



An
Bord
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-307462-20 1st meeting

Description	Proposed construction TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Donegal		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1 st		
Date	17/09/20	Time	11 am – 12.30 pm

Representing An Bord Pleanála

Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)

Sarah Lynch, Senior Planning Inspector

Rob Mac Giollarnáth, Executive Officer r.macgiollarnath@pleanala.ie

Representing the prospective Applicant

Patrick Duffy Regional Manager Transport Infrastructure Ireland

Liam Ward Director of Community Development & Planning Services Donegal County Council

Paul Christie Senior Executive Planner Donegal County Council

Damian McDermott Senior Engineer, National Roads Office Donegal County Council

Aine McHugh Senior Executive Engineer, National Roads Office Donegal County Council

Tim Patterson Project Manager, (TEN-T Project - Section 1) RPS Barry Transportation JV
Eamon Cox Project Manager, (TEN-T Project - Section 2) RPS Barry Transportation JV
Eamon Daly Project Manager, (TEN-T Project - Section 3) RPS Barry Transportation JV
Paula Kearney Technical Director, Ecology RPS Barry Transportation JV
Hari Thogulava Lead Traffic Modeller, Jacobs c/o Barry Transportation

Introduction:

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant requesting pre-application consultations under Section 51A of the Roads Act 1993 as amended and advised the prospective applicant that the instant meeting essentially constituted an information-gathering exercise for the Board; it also invited the prospective applicant to outline the nature of the proposed development and to highlight any matters that it wished to receive advice on from the Board. The Board mentioned the following general procedures in relation to the pre-application consultation process:

- The Board will keep a record of this meeting and any other meetings, if held. Such records will form part of the file which will be made available publicly at the conclusion of the process. The record of the meeting will not be amended by the Board once finalised, but the prospective applicant may submit comments on the record which will form part of the case file.
- A further meeting or meetings may be held in respect of the proposed development.
- Further information may be requested by the Board and public consultations may also be directed by the Board.
- The Board may hold consultations in respect of the proposed development with other bodies.

- The holding of consultations does not prejudice the Board in any way and cannot be relied upon in the formal planning process or any legal proceedings.

Presentation by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant provided an overview of the project by way of a PowerPoint presentation that is on the file and which covered the following areas:

- Need for the Project
- Overview & Planning Policy
- Background & Previous Proposals
- Project Development Process
- Design & Environmental Evaluation
- Project Design Summary
- Scoping of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report & cumulative impacts
- Project benefits
- Strategic Infrastructure Development criteria

A summary of the main points of the presentation is set out below.

Need for the project

- Donegal is primarily reliant on agriculture and tourism. Suffers from a lack of connectivity on an island and European basis. It is a county that has substandard road conditions contributing to a high rate of traffic accidents coupled with low average speeds/ poor journey time reliability.

Overview & Planning Policy

- Ten-T Regulations – Regulation (EU) No. 1315/2013
- National Planning Framework
- National Development Plan 2018 to 2027

- Northern & Western Regional Assembly – Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy
- Donegal County Council, County Development Plan 2018 – 2024. This plan is being varied and the variation is expected to be published in January 2021.

Background & Previous Proposals

- Three road projects had been previously proposed (all three projects have been suspended).

Project Development Process

- Needs study carried out to identify potential route.
- Key constraints identified (SAC, river crossings, archaeological features, urban/residential issues).
- Several options considered.
- Public consultations carried out.
- Selection of preferred option.

Design and Environmental evaluation

- Ongoing design development/Environmental evaluation
- Mainline/sideroads, junctions, structures, cycleway, earthworks, accommodation works
- Consultation with landowners, statutory consultees
- Ground investigations
- Environmental/archaeological surveys
- Topographical surveys
- Traffic volumes, bypassing of towns

Project Design Summary

Road Type: 30km Type 2 Dual Carriageway
 4.4km Type 1 Dual Carriageway (Upgrade of Existing)
 7.7 km Type 3 Single Carriageway Link Roads

Realigned Local Road and existing National Road
at road interfaces

Strategic Junctions: 6 intermediate Compact Grade Separated
Junctions

6 tie-in roundabouts

Active Travel Facilities: >30 km Segregated Cycleway, connection to
existing road network, future greenway and
redundant railway

SAC Bridge Crossings: Multi-span structures proposed with central span
across SAC designated area.

