



An  
Coimisiún  
Pleanála

## Inspector's Report ACP-324330-26

|                                        |                                                                                                  |
|----------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Development</b>                     | Proposed development of the Belview - Great Island 38kV underground cable river crossing         |
| <b>Location</b>                        | in the townlands of Great Island Co. Wexford and Drumdowney Upper and Gorteens Co. Kilkenny      |
| <b>Coastal Planning Authority</b>      | Wexford County Council & Kilkenny County Council                                                 |
| <b>Prospective Applicant</b>           | Electricity Supply Board                                                                         |
| <b>Type of Application</b>             | Pre Application Consultation under s.287 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended). |
| <b>Date of Pre-Application Meeting</b> | 9 <sup>th</sup> July 2026                                                                        |
| <b>Date of Site Inspection:</b>        | None                                                                                             |
| <b>Inspector:</b>                      | Sinéad O'Connor                                                                                  |

## **1.0 Introduction.**

- 1.1. This report relates to pre-application discussions held with Electricity Supply Board (ESB), Engineering & Major Projects, The Sidings, Grand Canal Quay, Dublin 2, 'the Prospective Applicant' in respect of the proposed development of a 38kV underground cable, from the existing Great Island 220 kV station (680000) on the east side of the Barrow River in Great island, Co. Wexford, under the River Barrow, to the Belview Substation in Drumdowney Upper, Co. Kilkenny.
- 1.2. This report describes the location and nature of the proposed development, the applicant's submission, the consultations held and the legal provisions that are relevant to the proposed development.

The pre-application consultation request was received by An Coimisiún Pleanála (the Commission) on the 29<sup>th</sup> May 2026. The meeting was held on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2026. On the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2026, the Commission issued to the Prospective Applicant the written record of the pre-application meeting for comment. On 17<sup>th</sup> September 2026 the Prospective Applicant responded to state that they had no further comment and to request that the pre-application consultation process be closed.

- 1.3. Owing to the nature and scale of the proposed development, I do not think a site inspection is required in this instance.
- 1.4. On the basis of the scope and nature of the meeting discussions, I am satisfied that it is appropriate to close the pre-application consultation process at this stage.

## **2.0 Site Location and Description.**

- 2.1. The proposed subject site is linear in nature, excluding those areas to accommodate the horizontal directional drilling (HDD) entry and exit pits on either side of the River Barrow.
- 2.2. For ease of description the subject site can be broken into three sections:
  - Onshore (Co. Wexford) – c. 500 metres - From the Great Island substation, located to the north of the Great Island Power Station (gas powered), the underground cable will travel west to the banks of the River Barrow and then north to the HDD entry pit.

- Offshore (River Barrow) – 688 metres – From the entry pit on the eastern bank of the River Barrow, the single bore hole will travel 33 metres below the riverbed to the landing area on the western bank. This section of the route is located to the north of the existing River Barrow Rail Bridge.
- Onshore (Co. Kilkenny) – c. 4 km – From the landing area on the western bank of the River Barrow, the underground cable west/southwest across privately owned land and roads until it reaches Belview Substation, located on the western side of Belview Port. The final c. 300 metres of this route occur at the N29 National Road.

2.3. The MAC relates to an area 1.4 ha, which encompasses the part of the subject site located under the River Barrow.

2.4. The offshore section of the subject development and parts of the onshore sections on the banks of the River Barrow occur within the River Barrow and River Nore SAC (Site Code 002162).

### 3.0 The Proposed Development.

3.1.1. As per the submitted documentation, the offshore section of the development comprises 3 x 1000Al XLPE 38 kV cables installed in 140mm diameter ducting. The onshore section of the cable consists of 3 x 630Al 38 kV XLPE cable installed in 125mm diameter ducts.

3.1.2. The submitted documentation includes a cross section drawing of a Typical Cross Section 38 kV 5-Way Circuit UGC.

### 4.0 Policy Context.

4.1. The cover letter submitted by the prospective applicant contains a detailed Planning Context Section in Section 5. I will not be repeating these details herein. Key policy context provisions include the following;

4.2. Transmission Policy 4 of the **National Marine Planning Framework** is noteworthy, as it seeks to support land based and coastal energy transmission infrastructure. Similarly, National Policy Objective 71 of the **National Planning Framework (First Revision)** seeks to support the development and upgrade of electricity grid

infrastructure. Both the RPO 219 'New Energy Infrastructure' and RPO 222 'Electricity Infrastructure' of the **Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy for the Southern Region 2020-2032** support and facilitate the reinforcement and development of electricity transmission infrastructure.

