



An  
Bord  
Pleanála

## Record of Meeting ABP-307462-20 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting

<b>Description</b>	Proposed construction TEN-T Priority Route Improvement Project, Co. Donegal		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-application Consultation under Section 51A of the Roads Act 1993		
<b>1st / 2nd / 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> Meeting		
<b>Venue</b>	Virtually (Microsoft Teams)		
<b>Date</b>	15/01/21	<b>Time</b>	11am – 1pm

<b>Representing An Bord Pleanála</b>
Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Sarah Lynch, Senior Planning Inspector
Sarah Kerley, Executive Officer <a href="mailto:s.kerley@pleanala.ie">s.kerley@pleanala.ie</a>
<b>Representing the prospective Applicant</b>
Damian McDermott, Senior Engineer, Donegal County Council
Áine McHugh, Senior Executive Engineer, Donegal County Council
Tim Patterson, Project Manager, RPS   Barry Transportation JV
Eamon Cox, Project Manager, RPS   Barry Transportation JV
Eamon Daly, Project Manager, RPS   Barry Transportation JV
Paula Kearney, Environmental Co-ordinator, RPS   Barry Transportation JV

Paul Christie, Senior Executive Planner, Donegal County Council
<b>Attendees</b>
Patrick Duffy, Regional Manager, Transport Infrastructure Ireland
Brendan O'Donnell, Director of Roads and Transportation
Liam Ward, Director of Community Development & Planning Services
John McFeely, Executive Planner, Donegal County Council
Eunan Quinn, Senior Planner, Donegal County Council
Liam Prendiville, Project Director, RPS   Barry Transportation JV
Gareth McElhinney, Environmental Co-ordinator, RPS   Barry Transportation JV
Emma Coyle, RPS   Barry Transportation JV

### **Introduction:**

This was the second meeting held between the prospective applicant and the Board's representatives. The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting took place on the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2020. Following introductions, the prospective applicant wished to clarify some points from the previous meeting record:

1. It is confirmed that reasonable alternatives were assessed for the proposed development. (Assessed 36 options for section 1, 39 for section 2 and 42 for section 3)
2. In relation to the number of dwellings to be impacted, the prospective applicant will give an updated status throughout this presentation.
3. Consultations also undertaken with National Parks & Wildlife Service along with other statutory consultees, noted previously.

The prospective applicant proceeded with their presentation.

### **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:

- Development Design – Recap
- Landowner Engagement

- Design Progress – Section 1
- Design Progress – Section 2
- Design Progress – Section 3
- Natura Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Assessment Report Structure
- Policy and Planning

### Development Design – Recap

One of the major needs for the project is the access to the North-West, and County Donegal, in particular. Shares only 9km of its boundary with the Republic of Ireland (Co. Leitrim)

### **Road Type**

- 30km Type 2 Dual Carriageway
- 4.4km Type 1 Dual Carriageway
- 7.7 km Single Carriageway Link Roads
- 30 km Segregated Cycleway, connection to existing road network
- Realigned local road and existing National Road at interfaces
- 7 intermediate Compact Grade Separated Junctions (an increase of 1 since previous meeting)
- 5 tie-in roundabouts (a reduction of 1)

### Landowner Engagement:

- Currently at Phase 3 stage, Design and Environmental Evaluation
- Overall, there has been good engagement with impacted landowners
- Some small areas of land have not been accessible for elements of work
- One to one meetings with impacted landowners carried out in Q4 2020

*Number of landowners expected to be impacted by the CPO*

Section 1: 147

Section 2: 134

Section 3: 123      **Total:** 404 (To be confirmed with the final CPO)

13 landowners remaining who have not engaged in any communication to date.

### Design Progress – Section 1

- Ballybofey/Stranorlar section
- River Finn (major river crossing)
- Approximately 9km long
- Type 2 dual carriageway (running to the North of the town)
- 3 Compact Grade Separated Junctions
- Main elements in design
  1. Constraint rich area. Conscious efforts made to avoid mature woodlands on the route. Green bridge for pedestrians & cyclists
  2. Properties directly and in-directly impacted (assessing whether they should be included in CPO)
  3. ESB diversions. Existing ESB line needs to be diverted in order to progress the scheme. In consultation with ESB team. Either divert to the North or South. Will be included in the proposals for the development

### Design Progress – Section 2

- Approximately 10km North of section 1
- Topography of area – River Swilly, steep gradients
- River Swilly – SAC and SPA at this location (key consideration)
- Isle Burn SAC – West of Pluck Roundabout
- River is tidal
- Semi-urban nature of Letterkenny. Densities of residential and commercial buildings in the area
- River Swilly crossing - 100-110m of clear span bridge
- Developing an existing flood model

### Design Progress – Section 3

- Interface between Section 2 & 3. Connection point at Pluck roundabout
- Follows closely to the existing N14 before diverting to connect with the A5 link
- 3 intermediate junctions
- Type 2 dual carriageway
- N14 will be maintained in its entirety

- Contour levels between 20m and 160m.
- Separate cycle/pedestrian way proposed to run along the full length of the scheme
- Accident history at Pluck Roundabout – High gradients on approach. New proposed roundabout to the South which will reduce the gradient on the roundabout
- Connection with N14/N15 to A5 link
- Considered several tie-in options to the A5 link
- Requirement for realignment of A5 link bridge (Requires ABP advice whether this would be considered a material alteration from the scheme previously permitted by ABP)

