



**An
Coimisiún
Pleanála**

Inspector's Report ACP 323441-25

Development

Proposed development of a 110kV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) electricity substation and grid connection.

Location

Townland of Rathpatrick, County Kilkenny.

Planning Authority

Kilkenny County Council

Type of Application

Pre-application consultation under section 182E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

Prospective Applicant

Drumdowney Solar Farm Limited.

Inspector

Brendan Coyne

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1. The Commission received a request on 15th August 2025 from the prospective applicant, Drumdowney Solar Farm 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 of a 110kV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) substation and a 'loop-in/loop-out' connection to the existing Great Island-Waterford overhead transmission line on lands within the townland of Rathpatrick, County Kilkenny. The proposed development would serve the proposed Drumdowney Solar Farm, which is the subject of a current planning application to Kilkenny County Council (P.A. Ref. 2560391).
- 1.2. The primary purpose of the pre-application consultation is to address the issue of whether or not the proposed development constitutes strategic infrastructure for the purposes of the 2000 Act. A record of the written consultations undertaken is on file. This report provides an overview of the proposed development, as well as details of legislative provisions and relevant precedent.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1. The site of the proposed development is located on agricultural land in the townland of Rathpatrick, c. 750m northeast of Slieverue village and c. 2km northeast of Waterford city in County Kilkenny. The site, as outlined in red, has an irregular shape and is accessible from the Luffany Roundabout along the N25 via a cul-de-sac road to the northwest. The Great Island-Waterford 110kV overhead transmission line traverses the site's northern section in a northwest-southeast direction. The proposed Drumdowney Solar Farm, to which the proposed development would connect, is located c. 1km to the northwest of the site.
- 2.2. The ground levels of the site rise from c.90m OD along the western boundary to c. 95m OD towards the eastern boundary. Native hedgerows and trees define the site's field boundaries. There are no notable watercourses on the site. The surrounding area is rural, characterised by one-off rural housing and farmsteads. A cluster of commercial, logistic and engineering premises is located on the western side of the nearby Slieverue Link Road. The site's northern boundary is near a recorded archaeological monument (RMP Ref. KK044-013), identified as Ringfort. There are

four Natura 2000 European Sites within 15 km of the site. These include the River Barrow and River Nore SAC (2.6km to the east), Lower River Suir SAC (c. 2.9km to the southeast), Tramore Dunes and Backstrand SAC and Tramore Back Strand SPA (both c. 13km to the south).

3.0 Proposed Development

The proposed development comprises the following:

- A 110kV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) Substation with a 33kV customer compound substation. The substation would consist of EirGrid and Independent Power Producers (IPP) control room buildings, a transformer, security fencing, security lighting, drainage infrastructure, a temporary construction compound and high voltage electrical equipment.
- A 'loop-in/loop-out' grid connection to the existing Great Island-Waterford 110kV overhead transmission line, via 2 no. new interface towers (16m high).

3.1. The purpose of the proposed development is to serve the proposed Drumdowney Solar Farm, which is the subject of a current planning application to Kilkenny Council (P.A. Ref. 2560391).

4.0 Prospective Applicant's Case

4.1. The prospective applicant's case, as outlined in the cover letter submitted and planning submitted, is summarised as follows:

- The proposed substation would be a 110kV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) electricity substation with a 33 kV customer compound.
- The substation would connect to the existing Great Island-Waterford 110kV overhead transmission line via a loop-in / loop-out grid connection and two new interface towers.
- The purpose of the substation and grid connection is to serve the proposed Drumdowney solar farm, which is the subject of a current planning appeal to Kilkenny County Council (Planning Authority Ref. 25/60391).

