

An  
Coimisiún  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report ABP-320865-24

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<b>Development</b>	Proposed development comprising of 2 no. 220kV Substations and associated 220kV Grid Connection
<b>Location</b>	In the townlands of Garryard West, Gortshanroe & Silvermines, Co. Tipperary
<b>Planning Authority</b>	Tipperary County Council
<b>Type of Application</b>	Pre-application consultation under section 182E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended
<b>Prospective Applicant</b>	Siga-Hydro Limited
<b>Date of Site Inspection</b>	14 <sup>th</sup> October 2024
<b>Inspector</b>	David Ryan

## 1. Introduction

The Commission received a request on 18<sup>th</sup> of September 2024 from the prospective applicant, Siga-Hydro Limited, to enter into pre-application consultations under Section 182E of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended ('2000 Act'), in relation to the proposed development comprising of 220kV substations and associated 220kV grid connection on lands at Garryard West, Gortshanroe, and Silvermines, Co. Tipperary.

The primary purpose of the pre-application consultation is to address the issue of whether or not the proposed electrical infrastructure development constitutes strategic infrastructure for the purposes of the 2000 Act. Two pre-application consultation meetings were held with the prospective applicant on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024, and 12<sup>th</sup> February 2026. In the first meeting the prospective applicant proposed a grid connection comprising an underground cable route linking two new 220kV substations to the existing 220kV overhead transmission line serving the National Grid. It was outlined that two grid connection route options were under consideration to link a proposed reservoir substation and a second proposed substation at the end of the route line as it ties into the network. This included 220kV cables via the R499 and L2110, and an alternate route option via the R499, which would range up to 4-5km in length. The applicant outlined the proposed development application was being sought to facilitate a grid connection for a hydro pumped storage project.

Clarity was sought by the Commission's representatives from the prospective applicant on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2024 as to whether the proposal related to one or two new substations. The prospective applicant confirmed on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024 that 2 no. substations are proposed. In the second meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2026, the prospective applicant outlined two updated underground grid connection route options were under consideration to link a proposed eastern reservoir substation and a second proposed western substation at the end of the route line at Shalee as it ties into the network, and included 220kV cables via the R499 and agricultural lands (Option A), and an alternate route option via the R499, L2133 and a laneway (Option B), which would range up to 4-5km in length.

In the interests of clarity, the Commission's representatives requested that the prospective applicant submit mapping details of the 2 no. proposed substations and the 2 no. grid connection route options. Correspondence including for mapping was received by the Commission on 6<sup>th</sup> March 2026 detailing the location of 2 no. proposed substations and the 2 no. grid connection route options (Option A and Option B). It should be noted that while two options are under consideration that an application is only proposed for one and therefore design flexibility is not required.

This report provides an overview of the proposed development, as well as details of legislative provisions, relevant precedent, an assessment and recommendation.

## **2. Site Location & Description**

The proposed eastern 220kV substation is located within the Magcobar Mine site which has ceased operation, to the east of a reservoir, located c.0.7km west of Silvermines, Co. Tipperary, and is accessed off the R499. Dwellings are located to the north and east of this area of the site, adjacent to the proposed cable routes on the R499 and L2133, and within the vicinity of the proposed western 220kV substation site location. The grid connection cable routes set out which will connect the eastern substation to the western substation at the existing 220kV overhead transmission line, are located within public roads, a laneway, and agricultural lands, with the connection point to the grid within agricultural lands. A number of archaeological monuments are located in the vicinity of the eastern substation site. The westernmost substation site is located to the east of the M7, to the east adjacent the pending ACP-323980-25 for the proposed Water Supply Project for the Eastern and Midlands Region, and to the west of an airfield. Designated European sites including Slievefelim to Silvermines Mountains SPA and Silvermines Mountains West SAC are located adjacent to the cable routes and in close proximity to the substation sites.

