

Sligo County Council
Planning Department
City Hall
Quay Street
Sligo
Co. Sligo
F91 PP44

Date: 18 September 2023

Re: Proposed windfarm development including 13 no. wind turbines in Bunnyconnellan, Co. Mayo and hydrogen plant in Castleconnor, Co. Sligo.
Carrowleagh, Bunnyconnellan, Co. Mayo and Curraun, Castleconnor, Co. Sligo.

Dear Sir / Madam,

An Bord Pleanála has received your submission in relation to the above mentioned proposed development and will take it into consideration in its determination of the matter.


The Board will revert to you in due course in respect of this matter.

Please be advised that copies of all submissions / observations received in relation to the application will be made available for public inspection at the offices of the local authority and at the offices of An Bord Pleanála when they have been processed by the Board.

More detailed information in relation to strategic infrastructure development can be viewed on the Board's website: www.pleanala.ie.

If you have any queries in the meantime 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,


Niamh Hickey
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01-8737145

PA09

Teil	Tel	(01) 858 8100
Glaó Áitiúil	LoCall	1800 275 175
Facs	Fax	(01) 872 2684
Láithreán Gréasáin	Website	www.pleanala.ie
Ríomhphost	Email	bord@pleanala.ie

64 Sráid Maoilbhríde	64 Marlborough Street
Baile Átha Cliath 1	Dublin 1
D01 V902	D01 V902

Niamh Hickey

From: Marine
Sent: Thursday 14 September 2023 13:43
To: SIDS
Subject: FW: Sligo County Council Submission: ABP-317560-23
Attachments: Cover Correspondence (14 Sept '23).pdf; Submission Appendices (14 Sept '23).pdf

From: Appeals2 <appeals@pleanala.ie>
Sent: Thursday, September 14, 2023 1:18 PM
To: Marine <marine@pleanala.ie>
Subject: FW: Sligo County Council Submission: ABP-317560-23

From: Bord <bord@pleanala.ie>
Sent: Thursday, September 14, 2023 1:10 PM
To: Appeals2 <appeals@pleanala.ie>
Subject: FW: Sligo County Council Submission: ABP-317560-23

From: Planning Emails <planning@sligococo.ie>
Sent: Thursday, September 14, 2023 12:52 PM
To: Bord <bord@pleanala.ie>
Cc: Planning Emails <planning@sligococo.ie>
Subject: Sligo County Council Submission: ABP-317560-23

Your Ref: ABP-317560-23

Re: Proposed Windfarm Development including 13. No wind turbines in Ballyconnellan, Co Mayo & hydrogen plant in Castleconnor, Co Sligo
Carrowleagh, Bunnyconnellan, Co Mayo & Curraun, Castleconnor, Co Sligo

FAO: Niamh Hickey, Executive Officer

I refer to correspondence received by this office on 13th July 2023 regarding the above.
In this regard, please find attached Sligo County Council's submission:

- Cover Correspondence
- Submission Appendices

Should you require a hard copy of the attached documents to follow, please advise.
I would be obliged if you could confirm receipt of this submission by reply.

Many thanks.

Kind regards,
Siobhán

Siobhán Gillen
Administrative Officer
Planning Section
Sligo County Council,
City Hall, Quay Street, Sligo, F91 PP44

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Sligo County Council
Comhairle Chontae Shligigh

Sligo.



Your ref: **ABP-317560-23**

14th September 2023

Ms. Niamh Hickey,
Executive Officer,
An Bord Pleanála,
64 Marlborough Street,
Dublin 1, D01 V902

Appeal Re:- Proposed windfarm development including 13. No Turbines in Bunnyconnell, Co Mayo & hydrogen plant in Castleconnor, Co Sligo

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Dear Ms Hickey,

Pursuant to Section 37E(4) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), attached is the submission of Sligo County Council to the Board setting out the views of the authority of the effects of the proposed development on the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area of the authority.

The view of the authority is contained with the Chief Executive's Report dated 4 September 2023. In addition, and as per section 37E(6) and (7) of the Act, the following is included:

- A summary of the view of the Members of the Council given at the meeting;
- An extract of the record of the meeting prepared by the meetings administrator [Note: this is in draft form pending agreement of the minutes at the next council meeting]; and,
- Two resolutions made at the meeting relevant to this item.

Yours sincerely,

**Siobhan Gillen,**  
Administrative Officer,  
Planning Section

/Encl.





**Sligo County Council**  
**Comhairle Chontae Shligigh**

**Sligo.**

**Chief Executive's Report to the members of Sligo  
County Council on 4 September 2023**

**in relation to**

**a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID)  
application on lands located in Castleconnor, Co Sligo  
(and townlands within in Co. Mayo) submitted to An  
Bord Pleanála on 6 July 2023.**

**The proposed development consists of 13 no. wind  
turbines in Bunnyconnellan, Co Mayo and a Hydrogen  
plant within Castleconnor, Co Sligo**

4 September 2023

## 1.0 Introduction and Background

A Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) application on lands located in Castleconnor, Co Sligo (and townlands within in Co. Mayo) was submitted to An Bord Pleanála on 6 July 2023. An SID is a specific class of development as defined in the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), and generally includes large-scale projects in energy, transport, environment, and health sectors where the decision-making procedure requires an application to be submitted directly to the Board (as opposed to the local planning authority).

