Our Case Number: ABP-310143-21

Your Reference: Bord Na Móna Powergen Ltd.

An Bord Pleanála

MKO
Tuam Road
Galway
Co. Galway
H91 VW84

Date: 3rd August 2021

Re: Construction of a wind energy development comprising approximately 50-55 no. wind turbines In Ballydermot (and other townlands), Co. Offaly and Lullybeg (and other townlands) , Co. Kildare

Dear Sir / Madam,

I have been asked by An Bord Pleanála to refer further to the above-mentioned pre-application consultation request.

Please find enclosed a copy of the written record of the first meeting of the 26th July, 2021.

If you have any queries in relation to the matter please contact the undersigned officer of the Board.

Please quote the above-mentioned An Bord Pleanála reference number in any correspondence or telephone contact with the Board.

Yours faithfully,

Jennifer Sherry
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01-873 7266

PC07

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An Bord Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-310143-21 1st meeting

Case Reference / Description	ABP-310143-21 Construction of a wind energy development comprising approximately 50-55 no. wind turbines, in Ballydermot (and other townlands), Co. Offaly and Lullybeg (and other townlands), Co. Kildare		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1st		
Date	26/07/21	**Start Time**	11.00 a.m.
Location	N/A	**End Time**	12.20 p.m.

Representing An Bord Pleanála
Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)
Donal Donnelly, Senior Planning Inspector
Niamh Thornton, Executive Officer
Representing the Prospective Applicant
Jimmy Green
Sean Creedon
Catriona Carter
Muriel Ennis
Karen Mulryan
Paul Sweeney

The meeting commenced at 11.00 a.m.

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant requesting pre-application consultations 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 it wished to receive advice on from the Board. The Board mentioned general procedures in relation to the pre-application consultation process as follows:

- 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.
- The Board will serve notice at the conclusion of the process as to the strategic infrastructure status of the proposed development. It may form a preliminary view at an early stage in the process on the matter.
- 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 gave a brief overview of the history of the company. With a landbank of approximately 80,000 hectares, the prospective applicant owns 7% of the peatland of Ireland. The prospective applicant is committed to transitioning to peat-free electricity generation by 2030.

The proposed development site measures approximately 5,581 hectares, across 14 bogs on the border of counties Offaly and Kildare.

The prospective applicant stated that wind energy projects are well suited to areas of cutaway peatland due to their large land parcels, open topography, and suitable wind speeds. The prospective applicant carried out a site selection process, considering various criteria including planning policy context, proximity to sensitive receptors, environmental/ecological sensitivity and designations, grid capacity, landscape capacity, land-use, access, and infrastructure.

The prospective applicant stated that there is strong national and international support for additional renewable energy and de-carbonization and noted that developments like these are supported by the National Planning Framework 2018-2040 and Climate Action Plan 2019. Both the Kildare County Development Plan 2017-2023 and the Offaly County Development Plan 2014-2020 include supporting policies encouraging the growth of renewable energy sources and development of wind energy. The area of the proposed development site on the Offaly side has been deemed suitable for wind energy. There is no specific wind energy strategy in Kildare.

The prospective applicant noted a number of constraints, including several high amenity and designated sites nearby, telecom links, watercourses, and a number of existing and consented windfarms within the 20km study area. It was noted that these would be considered as part of the cumulative effects.

The prospective applicant stated that project design is underway with survey work ongoing. The prospective applicant clarified that, at the moment, it is proposed to connect the proposed development into the national grid infrastructure in County Kildare. Haul route options are also being reviewed.

The prospective applicant anticipates the development will comprise of 40-50 no. wind turbines, up to a maximum height of 220 metres, a 220kV substation and underground cabling, with a total output of circa. 240MW. The prospective applicant showed an initial layout of 16 turbines in County Offaly and 34 turbines in County Kildare. It is proposed to open the site and provide amenity space in the form of walking and cycle routes.

The prospective applicant stated that it held consultations with Kildare and Offaly County Councils in April 2021 and a scoping document was submitted to prescribed bodies in February 2021. Public consultation has taken place in the form of a website with virtual consultation room and door to door and zoom engagement with local residents.

The prospective applicant gave an overview of the chapters to be included in the EIAR. The prospective applicant clarified that a NIS will also accompany the application. The prospective applicant showed preliminary images of the turbines from several viewpoints.

The prospective applicant stated that the proposed development should be considered Strategic Infrastructure Development due to the number of turbines and power output. The prospective applicant also stated that it was of the opinion that the proposed development meets all three of the criteria under section 37A(2) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended.

The prospective applicant outlined the proposed project timeline with the aim of submitting an application in Q2 of 2022.

Board's comments/queries:

The Board noted that the number of turbines and output level of the proposed development is above the threshold as listed in the 7th Schedule.

The Board recommended that, given the height and number of turbines, the visual impact of the development be considered adequately, viewpoints chosen carefully, and worst-case scenario images produced.

The Board also recommended that the prospective applicant focus on cumulative impacts, given the number of windfarms in the area, the conditions of local roads when assessing haul routes and recommended the prospective applicant ensure that all ecological surveys are up to date. The Board also recommended a shapefile be submitted with application documents to facilitate GIS and that a separate section be included in the EIAR showing mitigation measures. The prospective applicant stated that detail on the carbon balance of the proposed development will be included in the EIAR.

The Board recommended the prospective applicant look at recent windfarm cases which were brought for Judicial Review, noting the Derryadd windfarm case as an example.

The prospective applicant confirmed that the site is subject to an EPA licence.

The prospective applicant clarified that there is some forestry on site and the amount of tree felling will depend on the final layout plan.

Conclusion:

The Board advised the prospective applicant that it is open to it to keep the pre-application process open for the time being and said that a further meeting can be facilitated.

The record of the instant meeting will issue in the meantime and the prospective applicant can submit any comments it may have in writing or alternatively bring any comments for discussion at the time of any further meeting. The onus is on the prospective applicant to either request a further meeting or formal closure of the instant pre-application consultation process.

The meeting concluded at 12.20 p.m.

Ciara Kellett 3/8/21

Ciara Kellett

Assistant Director of Planning