## **3. Proposed Development**

The proposed development relates to a grid connection comprising a 220kV underground cable route, linking a newly constructed 220kV substation switchyard

to the 220kV transmission lines serving the National Grid. The overall proposed grid connection comprises of:

- Transformer compounds and all associated infrastructure and works, comprising two 220kV substations and associated electrical cabling and ducting works facilitating the connection for the proposed substations to the National Grid;
- Control room buildings(s) and associated works (switch gear and other electrical control equipment would be contained within the proposed control building);
- Amendment of the site's existing access on the R499 Regional Road. The amended design shall be developed in line with Transport Infrastructure Ireland publications, and designed to meet visibility requirements for drivers entering and exiting the access, as well as stopping sight distance requirements on the R499;
- Temporary site welfare compounds and all associated site works and;
- All associated site development, lighting, landscaping, security fencing, boundary treatment works and all associated ancillary infrastructure.

The proposal is being sought to facilitate a grid connection for a hydro pumped storage project. It should be noted that this pre-application consultation request relates only to the electricity infrastructure and no pre-application request has been received by the Commission in respect of the hydro pumped storage project.

#### **4. Prospective Applicant's Case**

The prospective applicant's case, as outlined in the cover letter and documentation submitted can be summarised as follows:

The proposed development is seeking to facilitate the connection of a planned hydro pumped storage project to the national grid. The grid connection will be facilitated through an 220kV underground cable route, linking 2 no. new substations to the 220kV transmission line, with two grid route options under evaluation, via the R499,

L2133, and agricultural lands. The applicant contends that the proposed 220kV substations and associated 220kV grid connection falls within the definition of transmission as set out in Section 2 (1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999 and therefore comprises Strategic Infrastructure Development under Section 182A(1) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended.

## 5. Relevant Precedents

I note the similarities between this project and other examples put before the Commission where it has been determined as to whether or not they constitute SID. Precedent cases that are relevant to the current application before the Commission are set out in the Table below.

ABP Ref. No.	Location	Development Description	Decision Date	Decision
320154	Various townlands, Co. Cork	220kV Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) tail fed substation with associated grid connection comprising 220kV underground cabling connecting to the existing 220kV Knockraha substation	2024	Is SID
313767	Coolderry, Co. Clare.	Development of a 110kV substation at Coolderry, Co. Clare and associated 110kV underground cabling to Ardnacrusha 110kV substation.	2024	Is SID
313680	Blackwater Bog, near Shannonbridge, Co. Offaly	Development of 100kV substation and grid connection	2023	Is SID

## 6. Legislative provisions

### 6.1 Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended

Section 2(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended ('2000 Act'), defines 'strategic infrastructure' as including, *inter alia*:

*"any proposed development referred to in section 182A(1)"*

Under subsection 182A(1) of the 2000 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.

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.”*

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.

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

Section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999, as amended (‘1999 Act’), sets out the following definitions:

- **‘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 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 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*

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

- **‘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”*

- **‘Distribution’:**

*“...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 switchgear and which is used for conveying electricity to final customers”.*

## **7. Consultation Meeting**

Two pre-application consultations meeting were held with the prospective applicant on the 5<sup>th</sup> November 2024, and 12<sup>th</sup> February 2026. The meeting records relating to this development proposal and the presentations made by the applicant to the Commission's representatives are attached to the file.

In the pre-application consultation meeting held 12<sup>th</sup> February 2026, the prospective applicant outlined one grid connection route is proposed to be sought in the application, and that it was not proposed to seek design flexibility.

## **8. Assessment**

The definition of 'strategic infrastructure' includes 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).

The proposed development consists of a grid connection comprising a 220kV underground cable route, linking 2 proposed 220kV substations to an existing 220kV transmission line serving the National Grid. The proposal includes an on-site titled Eastern Reservoir substation, and a second off-site western substation at the end of the route line at Shalee as it ties into the network. The two underground grid connection route options, comprise 220kV cables via the R499 and agricultural lands (Option A), and an alternate route option via the R499, L2133, a laneway and agricultural lands (Option B), which would range up to 4-5km in length. One preferred route will be selected as part of the application. The proposal is being sought to facilitate a grid connection for a hydro pumped storage project.