- 4.3. At the local level, Objective PT01 of the **Wexford County Development Plan 2022-2028** and Section 10.3.2 of the **Kilkenny City and County Development Plan 2021-2027** support the provision of new energy network infrastructure, subject to planning and environmental assessment.
- 4.4. The Commission should be aware that the subject site does not fall within the boundary of the South Coast D-Map.

## **5.0 Meeting Held.**

- 5.1. The Commission's representatives met with the prospective applicant on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2026. This report should be read in conjunction with the written record on file of the pre-application consultation meeting. It is not proposed to repeat the contents of that record here.

## **6.0 Legislative Context.**

- 6.1. Section 286 of the Act states that permission shall be required for development that is not exempted development to which chapter III applies (S286(1) refers), and that a person shall not be eligible to apply for permission unless they are the holder of a MAC, a foreshore licence/lease, or are acting on behalf of or are the owner of the land in the maritime area.
- 6.2. Section 287(1) of the Act, states that a person who proposes to make an application for permission under Section 291 shall consult with the Commission. Section 287(2) of the Act states that the Commission may provide its opinion regarding the making of the application and in particular, as respects:
  - (a) *'the procedures to be followed by the prospective applicant when making the application and by the Board when considering the application,*
  - (b) *the documents required to accompany the application,*

- (c) the need for the prospective applicant to create an internet website for the purpose of publishing the application and all documentation accompanying the application,*
- (d) the publication of notices in accordance with this Act, the furnishing of documentation to persons referred to in subsection (3) of section 291 and the making of submissions and observations in relation to an application under that section,*
- (e) such persons as may be prescribed for the purposes of this Chapter,*
- (f) some or all of the matters that the Board is likely to take into consideration relating to—*
  - (i) the National Marine Planning Framework,*
  - (ii) objectives of maritime spatial planning,*
  - (iii) principles of proper planning and sustainable development, and*
  - (iv) the environment or any European site,**when making a decision under section 293 in relation to the application,*
- (g) the fees payable to the Board in relation to the making of the application, and*
- (h) compliance by the prospective applicant with any direction of the Board under subsection (3) of section 291.'*

- 6.3. Of note, under S.287(3) the Board may at any time conclude a consultation under this section where it considers it appropriate to do so.
- 6.4. The Commission will note that all references to the Board in these sections are direct quotes from the Act, however, the enactment of Part 17, Section 295 of the Planning and Development Act 2024 in June 2025 changed all such references to 'An Coimisiún Pleanála'.
- 6.5. Section 287A of the Act relates to the ability for an applicant to engage with the Commission for the purposes of seeking an opinion as to flexibility in relation to the details of any future application which may not be confirmed at the time of application. There is no record of any application made by the prospective applicant under Section 287A of the Act.

## **7.0 Relevant Cases/Planning History.**

7.1. The prospective applicant has submitted with the preapplication documentation a summary of the planning history of the subject site. I will not be repeating all of these details herein. Key applications in the vicinity of the subject site include the following:

- ABP Ref. ABP-308906-20: Permission was granted for a section of the Greenlink Interconnector from Baginbun beach/Baginbun head to Great Island power station on 23 June 2021.
- PA Ref. 20230871, ABP-318204-23: Permission was granted for grid stability and associated site works at the Great Island power station on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2025
- ABP-318103-23: Permission was sought for a new 13.75 km long 38kV electricity circuit between the existing ESB substations at Knockmullen and Great Island. The Commission's Decision was quashed by Order of the High Court, and the case is being considered again under ABP Ref. 324358. A decision has yet to be made.
- ABP-318914-24: Permission was granted for a 110kV substation and 110kV underground grid connection at the Great Island power station on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2024.
- PA Ref. 2560391, ABP Ref. PL-500967-KK-26: Application for a solar farm and associated site works. A decision has yet to be made.

## **8.0 Matters Arising.**

### **8.1. Proper Planning and Sustainable Development:**

8.1.1. During the pre-application consultation there were broad discussions on a range of issues with the prospective applicant, and the Commission is referred to the record of the meeting that is attached to the file. I have summarised the broad matters arising below which include inter alia:

- **Proposed Development:**

The prospective applicant has provided an appropriate level of detail setting out the nature of the proposed development, in their recent submission and through discussions held at the pre-application meeting.

The prospective applicant was advised to include, with the application, a detailed justification for the proposed development, including the necessity to provide a new crossing of the River Barrow.

- **Planning Policy Context National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF):**

Due to the location of part of the subject works, the prospective applicant was advised that any future application documentation should demonstrate compliance with the policies of the National Marine Planning Framework (NMPF).

