



**An
Bord
Pleanála**

Inspector's Report ABP-317307-23

Development	Construction of an 11-turbine windfarm, with individual power outputs of between 6.0 MW to 6.6 MW (total power output of ~ 66-73 MEC), and grid connection comprising loop-in Connection to Cashla-Dalton 110kV overhead line
Location	Townlands of Beagh More, Cloonbar, Cloonnaglasha, Cloonsheen, Cloonteen, Corillaun , Derrymore, Shancloon, Toberroe, and Tonacooleen in county Galway, near the Mayo border
Prospective Applicant	RWE Renewables Ireland Ltd.
Planning Authority	Galway County Council
Type of Application	Pre-Application Consultation under s.38B of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. The Board received a request on 12th June 2023 from Fehily Timoney and Company, acting on behalf of RWE Renewables Ireland Ltd. ('the prospective applicant'), to enter into pre-application consultation under section 37B of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended ('the 2000 Act'), in relation to proposed development consisting of the construction of a 11 turbine wind farm and new 110kV substation, in the townlands of Beagh More, Cloonbar, Cloonnaglasha, Corillaun, Derrymore, Shancloon, Toberroe and Tonacooleen, Co. Galway.
- 1.2. Two consultation meetings were subsequently held between An Bord Pleanála and the prospective applicant on 4th September 2023 and 10th November 2023. The prospective applicant formally requested closure of the pre-application consultation process in a letter dated 19th December 2023 and received by the Board on 21st December 2023.
- 1.3. This Report provides an overview of the proposed development, a summary of the meeting and the advice provided by the Board, the legislative provisions, relevant precedents and recommends that the Board determine that the proposed development does fall within the scope of section 37B of the 2000 Act. A recommended list of Prescribed Bodies, that should be forwarded copies of the application, is included in Appendix A.

2.0 Site location

- 2.1. The proposed site is located in the townlands of Beagh More, Cloonbar, Cloonnaglasha, Cloonsheen, Cloonteen, Corillaun, Derrymore, Shancloon, Toberroe, and Tonacooleen in County Galway, near the Mayo border. The closest settlements to the proposed development are Shrule (ca. 3.5 km to the west) and Tuam (ca. 8 km to the east). The area is rural in nature, with low density ribbon development along local roads.
- 2.2. The site currently comprises flat peatlands, agricultural land and scattered forestry. The peat habitats within and immediately adjacent to the proposed wind farm host the Annex I habitats European dry heaths (4030) and active raised bog (7110)

5.0 Relevant Precedents

5.1. The following table outlines a sample of other SID preapplication determinations for wind farm developments of similar scales decided by the Board:

ABP Ref.	Location	Development Description	ABP Decision
315851	Tipperary	9-10 wind turbines. Greater than 50 MW output.	Is SID
315239	Clare	10 turbines. 60-66 MW output.	Is SID
315864	Mayo	21 wind turbines and grid connection. 72.45 MW output.	Is SID
314798	Kerry and Cork	11 wind turbines and grid connection. To exceed 50 MW output.	Is SID
314271	Meath and Westmeath	8 wind turbines and grid connection. 57.6 MW output.	Is SID
313780	Kilkenny	15 turbines and grid connection. 65-75 MW output.	Is SID
313778	Offaly	11 turbine wind farm and associated works. 79.2 MW output.	Is SID
313440	Cork	14 wind turbines and associated works. 78.4-92 MW output.	Is SID.
313375	Laois	13 turbines and associated works. 86 MW output.	Is SID
313351	Westmeath	9 turbines and associated works. In excess of 50 MW output.	Is SID

shall be made directly to the Board if the proposed development would fall within one or more of the following paragraphs:

(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.

7.1.2. Class 1 of the Seventh Schedule relates to energy infrastructure and includes the following category of development:

‘an installation for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (a wind farm) with more than 25 turbines or having a total output greater than 50 megawatts’.

8.0 Assessment

8.1. Section 37A(1): Is the development specified in the Seventh Schedule of the Act?

8.1.1. Based on the information contained in the prospective applicant’s cover letter and elaborated upon at the pre-application consultation meetings, and close-out request, the proposed development would provide 11 turbines with total output of between 61.6 MW - 72.6 MW, depending on the turbine chosen. Based on the proposed output, the proposed development would exceed the 50MW threshold for wind farms set out in Class 1 (Energy Infrastructure) of the Seventh Schedule of the Act.

8.1.2. The proposed development would therefore satisfy section 37A(1) of the Act.

8.2. Section 37A(2): Does the Proposed Development fall within one or more of Sections 37A(2)(a), (b), and (c)?

S.37A(2)(a)

sources in the region, stating that the renewable energy needs of the region, in the form of wind, solar and biomass, will be likely to be met in rural areas.

- 8.2.7. The proposal to generate over 50MW of renewable energy by using wind as a resource would assist in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and would contribute significantly towards the achievement of a low carbon economy. In this regard, I am satisfied that the development would meet relevant NPOs of the NPF and would serve to fulfil the relevant RPOs of the RSES. The development would therefore satisfy the requirement set out in Section 37A(2)(b) of the Act.

S. 37A(2)(c) - Significant effect on the area of one of more planning authority

- 8.2.8. The windfarm site is within the Galway County Council administrative area, proximate to the boundary with Mayo County Council. The project will be connected to the national grid and will provide renewable energy to the region, which could power approximately 41,300-45,500 homes and displace the emission from other less clean forms of energy generation.
- 8.2.9. I consider that the Board could reasonably come to the conclusion that the development would have an effect on an area of more than one local authority. Accordingly, I am also of the opinion that the proposed development would also fall within the scope of section 37A(2)(c).

9.0 Recommendation

- 9.1. Based on the above assessment, it can be concluded that the proposed development would exceed the threshold set out in the Seventh Schedule of the Act and therefore satisfies the requirements of section 37A(1) of the Act. It can also be determined that the requirements of sections 37A(2)(a)(b) and (c) of the Act.
- 9.2. I recommend that the Board serve a notice on the prospective applicant, pursuant to Section 37(B)(4) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, stating that it is of the opinion that the proposed development constitutes a strategic infrastructure development within the meaning of Section 37A of the Act for the reasons and considerations set out below.

Appendix A: Prescribed Bodies

The following is a list of prescribed bodies considered relevant by the Board:

- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media
- Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications
- Galway County Council
- Mayo County Council
- The Northern and Western Regional Assembly
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- An Taisce
- Fáilte Ireland
- Heritage Council
- National Parks and Wildlife Service
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Uisce Eireann
- Irish Aviation Authority
- Health Service Executive
- Office of Public Works

Further notifications should also be made, where deemed appropriate.