



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP 318208-23

Development	110kV grid connection for Shronowen windfarm, Co. Kerry
Location	Shronowen, Co. Kerry
Planning Authority	Kerry County Council
Prospective Applicant	EMPower
Type of Application	Pre-Application Consultation under Section 182E of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended
Inspector	Pauline Fitzpatrick
Date of Site Inspection	22/11/23

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. The Board received a request on 11th October 2023 from EMPower to enter into pre-application consultations under section 182E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in relation to a 110kV grid connection from a permitted wind farm (Shronowen) to a permitted 110kV substation at Tullamore Solar Farm.

2.0 Site Location

The permitted 10 no. turbine wind farm is to the east of the R552 c. 4km south of Ballylongford and 6km north of Listowel. It is accessed via local road L6021 from the northwest and via local road L1009 from the west. The general area is characterised by open peatland comprising primarily of cutover bog and agricultural lands with small commercial forestry pockets interspersed. The area is lightly populated with several farm buildings and detached houses along the local road network. The area is relatively flat

The route of the grid connection is along the minor local road network from the location of the permitted windfarm substation south-westwards connecting into the permitted substation at Drombeg in the Tullamore solar farm.

3.0 Proposed development

The proposed development would comprise a new Tail-fed 110kV underground grid connection along the local road network from the permitted Shronowen wind farm to the permitted 110kV substation in the permitted Tullamore solar farm. The substation is in the townland of Drombeg. The proposed grid connection would facilitate the proposed windfarm to connect to the national grid. The permitted Drombeg substation is a 110kV 4-Bay C-Type electricity substation with loop-in infrastructure to tie into the existing 110kV overhead Kilpaddoge to Tralee transmission line. The works would require amendments to the substation permitted as part of the windfarm development from a Loop-in to a Tail-fed substation design.

The windfarm, as permitted, provided for a 110kV substation with a grid connection consisting of a 225 metre 110kV cable connection to the existing 110kV transmission line to the east. The 225 metre cable was to be trenched underground crossing the

local road and then through a field to the location of 2 no. new steel lattice tower structures on the transmission line.

An alternative 110kV grid connection route was considered in the EIAR which is now the subject of this pre-application consultations.

Two access points into the permitted solar farm are being considered for the route. The access points are c. 100 metres apart from each other on the local road. The following table gives a summary of the options.

Characteristics	Option 1 – southern access	Option 2 – northern access
Local road corridor	4.4km	4.3km
Agricultural Land	1.12km	0.55km
Overall Length	5.52km	4.85km
Potential Water crossings	4	2
Horizontal Direction Drilling (est.)	1	1
Joint Bays (est.)	8	7

4.0 Relevant Planning History

ABP 302681-18 – permission granted 22/05/19 for a solar PV farm in the townlands of Tullamore, Drombeg and Coolkeragh Co. Kerry.

ABP 305106 -19 – permission granted 30/03/20 for a 110kV 4 bay C-type substation and associated loop-in infrastructure to tie into an existing transmission line at Tullamore Co. Kerry within the site of the above permitted solar farm.

ABP 315857 – Amendments to the above approved substation (visual details of the 4th bay) were deemed not to be a material alteration of the approved scheme on 09/06/23.

ABP 309156-21 - permission granted 27/09/22 for a windfarm comprising of 12 wind turbines, substation, grid connection and ancillary works in the townlands of Ballyline

West, Coolkeragh, Dromalivaun and Tullamore. Co. Kerry. Condition 2 attached to the decision omitted turbine nos. T1 and T2 giving a total of 10 no. turbines.

5.0 Prospective applicants' case

As per the details provided at the pre-application consultation meeting the prospective applicant considers that the new grid connection does not qualify as SID under Section 182A(1) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.

6.0 Pre-Application Consultations

6.1. Pre-Application Consultations took place between the Board and the prospective applicant on 15th December 2023. The issues discussed pertained to:

- Timescale in which decision is to be made as to preferred access to be used,
- Completion date for Drombeg substation,
- Other development connecting to substation,
- Road reinstatement,
- Consultations with Kerry County Council,
- Consultations with prescribed bodies including Uisce Eireann,
- Consideration of cumulative impacts,
- Hedgerow removal and EIA screening,
- Traffic management,
- Alterations to substation as permitted as part of the windfarm development.

6.2. The applicant requested closure of the pre-application consultations in a letter dated 8th May, 2024.

7.0 Legislative Provisions

7.1 Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended

Section 2 (1) defines strategic infrastructure as including inter alia:

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

Section 182A (1) where a person, (thereafter referred to as 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.

Section 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.

Section 182E(1) provides that a prospective applicant who proposes to apply for approval under section 182B or 182D shall, before making the application, enter into consultations with the Board in relation to the proposed development.

7.2 Electricity Regulation Act, 1999,

Section 2(1) - definitions

“**transmission**” is defined as 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 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.

“**distribution**” is defined 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.”

“electric plant” is defined 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

8.0 Assessment

The proposed development comprises a new 110kV underground grid connection from the permitted Shronowen windfarm to the permitted Drombeg 110kV substation located to the south-west within the permitted Tullamore solar farm. The substation is under construction. Depending on which solar farm site entrance is to be used to access the substation from the local road, the length of the grid connection would be between 4.85km and 5.520km. It is envisaged that electricity generated by the Shronowen windfarm would be “tail-fed” into the national grid via the proposed grid connection. As confirmed in the pre-application consultation meeting the substation permitted as part of the windfarm development would require alterations to the internal layout, only, to allow for the Tail-fed connection. Its footprint would not be altered.

I am satisfied that the proposed 110kV grid connection constitutes electric infrastructure as defined in section 7 above in that it is connected with the generation and transmission of electricity.

Section 182A (9) of the Act sets a threshold of 110kV in order for a high voltage electricity transmission line to be considered strategic infrastructure, and the proposed grid connection meets this threshold.

In conclusion, I consider that the proposed grid connection as described in the submissions and drawings constitutes strategic infrastructure coming within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, necessitating an application direct to the Board.

8.1 Prescribed Bodies

In view of the scale, nature and location of the proposed development, as described in this report, it is recommended that the prospective applicant should consult with

the prescribed bodies listed in the attached Appendix in respect of any future application for approval.

9.0 Recommendation

I recommend that EMPower be informed that the proposed development consisting of a 110kV underground grid connection from Shronowen wind farm to Drombeg substation, as set out in the plans, particulars received by An Bord Pleanála falls within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and that a planning application should be made directly to the Board.



Pauline Fitzpatrick

Senior Planning Inspector

27th May, 2024

Prescribed Bodies

The following is a schedule of prescribed bodies considered relevant for the purposes of Section 37E (3) (c) of the Principal Act.

- Kerry County Council
- Southern Regional Assembly
- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage.
- Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications.
- An Taisce
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- Fáilte Ireland
- The Heritage Council
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Uisce Eireann
- Health Service Executive
- Commission for the Regulation of Utilities

Further notifications should also be made, where deemed appropriate.