An Bord Pleanála

Record of Meeting ABP-314186-22 and ABP-314187-22 1st meeting

Description	ABP-314186-22 – Proposed development of 13 wind turbines together with all associated works, Killoshulan and adjacent townlands, Co. Kilkenny. ABP-314187-22– Proposed 110kV electrical infrastructure which will facilitate the connection of the proposed Killoshulan Wind Farm to the existing 110kV Ballyragget substation, Killoshulan and Ballyragget, Co. Kilkenny.		
Case Type	Pre-application Consultation.		
1st / 2nd / 3rd Meeting	1st Meeting		
Venue	Virtually by Microsoft Teams		
Date	13/10/2022	**Time**	11:00am – 12:00pm

Representing An Bord Pleanála		
Ciara Kellett, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)		
Alaine Clarke, Planning Inspector		
Sarah Caulfield, Executive Officer	s.caulfield@pleanala.ie	01-8737287
Representing the Prospective Applicant		
John Willoughby – MKO		

Jonny Fearon – MKO
Gus McCarthy - MKO
Brian Keville – MKO
John Tierney – Applicant, Killoshulan Renewable Energy Limited

Introduction:

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 27th July 2022, 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 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.
- 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 in any legal proceedings.

Presentation by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant, Killoshulan Renewable Energy Limited is a subsidiary of Atlantic Infrastructure Renewables (AIR) and Atlantic Infrastructure Partners (AIP). The two proposed developments to be discussed today are:

1. **ABP-314186-22** – Wind farm development under section 37B of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.
2. **ABP-314187-22** – Associated grid connection development under section 182E of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

Proposed Wind Farm Development

The proposed wind farm development consists of 12 wind turbines, each with an expected output of between 5-7MW which equates to an overall capacity of approximately 60-80MW. The proposed site is located approximately 3 kilometres east of Johnstown and 5 kilometres northwest of Freshford, Co. Kilkenny. The site area comprises approximately 1,442 hectares. The prospective applicant said the maximum turbine tip height is 175 metres and this will be a fixed dimension and therefore height ranges will not be submitted as part of the application.

Associated Grid Connection Development

The prospective applicant said it is proposed to connect into the National Grid via a proposed 110kV onsite substation and underground grid connection to the existing 110kV Ballyragget substation. The underground connection is proposed to run along the existing public corridor for approximately 12 kilometres.

The prospective applicant referred to several current crises including climate, energy, geopolitical and said the proposed Killoshulan Wind Farm development would make a contribution towards Irelands carbon neutral target. Additional policies were discussed including Energy Security/REPowerEU which was published in March 2020 and the National Energy Security Framework, published in April 2022, which highlights the need to replace fossil fuels with renewable energy and the alignment of the planning system to fully support accelerated renewable energy development.

The prospective applicant provided an overview of the Climate Action Plan 2021, Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2021 and referenced the National Development Plan, the National Development Framework and the Southern RSES with regards to national and regional renewable energy and wind policy.

Regarding local policy, the prospective applicant said the Kilkenny County Development Plan 2021-2027 came into effect in October 2021 and noted that some elements are currently the subject of a Ministerial Direction. The prospective applicant said the draft direction states that the development plan fails to identify renewable energy targets (in megawatts) which Kilkenny can contribute to delivering its share of overall Government targets on renewable energy and climate change mitigation over the plan period. The prospective applicant said it is their opinion that essentially there is no Wind Energy Strategy for the county.

It was submitted that the proposed site is designated within the current development plan as not normally permissible for wind energy development. It was noted that the reasons for this classification include the potential archaeological landscape, Spahill and Clomantagh Hill Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 000849) and proposed national heritage areas and protected views to the north and east between Johnstown and Gattabaun.

In relation to archaeology, the prospective applicant said there is a megalithic tomb and hill fort on the site but that they are recorded monuments from different periods of history, and they are not related to each other in any way. It said a preliminary archaeological audit was recently carried out of archaeological landscapes for the entire county, which identified 3 such landscapes and said none of which are located near the proposed site.

The prospective applicant said the proposed site is situated within the Spahill and Clomantagh Hill Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 000849) which is designated for its calcareous grassland which is a static habitat. It was noted that there are no bird or other fauna designations within the Special Area of Conservation.

Regarding the protected views to the north and east between Johnstown and Gattabaun, the prospective applicant said 3 landscape capacity assessments have

been completed to-date. The main aim of these assessments was to establish whether Spahill has the capacity to absorb a wind farm into the landscape. It said the assessments carried out has demonstrated that the proposed site is more than capable of accommodating a wind farm development. The prospective applicant said the protected views have played a key role in the project design and the turbine locations to ensure no turbines appear in the view looking outwards from the protected view.