- The proposed underground cable providing the grid connection from the new 110kV GIS substation into the existing Great Island-Waterford 110kV overhead transmission line, via two new interface towers, would be at a voltage of 110kV. As such, the underground cable falls within the definition of 'transmission' as set out in section 182A(9) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), which is construed in accordance with section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999.
- Under section 182A(9) of the Act, there is no threshold regarding a substation. It is considered that the proposed 110kV GIS substation constitutes an '*electric plant*' in accordance with the definition set out in section 2(1) of the Electricity Act, which refers to "*any plant, apparatus or appliance used for, or for purposes connected with, the generation, transmission, distribution or supply of electricity*".
- The proposed 110kV GIS substation is part of a transmission system which "*consists, wholly or mainly, of high voltage lines and electric plant and which is used for conveying electricity from...one substation to another*". As such, it is considered that the substation also falls within the definition of transmission as set out in section 182A(9) of the Act.
- The proposed development is strategic infrastructure, and accordingly, any application for statutory approval must be made to An Coimisiún Pleanála under section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).
- On this basis, the prospective applicant engaged with An Coimisiún Pleanála as part of the pre-application consultation process set out in section 182E of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended), with a view to confirming if the proposed development is strategic infrastructure development.
- The prospective applicant notes that the proposed development refers only to the 110 KV substation and grid connection, not the solar farm or other ancillary development, which forms part of the wider project.

5.0 Relevant Precedents

- 5.1. The prospective applicant cites several cases where An Coimisiún Pleanála (formerly An Bord Pleanála) determined that similar development comprised Strategic

Infrastructure Development (SID) under s182A. Those cases are detailed in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Precedent cases presented by the prospective applicant

ABP Ref. No.	Location	Development Description	Decision Date	Decision
ABP 320154-24	Ballysallagh	A 220kV Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) tail-fed substation with associated grid connection comprising 220kV underground cabling connecting to the existing 220kV Knockraha substation.	23/09/2024	Is a Strat. Infrast. Dev.
ABP 315433-22	Delamain	A 220kV Air Insulated (AIS) tail-fed substation with the associated grid connection comprising 220kV underground cabling to connect into the existing 400/220kV Dunnstown substation.	08/05/2023	Is a Strat. Infrast. Dev.
ABP 317173-23	Rathcoursey	110kV Air Insulated Switchgear (AIS) loop-in substation and associated grid connection		Not yet concluded
ABP 304862-19	EirGrid Bogganstown / Kellystown	220 kV Gas Insulated Switchgear substation, 2 no. 220 kV underground circuits forming a loop-in/loop-out to the existing Maynooth-Woodland 220 kV Overhead Line and 6 no. 220 kV underground circuits and associated low voltage and communication underground cabling connecting the proposed substation with electricity transformers within the Intel Ireland Facility	21/11/2019	Approve with Conditions

ABP-313676-22	Lodgewood	Development of a substation and associated grid connection	01/11/2022	Is a Strat. Infrast. Dev.
ABP-311187-21	Bendinstown	Proposed 110kV AIS single bay tail-fed substation and underground cable connection	24/11/2021	Is a Strat. Infrast. Dev.
ABP-311403-21	Rhotirees	Proposed development of 110kV infrastructure	17/01/2022	Is a Strat. Infrast. Dev.
ABP-310846-21	TDC Community Solar Park	110kV substation to feed into the existing Athlone 220/110 kV substation at Monksland, Co. Roscommon, including underground cable connection and all associated works	24/11/2021	Is a Strat. Infrast. Dev.
ABP-310024-21	Highfield	Proposed development of 110kV substation	10/09/2021	Is a Strat. Infrast. Dev.
ABP-310033-21	Dunnstown	Proposed development of a 220kV substation and grid connection at the existing Dunnstown 400kV substation	18/01/2022	Is a Strat. Infrast. Dev.

5.2. Table 2 below details other recent relevant precedent cases in which An Coimisiún Pleanála determined similar developments to be strategic infrastructure development.

Table 2. Other recent relevant precedent cases

ABP Ref. No.	Location	Development Description	Decision Date	Decision
VC17.321580	Kells Municipal District, Co. Meath.	110kV Substation and Cable Connection.	03/04/2025	Is a Strat. Infrast. Dev.
VC01.319470	Grangeford Co. Carlow	110kV substation and 110kV underground cable connecting the substation to the existing ESB 220kV Kellistown substation	05/02/2025	Is a Strat. Infrast. Dev.

