infrastructure.

7.0 Legislative provisions

7.1. Section 182A(1) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) requires that where a person (referred to as the 'undertaker') intends to carry out development comprising or for the purposes of electricity transmission, the undertaker shall prepare an application for approval of the development to the Board.

7.2. Section 182A(9) of the Act 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.

7.3. Section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999 defines transmission as follows:

“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.”

7.4. Electric plant is defined as follows:

“any plant, apparatus or appliance used for, or for 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.

7.5. Section 37A(2) refers to Seventh Schedule development but generally describes strategic infrastructure development as falling within one or more of the following:

(a) the development would be of strategic economic or social importance to the State or the region in which it would be situate,

(b) the development would contribute substantially to the fulfilment of any of the objectives in the National Planning Framework or in any regional spatial and economic strategy in force in respect of the area or areas in which it would be situate,

(c) the development would have a significant effect on the area of more than one planning authority.

8.0 Assessment

- 8.1. The proposed development comprises a grid connection to a Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and Synchronous Condenser (Sync Con) to be developed at Lough Ree Power Station and a 110kV underground cable connection between the proposed BESS units and the proposed Sync Con units and bays within a permitted 110 kV GIS substation compound.
- 8.2. I consider that the proposed BESS and Sync Con do not come within the definition of transmission set out above, not being a system which consists, wholly or mainly, of high voltage lines and electrical plant used for the conveying of electricity from a generating station to a substation, from one generating station to another, from one substation to another or from any interconnector or to final customers. Furthermore, I consider that the proposed BESS and Sync Con are not a class of development set out in Schedule Seven of the Act for the purposes of section 37A.
- 8.3. The pre-application consultation is triggered by and relates to the grid connection between the proposed BESS and Sync Con and the permitted 110 kV GIS substation compound. This includes some 110 kV underground cables. Details of the proposed development as presented on the indicative site layout show the general arrangement of the relevant electrical works.
- 8.4. The submission of ESB is that the proposed electrical works do not constitute strategic infrastructure having regard to the criteria set out under section 37(A)(2). While I note and accept the prospective applicant's case, that the proposed electrical works would not satisfy any of the relevant criteria, I consider that the critical consideration is that the proposed BESS and Sync Con serve only to adjust and stabilise conditions on the grid and would not come within the definition of transmission. Accordingly, it follows that the ancillary electrical infrastructure subject of this pre-application consultation is not transmission infrastructure.
- 8.5. I consider that the grid connection development which is ancillary to the BESS and Sync Con does not come within the definition of transmission and is not strategic infrastructure.

9.0 Recommendation

- 9.1.1. I recommend that ESB be informed that the proposed development consisting of electrical development associated with the proposed Battery Energy Storage System and Synchronous Condenser within the existing Lough Ree Power Station, Lanesborough, Co Longford, as set out in the plans and particulars received by An Bord Pleanála on 18 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 Longford County Council.

Mairead Kenny

Senior Planning Inspector

6 January 2022