The prospective applicant is seeking a determination from the Commission as to whether the proposed development is or is not Strategic Infrastructure Development.

The prospective applicant contends that it is Strategic Infrastructure Development on the basis that the 220kV substations and associated 220kV grid connection falls within the definition of transmission as set out in Section 2 (1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999 and, therefore comprises Strategic Infrastructure Development under Section 182A(1) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended.

Under section 182A of the PDA an undertaker shall apply to the Board for approval of a development comprising or for the purposes of energy transmission. Section 182A(9) states that 'transmission' shall be construed in accordance with section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999 and shall also be construed as meaning inter alia *'the transport of electricity by means of a high voltage line where the voltage would be 110kV or more'*. I note in this case the voltage in the underground cables would be 220 kilovolts.

Section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act defines the transmission system as a system which consists wholly or mainly of high voltage lines and electrical plant 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. I consider that the proposed 2 no. substations constitute 'electric plant' as defined in relevant legislation.

The proposed 2 no. 220kV substations and the 220kV underground grid connection cable route, entailing Option A, or Option B, connecting into the existing 220kV overhead transmission line would enable the transport of electricity. On the basis of the information submitted and discussions held at the pre-application consultation meetings, it is considered that the proposed 220kV substations and 220kV underground grid connection cable route, entailing Option A, or Option B, which will connect to existing 220kV transmission line constitutes the 'transport of electricity by means of a transmission system' as defined in Section 2(1) of the ERA. The construction of a new 220kV substation at the reservoir site, connecting into a second new 220kV substation at Shalee, c.4-5km away by means of a 220kV underground cable (entailing Option A, or Option B), and their connection into an existing 220kV transmission line, meets the definition of transmission as set out in S182A(9) of the Act and Section 2(1) of the ERA. Under the P&DA 2000 the definition of electricity transmission for SID purposes is a high voltage line of 110kV

or greater, as per S.182A(9). Accordingly, I consider the proposed 220kV infrastructure would fall under S182A (1) of the Act and would be deemed to be SID.

In conclusion, therefore, I recommend that the Commission issue a determination that the proposed development does fall within the scope of section 182A of the 2000 Act, as amended, and that a planning application should be made directly to the Commission.

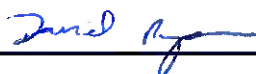
A list of prescribed bodies is set out in Appendix 1.

## **9. Recommendation**

I recommend that the prospective applicant, Siga-Hydro Limited, be informed that:

- (i) the proposed development comprising 2 no. 220kV substations and associated 220kV grid connection (Option A or Option B) on lands at Garryard West, Gortshanroe, and Silvermines, Co.Tipperary, as set out in the plans and particulars received by An Coimisiún Pleanála on the 18<sup>th</sup> September 2024, 10<sup>th</sup> December 2024, 24<sup>th</sup> February 2026 and 6<sup>th</sup> March 2026, falls within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and that a planning application should therefore be made directly to the Commission.

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence, directly or indirectly, the exercise of my professional judgement in an improper or inappropriate way.



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David Ryan

Senior Planning Inspector

31<sup>st</sup> March 2026

## **Appendix 1: Prescribed Bodies**

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

- *Department of Housing and Local Government and Heritage*
- *Minister of Climate, Energy and the Environment*
- *Tipperary County Council*
- *Southern Regional Assembly*
- *Transport Infrastructure Ireland/National Transport Authority*
- *An Chomhairle Ealaíon*
- *Uisce Éireann*
- *Inland Fisheries Ireland*
- *Office of Public Works*
- *An Taisce*
- *Irish Aviation Authority*
- *Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine*
- *HSE, National Environmental Health Service*
- *The Commission for Regulation of Utilities*
- *Heritage Council*
- *Fáilte Ireland*
- *Córas Iompair Éireann*
- *Eirgrid*
- *ESB*

Further notifications should also be made, where deemed appropriate.