- **Construction:**

Construction methods of the various elements of the proposed development were discussed. Any future application will be accompanied by sufficiently detailed Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). It was advised that the CEMP should include details regarding the quantity of material to be excavated at the HDD site, and how this material would be stored.

It was discussed that there are residential properties in close proximity to the HDD entry pit on the eastern side of the River Barrow. It was advised that potential for noise impacts on neighbouring properties should be addressed in the application documentation.

The prospective applicant was encouraged to ensure that the full extent of the construction compounds are included in the red line boundary of the subject site.

- **Application Documentation:**

In terms of the application documentation being prepared, the prospective applicant has stated that the future planning application will be accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement and a Planning and Environmental Report.

The prospective applicant has been advised that the Schedule 7A EIA screening information should be identifiable, whether it is submitted as a standalone document or appended to the Planning Report.

The prospective applicant was informed that any future application for the proposed development would require a standalone website.

The prospective applicant confirmed that letters of consent would not be required for works on the public roads, as per SI. 236 of 2026.

## **8.2. Environmental Impact Assessment**

- 8.2.1. The prospective applicant acknowledged the necessity to screen the development for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). It was discussed that, owing to its nature, that the proposed development is not of a class of development that requires EIA under Schedule 5 of the Planning and Development Regulations, 2001, as amended.
- 8.2.2. The Commission will note that, as per S. 291(1)(b) of the MAP Act, Schedule 7A information is required to accompany any Chapter III application.

## **8.3. Appropriate Assessment**

- 8.3.1. The prospective applicant has stated that they are intending to submit a Natura Impact. The Commission will note that the prospective applicant confirmed that the NIS was being prepared at present.
- 8.3.2. The prospective applicant was advised to ensure that all necessary survey work is undertaken to inform the NIS. It was also advised that the prospective applicant review relevant submissions from the NPWS on projects in the vicinity, to gain an understanding of the key matters to be addressed in their NIS.

## **8.4. Procedures**

- 8.4.1. At the pre-application consultation, the proposed applicant confirmed that they were aware of the general procedures involved in making a planning application and were advised that they could submit their public notices for review by Commission staff, if they so wished.

8.4.2. In relation to the prescribed bodies for the purposes of any future application, I recommend that the Commission consider that the persons listed hereunder be served with the application and accompanying documents. In forming the list hereunder, regard was had to, inter alia, the requirements under Schedule 1 of the Planning and Development (Maritime Development) Regulations 2023 and to the provisions of S.291(3)(b) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended).

8.4.3. The prospective applicant should send the following persons a copy of the application, accompanying documents (including NIS) and a copy of the public notice:

- The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
- The Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications;
- The Minister of Transport;
- The Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine;
- The Environmental Protection Agency;
- The Maritime Area Regulatory Authority;
- The Minister for Rural and Community Development;
- The Marine Institute;
- Inland Fisheries Ireland;
- Health and Safety Authority;
- Commission for Regulation of Utilities
- An Taisce;
- Kilkenny County Council;
- Wexford County Council;
- The Southern Regional Assembly;
- National Transport Authority;
- Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland;
- Eirgrid;
- Commissioner of Irish Lights;

- Irish Coastguard; and
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland.

The Commission may wish to review the above list and satisfy itself that it is sufficient. In this regard, I note that the above list has been compiled on the basis of information that is available from the pre-application consultations and that the applicant, who has been carrying out detailed studies and surveys in preparing the application documentation and NIS, may consider other bodies to be relevant.

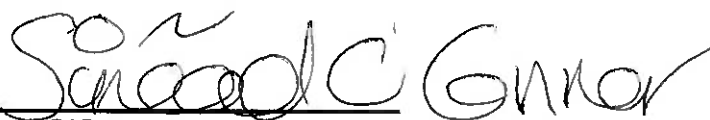
Accordingly, I recommend that any communication with the Prospective Applicant advise them that it is open to them to send copies of the application and its associated documentation to any other bodies that they consider relevant on the basis of the studies that they have carried out.

#### **8.4.4. Transboundary Consultation**

- 8.4.5. Owing to the location and scale of the proposed development, I do not consider that transboundary consultation will be required in any future application.

### **9.0 Conclusion**

- 9.1. Following the completion of the pre-application meeting on the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2026, and on review of the correspondence and details received by the Commission on 29<sup>th</sup> May 2026, I am of the opinion that the process should be concluded, and the Commission should notify the prospective applicant that the process is closed and include the attached list of bodies that the applicant is requested to send copies of the application to in accordance with S291(3)(b) and S291(3)(d).
- 9.2. 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.

  
Sinéad O'Connor  
Planning Inspector

12 October 2026