The prospective applicant said a wind energy capacity assessment for Kilkenny county has been carried out which focused on the designations within the Wind Energy Strategy and provided a breakdown of the percentage areas deemed open for consideration (63.96%), acceptable in principle (23.94%) and not normally permissible (11.66%). Following this, typical project level constraints were applied such as a 700-metre buffer from residential receptors, separation distance of 3.5 times rotor diameter from overhead lines, 75 metre buffer from watercourses, and typical buffers from road, rail and airfields. Once these buffers are applied, the prospective applicant illustrated the remaining available development land. Upon applying the 700-metre buffer from residential property, the percentage of open for consideration (OFC) areas reduced from 63.96% to 1.43%, this OFC area reduced further to 0.19% when land areas of less than 1sq.km are excluded. The prospective applicant said this analysis has identified a disconnect between policy at a national level and local level and also identifies the significant shortfall in policy to achieve local and national targets for renewable energy projects which can support energy and climate targets.

The prospective applicant provided an overview of the site selection process which commenced 2.5 years ago and factors such as site suitability for grid connection, wind resource, distance from residential receptors, on-site habitats and turbine delivery access were considered.

The preferred turbine delivery route consists of exiting the M8 at junction 7 onto the National Primary Route, coming off at Urlingford before arriving onto the site. It said any road accommodation works required can be facilitated on lands controlled by Kilkenny County Council.

The prospective applicant is of the opinion that both the wind farm development (under section 37) and the grid connection development (under section182) would fall within the definitions of strategic infrastructure development.

The prospective applicant said public consultation is expected to commence shortly and it expects to submit the planning applications in Q1 2023.

Discussion

The following matters were discussed:

- As the proposed site is located within an area currently deemed not normally permissible, the Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to provide clear and robust reasoning for the proposed development.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said the Ministerial Direction has not yet issued and Kilkenny County Council are of the opinion that until such a time, essentially there is no current Wind Energy Strategy for the county.
- The Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to maintain clarity between the two applications (under S37 and S182) and to provide clear distinguishment within the documentation.
- The Board's representatives said the appendix to the Kilkenny County Development Plan 2021-2027 and relating to the wind strategy references a potential archaeological landscape site at Spahill and Clomantagh and queried whether the entire Wind Energy Strategy is set aside or just the specific elements that are subject of the draft Ministerial Direction. The prospective applicant said following discussions with the planning authority it is of the opinion that the full Wind Energy Strategy is on hold and not just the particular elements under review, however the applicant offered to clarify the matter with the Council. The Board's representative said that while the location is referenced in the appendix, it is not listed as one of three archaeological sites named within the main text of the development plan.
- The prospective applicant said there is another SAC located to the north of the site and it is also designated for calcareous grassland. It confirmed that there

are no SPA's in the vicinity of the site. Additionally, it noted that following 2 years of surveys, bird activity is very low across the site.

- The prospective applicant confirmed that there is a hydrological connection to the River Nore Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004233) and said a Natura Impact Statement will be submitted with the planning application.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said the land comprises mineral soils and there is no presence of peat on the site. In relation to landslide susceptibility, the prospective applicant said fieldwork has been completed in this regard and given the nature of the soils and the results gathered to-date, there is no potential risk of landslides.
- The Board's representatives queried the tip height of the existing 4 turbines to the north of the site. The prospective applicant said it believes they are approximately 140 metres, but this will be confirmed and forwarded to the Board shortly.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant confirmed that the proposed wind farm development comprises of 12 wind turbines. They do not anticipate any increase or decrease to this number.
- The prospective applicant said the maximum turbine tip height will be fixed at 175 metres and turbine dimension ranges will not be submitted.
- The Board's representatives reminded the prospective applicant to include an analysis of the carbon losses and gains of the proposed development within the climate chapter of the EIAR.
- The prospective applicant said a number of documents will be forwarded to the Board following the initial meeting, including a written report detailing the wind energy capacity assessment carried out for Kilkenny, an ecological briefing note relating to the Special Areas of Conservation in proximity to the site, an archaeology briefing note and a landscape capacity assessment.
- The Board's representatives stated their preliminary opinion is that both proposed developments would constitute strategic infrastructure development but noted that it is ultimately a decision for the Board.
- The Board's representatives noted that the site is partially located within a preliminary source protection area for a group scheme. The prospective

applicant said borrow pits and other potentially impactful infrastructure will be located outside the source protection zone.

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. It is not anticipated that further meetings will be required. It will be a matter for the prospective applicant to revert to the Board if/when it wishes to formally close the pre-application consultation process.

Ciara Kellett 17/10/22

Ciara Kellett

Assistant Director of Planning