



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ABP VC0111

Development	110kV substation.
Location	Rosspile, Co. Wexford
Prospective Applicant	Highfield Solar Limited.
Planning Authority	Wexford County Council
Date of Site Inspection	1 st December 2017
Inspector	Mairead Kenny

1.0 Pre-Application Consultation

- 1.1. The Board received a request on 11th September to enter pre-application consultations under Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, in relation to the proposed development at Rosspile, Co. Wexford.
- 1.2. The Board's representatives met with the prospective applicant on 7th December 2017.

The Board issued a Direction on 27th April 2018 indicating a preliminary view that the proposed development is strategic infrastructure.

The prospective applicant formally requested closure of the pre-application consultation process in a letter dated 17th May 2018.

2.0 Site location

The subject site is located in south county Wexford close to the coast and 1 km south of the village of Foulkesmill. The overall land proposed for the development of a solar farm development is of stated area of 170 hectares. The Bannow Bay pNHA and the Bannow Bay SAC encroach onto the southern section of the proposed solar development site. Within 10km of the site is another European site.

3.0 Proposed Development

As outlined on the presentation images presented at the meeting the proposed development comprises a 110kV substation which is to be looped into the existing Great Island – Wexford 110kV line c.200m to the north of the location of the proposed substation. The proposed development would involve new angle masts, to replace existing pole set at the point of connection to the new substation and underground cables to the substation. An indicative layout of the substation is provided. It shows two separate areas one of which is an Eirgrid compound the other an IPP compound. There are proposals for an access road, associated landscaping and fencing and other works.

4.0 Planning History

No relevant planning history.

4.1. Applicant's Case

The application cover letter addressed the proposed 110kV substation and also provides details of the solar farm development. It was clarified at the meeting held that the question relates only to the substation element of the proposal.

The applicant outlined that in terms of the criteria set down as a test for SID the development is does not meet the criteria. It is stated that:

- No requirement for EIA arises.
- The substation and associated connection to the national grid will serve a single solar development.
- It would be solely of economic importance to the developer and not of economic or social importance to the state or region.
- It is not identified in the NSS.
- The Board has determined that similar projects which are listed were not deemed to be SID.
- Will not affect more than one planning authority.
- The long title is referenced.
- Project is deemed to not fall within the scope of section 182A.

5.0 Eirgrid Correspondence

The Board requested the comments of Eirgrid on the following matter:

Clarification as to whether the proposed substation may form part of the national transmission network and any relationship that the proposed substation would have with the existing transmission network having regard to its indicated role as servicing a proposed solar farm.

Eirgrid in its response noted:

- The applicant has a connection offer to the transmission grid.
- The proposed link into the existing circuit comprises a 'loop-in / loop out' meaning that power on the overall existing circuit is entirely diverted into the proposed substation and back out. In effect the proposed substation would comprise a new node along that existing circuit.
- Eirgrid state that the new substation and associated underground cable elements will therefore form part of the existing transmission grid when in operation. The proposed substation and associated underground cable elements will be transferred to Eirgrid for operational purposes on completion.

Legislative Provisions

Under section 182A (1) of the 2000 Act (inserted by section 4 of the 2006 Act) where a person, (thereafter referred to as the 'undertaker') intends to carry out development comprising or for the purposes of electricity transmission, (hereafter referred to in this section and section 182B as 'proposed development'), the undertaker shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, an application for approval of development under section 182B and shall apply to the Board for such approval accordingly.

Subsection 9 states that in this section '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.

In section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999, "transmission" is defined as 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.

“Distribution” is defined as

“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 switch gear and which is used for conveying electricity to final customers.”

“Electric plant” is defined as:

“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

6.0 Assessment

The proposal entails a new 110kV substation and overhead cable connection to the Wexford-Great Island 110kV overhead line c200 metres north of the proposed substation. Electricity generated a proposed solar farm would be fed into the substation and the substation would facilitate that single development. I consider that the substation constitutes electric plant as defined above in that is it plant for the purposes connected with the generation of electricity.

Section 182A (9) of the Act sets a threshold of 110kV in order for a high voltage electricity transmission line to be considered strategic infrastructure. No threshold is set in respect of a substation.

The layout of the substation connection involves a loop in/ loop out line to the existing line. Thus the power of the overall existing circuit will be entirely diverted into the substation and back out again by way of the proposed underground cables. In effect the proposed substation would comprise a new node along that existing circuit. The submission of Eirgrid is clear in this regard. The new substation and associated underground cables will form part of the existing transmission grid when in operation and the circuit will comprise a new node along the existing circuit.

I conclude that the substation, in forming a node on the 110kV transmission network, constitutes Strategic Infrastructure.

In terms of matters which might influence the decision of the Board I note the proximity to the European Site which passes through the site of the solar farm development. My inspection of the site did not reveal any significant matters which might be relevant to the consideration of this application in the future by the Board.

7.0 Conclusion

I consider that the proposed substation development as described in the submissions and drawings constitutes strategic infrastructure coming within the scope of section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, necessitating an application direct to the Board.

8.0 Recommendation

- 8.1. I recommend that Highfield Solar Limited be informed that the proposed development consisting of a 110kV substation, 2 no. masts, underground cabling and related ancillary infrastructure in the townland of Rosspile, County Wexford as set out in the plans and particular received by An Bord Pleanála on the 11th September 2017, falls 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 the Board.

Mairead Kenny

Senior Planning Inspector

21st May, 2018