



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report

ACP-324006-26

Development	Request to enter into pre-application consultation pursuant to Section 177E(1a) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.
Location	Blackwater bog, Belmont bog and Ballaghurt bog, Co. Offaly
Prospective Applicant(s)	Bord na Móna Energy Ltd
Type of Application	Application for substitute consent under Section 177E of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).
Planning Authority	Offaly County Council
Date of Site Inspection	Inspection not required.
Inspector	Paul Kelly

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Commission received a request on the 23rd December 2025 from Malachy Walsh and Partners (MWP) on behalf of Bord na Móna Energy 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 and informed the prospective applicant by correspondence dated 23rd March 2026.
- 1.2 One pre-application consultation meeting was held on 24th June 2026. The purpose of this report is to inform the Commission of the nature of the pre-application consultations undertaken, pursuant to Section 177E(1a) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended).
- 1.3 The applicant undertook peat extraction works at the application site from April, 2000 in line with an Integrated Pollution Control Licence (IPC) (Ref. P0502-01) from the EPA.

2.0 Site Location and description:

- 2.1 The site comprises the Blackwater, Belmont, Derryharney and Clonyon Bogs which form part of the Blackwater Bog Group with a site area of c. 12,896 ha. It is located in County Offaly approx. 1km northeast of Shannon Bridge Village, approx. 5.5km northwest of Belmont Village and 11.5km south of Athlone Town.
- 2.2 The application site is described as featuring various landcover types including bare cutaway peat, re-vegetated bare peat, scrub, low woodland and wetland areas.
- 2.3 There are six designated sites within close proximity to the proposed development. This includes the Fin Lough Special Area of Conservation (SAC) (Site Code: 000576) which is partly located within the proposed development site.

3.0 Description of Proposal:

- 3.1 The development for which Substitute Consent is being sought is for relevant peat extraction activities that were undertaken at the application site from July 1988 onwards.

3.2 The development is outlined in the presentation made to the meeting of 24th June 2026, a copy of which is appended to this file, and includes the following:

- Installation of surface water drainage infrastructure at the application site to facilitate peat extraction activities from 1988 to the present day;
- Vegetation clearance to facilitate peat extraction activity from 1988 to 2020;
- Use and maintenance of pre-existing ancillary supporting infrastructure and services to facilitate peat extraction (e.g. railway infrastructure, drainage (drains, silt ponds, pumps), etc) from 1988 to the present day;
- Control measures associated with the above, inclusive of the IPC Licence measures (Ref. P0502-01) which commenced from April 2000 onwards to the present day;
- All associated site development and ancillary works, and;
- The discharge of Condition No.10 of the IPC Licence which facilitates the rehabilitation of Blackwater, Belmont, Derryharney and Clonyon Bogs.

4.0 Planning History

From a review of the Commissions Map Register:

- 4.1 **ABP-303108-18** – Permission Refused on 19/07/2019 for continued operation of peat-fuelled power station to facilitate the phased transition to exclusive firing with biomass and associated development works. The applicant was ESB International.
- 4.2 **ABP-306490-20** - Application for leave to apply for substitute consent under section 177C of the Planning and Development Act 2000, (as amended) to regularize the planning status of Bord na Móna's historic peat extraction (and ancillary works) on the milled peat production bogs. Board decision to grant annulled (Quashed by Order of the High Court on 7th May 2021). Applicant was Bord na Móna.
- 4.3 **ABP-307283-20** - Application for substitute consent in relation to Peat Extraction at Ballaghurt Bog in the Blackwater Bog Group. Application withdrawn on 14/01/2021. Applicant was Bord na Móna.
- 4.4 **ABP-313668-22** - Application for Leave to Apply for Substitute Consent for peat extraction within the Blackwater Bog Group withdrawn on 15/01/2024. Applicant was Bord na Móna Environmental Ltd.

5.0 Legislation

- 5.1 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). The Commission will note that whilst Chapter 4 of the Planning and Development Act, 2024 is scheduled to commence imminently, at the time of writing there are no transitional arrangements or regulations addressing a pre-application consultation under S177E(1a) of the 2000 Act.

6.0 Pre-Application Consultation Meeting

- 6.1 A Pre-Application Consultation meeting took place via Microsoft Teams on the 24th day of June 2026, commencing at 2:30pm. Representatives of the prospective applicant and An Coimisiún Pleanála were in attendance. An agenda was issued by the Commission 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.
- 6.2 This report should be read in conjunction with the copy of the presentation made to the meeting and the written record of the pre-application consultation meeting held with the prospective applicant on file. 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.

7.0 Conclusion

- 7.1 The meeting concluded with An Coimisiún Pleanála representatives advising that the record of the meeting would issue to the prospective applicant in due course and if no comments on the record were received, the Commission would close the file and await the application. The prospective applicant was further advised that if they

were of the opinion that another meeting was required, they should identify the specific matter for discussion and rationale for the holding of such further meeting, and this would be examined. The holding of any such further meeting(s) would be at the discretion of the Commission. The meeting record issued to the prospective applicant on the 24th June 2026 and no comments on the record, or request for a further meeting have been received. I therefore recommend that the pre-application consultation process should now be closed.

Paul Kelly

Senior Planning Inspector

23rd September 2026