Scoping of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report & cumulative impacts

- Chapters have been set out in accordance with the relevant environmental factors as set out in the EIA Directive (2011/92/EU) as amended by the Directive (2014/52 EU).
- Contact has been made with the various State bodies and other relevant organisations and cross-border bodies.

Project benefits

- Enhanced regional accessibility for the north-west
- Economic competitiveness, growth & development
- Cohesive, safe & efficient high-quality access
- Sustainable transport network for all road users

Discussion:

The following matters were discussed:

- The Board's representatives stated that it would appear to be a complex case that raises a number of issues in relation to potential impacts on Natura 2000 sites given the number of bridge crossings proposed and the connectivity of the works to surrounding Natura 2000 site. This would have to be examined in detail.
- Given the complexity of the development it was mentioned that a robust assessment of all alternatives considered would need to be carried out.
- Issues for consideration and examination include traffic modelling (including the severance of local road network). Impacts on population, human health and loss of housing and both the permanent and temporary loss of residential amenity with regard to the construction and operational phases of the development.
- The Board's representatives stated that accurate baseline data is essential to the robustness of the NIS and EIAR.
- A robust Construction Management Plan would be required covering all steps of the construction over the full life of the project. It would be necessary to consult with both the NPWS, Inland Fisheries (including the Loughs Agency).
- Surveys would be required in respect of wintering birds and a query was raised with regard to sightings of the barn owl and also bats. Specific details in relation to all mitigation measures should be provided and the prospective applicant should consider measures beyond compensation for loss.
- The prospective applicant stated that there had been no recent records of the barn owl but would factor them in as regards mitigation measures. Measures would be considered not just as regards mitigation but also opportunities to develop ecosystems and lessen carbon footprint. The primary focus would be that there would be no net loss re. ecosystem and also that a more sustainable approach was adopted.

- The Board's representatives raised a query regarding geotechnical surveys and as to whether there was any extensive peatland. Full geotechnical surveys would be necessary. It would be important to incorporate visual studies into the EIAR as regards the impact on the landscape and mitigation measures to lessen any impact. Noise and vibration issues would need to be comprehensively addressed. A query was also raised as to the extent of public participation and also the extent to which property owners had been engaged with.
- The prospective applicant stated that a geotechnical survey had been carried out, there was some soft ground but no extensive areas of peatland had been identified. Landscaping mitigation measures would be included to minimise any impact. Some baseline studies have been carried out with regard to noise and vibration. Land liaison officers had been appointed and were in the process of setting up one-on-one meetings with landowners. It would be anticipated that 10 dwellings would be acquired and that a further 4-8 dwellings may be acquired.
- The Board's representatives raised a query as to when the variation to the County Development Plan regarding the route would be enacted. A query was raised as to the timelines for the lodging of an application. It was advised that at the next meeting a detailed set of drawings should be made available. The issue of transboundary effects and consultations with the relevant agencies was raised. The Board's representatives also stated that the prospective applicant could provide an overview of alternatives within the body of the EIAR and assess the individual environmental constraints in an attached appendix.
- The prospective applicant stated that the proposed variation to the County Development Plan was being currently progressed. It was hoped that an application in respect of the proposed development could be lodged in Q2 2021. The prospective applicant has been in contact with IFI and the Loughs Agency.

Conclusion:

The record of the meeting will issue to the prospective applicant and it will then be a matter for the prospective applicant to submit any comments on this if it wishes to do so or at the time of a further meeting. It is up to the prospective applicant to seek follow up meetings if required.

Ciara Kellett

Assistant Director of Planning