#### Natura Impact Statement - Structure

- Proposed structure, following EU guidelines 2001. 3 step process
- Potential direct, indirect and ex-situ impacts to European Sites
- Identified 5 sites likely to be impacted:
  - Lough Swilly SAC (Site Code: 002287)
  - Lough Swilly SPA (Site Code: 004075)
  - River Finn SAC (Site Code: 002301)
  - River Foyle and Tributaries SAC (Site Code: UK0030320)
  - Lough Foyle SPA (Site Code: 004087)
- Existing environment and conservation objectives
- Impact Assessment
- Mitigation
- Analysis and Conclusions

#### Environmental Impact Assessment Report – Structure

- Climate will now be included as a separate chapter
- Comprehensive option selection report prepared. Proposing to include a summary of this report and a synopsis of the option selection as an appendix to the report
- Assessing Population & Human Health together

- Positive and negative Health effects (with reference to factors such as air, noise, water, soil and the landscape)
- Amended Directive introduces 'Land' as a prescribed environmental factor. To be discussed under Land, Soil and Hydrogeology chapter but also under Material Assets (Agriculture and Non-Agriculture)
- Climate Action Plan – how the project looks to address these targets
- Achieve climate objectives – cycleways, footpaths, park and share facilities, e-vehicle charging
- New technologies in relation to climate change will be included in the climate change chapter
- Assessment of risks of major accidents and disasters: Particularly focused on flooding

#### Policy and Planning

- Support for the development within National and Regional plans
- Donegal County Council has decided to vary the County Development Plan 2018-2024 to facilitate the TEN-T project.
- The elected members agreed at the September 2020 meeting to proceed with the proposed draft variation to the County Development Plan
- The Environmental Report, Natura Impact Report and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Report has been finalised and will be presented at the next Council meeting in January 2021.
- Public consultation anticipated in early-mid February 2021.
- Prepare Chief Executive's Report following the public consultation period
- Anticipated to adopt the variation in mid-April 2021 (if there are no material amendments required)

#### Discussion

- In relation to a formal EIAR scoping request, the Board's representatives stated that the prospective applicant may receive sufficient information/advice out of the pre-application process however, a scoping opinion can always be sought once the consultation process has been closed. Due to transboundary

nature, relevant bodies in Northern Ireland would need to be consulted in the formal scoping opinion. With regards to timelines, the Board's representatives advised to allow more than 12 weeks for a response, given the transboundary requirements which is difficult to accurately assign a timeline to.

- The prospective applicant stated the entire project design will be available to view online in the coming weeks and the Board will be notified when this is available.
- The Board's representatives requested drawings of the entire project, including all sections to be sent digitally and to scale.
- The Board's representatives stated the importance to link any mitigation or policy measures that were developed in the Appropriate Assessment and to ensure the project is in line with these measures.
- With regards to the Assessment of Alternatives, the prospective applicant proposes to give a summary from stages 1-3 and the full report to be included as an appendix of the EIAR. The Board's representatives agreed this would be reasonable in order to make it manageable for the public to read and to include the main details in the body of the EIAR.
- The Board's representatives questioned the species surveyed within the bird assemblage areas; 3 species of note were observed including 64 no. curlew.
- Ex-situ impacts in relation to the Whooper Swan north of Lifford were discussed and any assessment of same will be within the NIS/EIAR.
- The Board's representatives queried the impact of the removal of hedgerows and woodland, the mitigation proposed and if an assessment had been undertaken. The prospective applicant stated that habitat mapping has been completed and they will endeavor to compensate and enhance hedgerows where possible.
- The Board's representatives discussed the function of the 'green bridge' and the impacts of habitat severance. The applicant stated that this has been considered within the assessments carried out.
- The Board's representatives sought clarity in relation to the diversion of the overhead line within the proposed development. The prospective applicant explained the need to divert the existing 110kV overhead line to the South of the proposed scheme and discussions are on-going with ESB Networks.

- In relation to the proposed demolition of up to 29 residential dwellings, the Board's representatives discussed the importance of communities and the potential for communities to become fragmented as a result of the proposed development. The prospective applicant agreed with the importance of local connectivity and it is something that they are currently assessing.
- The Board's representatives stated that extant permissions should also be considered in the context of the development.
- The Board's representatives highlighted the importance of assessing the wider implications for European sites outside the sites potentially directly impacted. Biodiversity outside the areas discussed could also be potentially indirectly impacted and to ensure that this has been assessed. The prospective applicant agreed and also stated that they will be looking at opportunities to include positives for biodiversity throughout the scheme.
- It was mentioned by the applicant that the water quality of the River Finn is poor and the development will be designed to ensure that the proposal is also in compliance with the Water Framework Directive.
- The agenda of future meetings was discussed, and it was agreed by both parties that each meeting would focus on a specific topic. The prospective applicant agreed to create a schedule for these future meetings and send to the Board.
- The Board's representatives suggested meeting on a more regular basis and will accommodate the prospective applicant as best they can.
- With regards to Covid-19 which has resulted in an abnormal baseline in terms of traffic, the prospective applicant proposes to base their design on data gathered pre-March 2020, in relation to air and noise. The Board's representatives agreed and advised to make this point very clear in the EIAR.
- The Board's representatives advised of the importance of a robust invasive species management plan for the entire length of the proposed development. This was noted by the prospective applicant.
- The Board's representatives made reference to Chapter 7 of the Donegal Development Plan and suggested that the applicant satisfy themselves that there are no conflicting policies and/or objectives within this chapter which

may hamper the proposed development. The applicant agreed and stated that the matter is in hand.

- The Board's representatives requested clarity in relation to the A5 link road in terms of what will be included within the EIAR and what was granted permission by the previous approval. It was stated by the applicant that the roundabout and link road were approved, and the potential future additional roundabout and link were identified within the EIAR of that application but were not the subject of the approval.

## **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.

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**Ciara Kellett**

**Assistant Director of Planning**