



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

**Pre-Application Consultation
pursuant to Section 177E(1A) of the
Planning and Development Acts,
2000, as amended.**

**Inspector's Report on
ABP-321436-24**

Development

Request to enter into pre-application consultation pursuant to Section 177E(1A) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.

Location

Meenbog Windfarm at Meenbog, Croaghonagh, Cashelnavean, Tawnawully Mountains, Friarsbush, Ardinawark, Keadew Upper, Keadew Lower and Cullionboy townlands, near the twin towns of Ballybofey and Stranolar, Co. Donegal.

Planning Authority

Donegal County Council

Prospective Applicant

Planree Limited

Date of Consultation Meetings

19th of February 2025, 7th of January 2026

Date of Site Inspection

12th of February 2026

Inspector

Stephanie Farrington

1.0 Introduction

The Commission received a request on the 10th of December 2024 from MKO on behalf of Planree Ltd., to enter into pre-application consultations under section 177E(1A) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. The Commission decided to grant this request from the prospective applicants by Direction dated 15th of January 2025.

The initial pre-application consultation meeting was held in the offices of An Coimisiún Pleanála on the 19th of February 2025. At this meeting the applicant requested a second pre application consultation meeting.

A request for a second pre-application meeting was received by the Commission on 1st of October 2025. A second pre-application meeting was held in the offices of An Coimisiún Pleanála on the 7th of January 2026.

The purpose of this report is to inform the Commission of the nature of the pre-application consultations undertaken, pursuant to Sections 177E(1A) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

2.0 Site Location

- 2.1. The site is located in the townlands of Croaghonagh and Meenbog, c.12km north of Donegal Town and 9km south of Ballybofey, in south County Donegal. The site adjoins Northern Ireland border with County Tyrone, along its eastern boundary. The site is located in a rural area that is characterised by a mix of mountains, blanket bog, forestry plantations and agricultural fields. There are a number of watercourses routing through the site, which drain primarily to the Mournebeg River, to the north.
- 2.2 The site consists of an under-construction wind farm, known as Meenbog Wind Farm, which has permission for 19 No. turbines and associated infrastructure, with electricity generation potential of 90MW. Construction work commenced on the permitted wind farm in November 2019. A peat slide occurred on the site on the 12th of November 2020 and worked associated with the development ceased.
- 2.3 The pre-application request documentation outlines that approximately 90% of the civil engineering works including wind farm access road, electrical substation, turbine

hardstands, turbine bases, peat repositories and burrow pits at the wind farm site were substantially completed.

- 2.4 The site is accessed from the N15 Donegal Town – Ballybofey National Primary Road. A stone track routes from the access junction around the site, providing access to the individual turbine bases.

3.0 **Description of Proposal**

The proposal, as described within the S177E pre application request documentation, relates to substitute consent for all works completed at the site under Section 177E of the Planning and Development Act. Consent is also being sought for completion of construction, operation and decommissioning of the windfarm.

4.0 **Planning History**

The following planning history relates to the application site.

Meenbog Windfarm

ABP Ref: 05.PA0040

- An Bord Pleanála refused permission in March 2016 for 49-x turbine windfarm, 2 x met masts, 2 x substations & associated works at two interconnected sites (c.3481ha) at Meenbog and other townlands, County Donegal.

ABP Ref: 300460-17

- The Board granted a ten year planning permission on 25th of June 2018 for the construction of wind farm comprising 19 No. wind turbines, grid connection and all associated site works. Permission was granted subject to 20 no. planning conditions.

ABP Ref: 303729-19

- Under Section 146(B) of the Act, the Board varied the permission by Order dated 5th of June 2019, in relation to: Lengthening of the blades of the proposed turbines while remaining within the previously permitted tip height of 156.5 metres.

ABP Ref: 314062-22

- Permission for Leave to Apply for Substitute Consent for alterations to the permitted Meenbog Wind Farm granted on the 13th of October 2023.

ABP Ref: 319466-24

- Application for Substitute Consent for 25 no. deviations from the permitted Meenbog Windfarm development (granted under ABP PA05E.300460) lodged with An Bord Pleanála on the 2nd of April 2024. This application was withdrawn on 21st of February 2025.

Wider Area

PA Ref: 2460495, ABP Ref: 321718-25

- Donegal County Council issued a notification of decision to refuse permission for the construction of 3 no. culverts to replace existing culverts and all associated site works along the N15 on the 13th of December 2024. Permission was refused for the development on the basis of the following reasons and considerations:

“Having regard to the rationale for the proposed works that is to facilitate a grid connection from Meenbog Wind Farm and to the current unauthorised nature of this large development that is the subject of ongoing legal proceedings, the Planning Authority considers that to permit the proposed development would be premature and contrary to proper and sustainable planning”.

The decision of Donegal County Council to refuse permission for the development is currently subject to appeal to An Bord Pleanála (ABP Ref: 321718-25).

5.0 Peat Slide

Construction work commenced on the permitted wind farm in November 2019. A peat slide occurred on the site on the 12th of November 2020 during the construction of a permitted access road to Turbine 7.

The documentation submitted by the applicant on the 22nd of December 2025 details Remedial Works undertaken by the applicant to address the effects of the peat slide including measures to remove accumulated peat, restoration works within the slip

scar and restoration works undertaken on the Shruhingarve Stream and its riparian area.

6.0 Relevant Enforcement/Legal Cases

An enforcement case was opened in respect of the development and Section 160 proceedings were initiated by Donegal County Council in respect of unauthorised development on the site.

- High Court Judgement [2024] IEHC 193 – deemed that the entire windfarm development is unauthorised development. The decision of the High Court was appealed by the applicant to the Court of Appeal.
- Court of Appeal Judgement [2024] IECA 300 – deemed that the entire wind-farm development is unauthorised development.

7.0 Legislation

Any subsequent application for Substitute Consent will be lodged under the provisions of Section 177E of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, and Part 19 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended.

8.0 Prospective Applicant's Case

The prospective applicant noted the planning history and context and requested the pre-application consultation in order to determine the exact process of how to lodge any application for substitute consent and what that application should contain.

9.0 Pre-Application Consultation Meeting

A Pre-Application Consultation meeting took place in the offices of An Coimisiún Pleanála on the 19th of February 2025, commencing at 2.30 pm. Representatives of the prospective applicant and An Coimisiún Pleanála were in attendance. An agenda was issued by An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) prior to the meeting. The prospective applicant was advised in advance of the meeting that the consultation would relate solely to the administrative procedures around the lodgement of an application, and any associated requirements.

This report should be read in conjunction with the written record on file of the pre-application consultation meeting held with the prospective applicant. It is not

proposed to repeat the contents of those records in detail here. The main topics raised for discussion at the meeting were as follows:

- Introductions
- Description of development and relevant background – clarity regarding scope of application.
- Procedural Advice / Queries arising with regard to any subsequent application for Substitute Consent.
- AOB.

A second pre-application meeting was held in the offices of ACP on the 7th of January 2026 commencing at 12pm. Representatives of the prospective applicant and An Coimisiún Pleanála were in attendance. An agenda was issued by An Coimisiún Pleanála prior to the meeting. This report should be read in conjunction with the written record on file of the pre-application consultation meeting held with the prospective applicant.

10.0 Conclusion

The meetings concluded. The minutes of both meetings were circulated to the applicant for comment. No comments were received. The applicant did not indicate that they would be requesting a further meeting. I therefore recommend that the pre-application consultation process should be closed.

Stephanie Farrington
Planning Inspectorate

17th of February 2026