VC09.322289	townland of Griffinrath, Celbridge, County Kildare	110kV customer substation, a 110kV underground cable and a new 110kV strategic station including 6 LCIMs (Line to Cable Interface Masts)	14/07/2025	Is a Strat. Infrast. Dev.
VC06S.320362	townlands of Aungierstown, Ballybane and Kilbride, Dublin 22.	110kV High Voltage (HV) Compound	07/03/2025	Is a Strat. Infrast. Dev.
VC29S.319699	James's Street, Watling Street, Victoria Quay and Steeven's Lane, Dublin 8	110kV ESB supply, 110kV underground cable network and 110kV substation	09/10/2024	Is a Strat. Infrast. Dev.
VC19.313680	Blackwater Bog, near Shannonbridge, Co. Offaly.	110kV substation and grid connection serving a proposed solar PV farm.	14/08/2023	Is a Strat. Infrast. Dev.
VC25M.313352	townland of Umma More in Co. Westmeath.	110kV substation and grid connection cabling to the existing Thornsberry 110kV substation in County Offaly	12/08/2022	Is a Strat. Infrast. Dev.

6.0 Legislative provisions

6.1. Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended

6.2. 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)"

6.3. 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.

6.4. 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 high voltage line where the voltage would be 110 kilovolts or more, or
an interconnector, whether ownership of the interconnector will be vested in the undertaker or not."*

6.5. 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.

6.6. **Electricity Regulation Act 1999, as amended**

6.7. 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."

6.8. 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".

7.0 Consultation Meeting

The prospective applicant confirmed, in response to correspondence from An Coimisiún Pleanála, that they did not seek a pre-application consultation meeting with

representatives of the Commission. As such, a meeting was not held regarding this case. A written record of the consultations undertaken has been attached to the file.

8.0 Assessment

- 8.1. The proposed development comprises the construction of a 110kV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) substation and a loop-in/loop-out connection to the Great Island-Waterford 110kV overhead transmission line. The infrastructure would facilitate the connection of the proposed Drumdowney solar farm, located on land c. 1km northwest of the site, to the national grid. The solar farm is the subject of a current planning application to Kilkenny Council (P.A. Ref. 2560391).
- 8.2. 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)" of the Act. Section 182A(1) of the 2000 Act requires that development comprising or for the purposes of electricity transmission shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, an application for approval of the development under section 182B and shall apply to the Commission for such approval accordingly. Section 182A(9) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) defines 'transmission', in relation to electricity, to be construed in accordance with section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999 but, for the purposes of this section, shall also be construed as meaning the transport of electricity by means of a high voltage line where the voltage would be 110 kilovolts or more. The definitions of 'transmission', 'electric line', 'electric plant', and 'distribution' as set out in section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999 are detailed in section 6.2 above.
- 8.3. Given that the proposed development comprises a 110 kV GIS substation and associated loop-in/loop-out connection to the existing Great Island-Waterford 110kV overhead transmission line, and that such infrastructure is defined in section 182A(9) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and Section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act 1999 (as amended), it is my view that the proposed development falls within the scope of Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The proposed development is designed to operate at a transmission voltage of 110kV, providing the infrastructure necessary to carry

renewable electricity from the nearby proposed Drumdowney solar farm to the national grid.

- 8.4. The proposed development is comparable to several precedent cases, detailed in Section 5 above, where An Coimisiún Pleanála (formerly An Bord Pleanála) determined that similar 110kV substations and grid connection cables constituted Strategic Infrastructure Development. Accordingly, I am satisfied that the proposed development constitutes Strategic Infrastructure Development within the meaning of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).
- 8.5. Given the scale, nature, and location of the proposed development, it is recommended that the prospective applicant consult with the prescribed bodies listed in the attached appendix regarding any application for approval.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1. In conclusion, I consider that the proposed development of a 110kV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) Substation and a loop-in/loop-out connection to the Great Island-Waterford 110kV overhead transmission line does fall 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 An Coimisiún Pleanála. A list of prescribed bodies is set out in Appendix 1 of this report.

10.0 Recommendation

- 10.1. I recommend that the prospective applicant, Drumdowney Solar Farm Limited, be informed that the proposed development of a 110kV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) Substation and a loop-in/loop-out connection to the Great Island-Waterford 110kV overhead transmission line on lands at Rathpatrick in County Kilkenny, as set out in the plans and particulars received by An Coimisiún Pleanála on the 15th August 2025, 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.

Brendan Coyne

Brendan Coyne
Senior Planning Inspector

09th October 2025

11.0 Appendix 1: Prescribed Bodies

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

- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications
- Tipperary County Council
- Commission for the Regulation of Utilities
- EirGrid
- ESB
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- National Monument Service
- Office of Public Works
- Heritage Council
- National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Uisce Éireann
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- An Taisce
- Health Service Executive

Further notifications should also be made, where deemed appropriate.