This SID proposal consists of 13 no. wind turbines in Bunnyconnellan, Co Mayo and a connected Hydrogen plant within Castleconnor, Co Sligo. A Site Location Plan and full Description of Development (as per the public notices) is provided at Appendix 1 of the report. Otherwise, all details submitted with the SID application are available to view at <https://firloughwindfarmplanning.com/>.

In accordance with Section 37E of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) the planning authority is required to:

- Prepare and submit to the Board a report setting out the views of the authority on the effects of the proposed development on the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, before 5.30pm on 14 September 2023.
- Submit the report to the members of the authority and seek the views of the members of the proposed development.

The members of the planning authority may then, by resolution, decide to attach recommendations (specified in resolution) to the report of the authority. The member's recommendations will then be attached to the report to be submitted to ABP.

An Bord Pleanála may then decide to:

- (i) grant permission, or
- (ii) make such modifications to the proposed development as it specifies in its decisions and grant permission in respect of the proposed development as so modified, or
- (iii) grant permission in respect of part of the proposed development (with or without specified modifications of the foregoing kind), and any of the above decisions may be subject to or without conditions, or
- (iv) refuse the application.

ABP may decide to hold an oral hearing as part of the SID process.

It is noted that there has been an opportunity for submission (from members of the public, interested parties, prescribed bodies etc) to be made directly to ABP (not the local planning authority). If ABP decide to hold a hearing, there may be a further opportunity for members of the public and prescribed bodies to make submissions.

Further background information on SIDs and the procedures involved in applying for and deciding SID applications is available in the Office of Planning Regulator leaflet:- [Planning Leaflet 14 – Strategic Infrastructure Development](#).

## 2.0 Nature of the Proposed Development

The proposal includes development within Co. Sligo and Co. Mayo. In summary, the wind farm (13 turbines) is to be located with Co. Mayo and the hydrogen plant is to be located within Co. Sligo. There are various items of ancillary infrastructure to accompany and facilitate the development (e.g.



substations, underground cables, highway alterations, demolition of agricultural buildings, forestry felling and replanting etc) and this includes the interconnector between the wind farm and the hydrogen plant and which will partly be located in Co Sligo. The development will also require both construction and alterations to the local road network (e.g. widening of roads and junctions) to allow for the delivery of turbine components and a significant element of this will be within Co. Sligo. There will be alterations to the local road network including junction widening/improvement and provision of a roundabout at the entrance to the hydrogen plant (NB: a full description of development and annotated site location plan showing the general location of the proposed development is included at Appendix 1). The application seeks a temporary permission of 40 years for the turbines (from when operational) but permanent permission for the hydrogen plant. As well as various planning and engineering drawings the application includes a Planning Statement, an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR), and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS). The EIAR includes various chapters on relevant topics including traffic and transport, landscape and visual amenity, ecology, air quality, noise and vibration etc.

The focus of this report relates to the proposed development within the administrative area of Co. Sligo which predominantly highlights the potential effects associated with the development of the hydrogen plant and alterations to the local highway network. While there will be some intervisibility of the windfarm proposed within Co. Mayo from Co. Sligo it is noted that there is a history of planning permissions relating to wind energy development to this site.

The hydrogen plant will be located approximately 600m southwest of the N59 nearby to the junction with the L6612 within the townland of Carraun, approximately 7km south of Enniscrone and 5.6km northeast of Ballina. It will comprise of the main Electrolyser building (to the western part of the site and measuring 130m x 110m and 16m to the ridge). It will be predominantly clad in insulated panels coloured agricultural green. Also, on the site will be the water treatment building (31m x 14m, towards the east of the site), and various associated equipment housing buildings and storage areas including underground water tanks, internal roads etc. The vehicle parking and turning area will be to the south of the site. The site will be mainly enclosed with palisade fencing and some landscaping. The site is to be regraded to accommodate the development with embankments to the north, south and west side. The construction of the hydrogen plant is anticipated to last 21 months.

**Fig 1: General arrangements – hydrogen plant site**



Contained within the submission is an explanation of the process (water electrolysis) to be undertaken at the hydrogen plant. In summary, this uses electricity generated by the wind farm and, utilising treated water drawn from bore holes, produces hydrogen by splitting the water molecule into hydrogen and oxygen (oxygen being the by-product). Hydrogen gas will then be transported from the plant by 'tube-trailers' for onwards use – this would include its use as hydrogen fuel or conversion back to electricity elsewhere. As the electricity proposed to be used in the process is from a renewable source (wind energy) with no associated emissions hydrogen is considered a renewable form of energy (often referred to as 'green hydrogen').

### **3.0 Planning Authority's Assessment of the Proposed Development**

The provision of renewable energy to meet national energy needs, replace fossil fuel use and to contribute towards climate change mitigation is fully recognised and supported at all levels of national, regional, and local planning policy including within the National Planning Framework (NPF), the Northern & Western Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy 2020-2032 (RSES) and the objectives of the County Development Plan 2017-2023 (as varied and extended). In addition, the National Hydrogen Strategy (2023) prioritises the scale up and production of renewable hydrogen, noting that, prior to 2030, hydrogen will be predominantly produced from grid connection electrolysis from surplus renewables. The Strategy goes on to include for various options for hydrogen to replace fossil fuels including within commercial and residential heating, road and rail transport, and maritime uses. As such, given the nature of the proposal, and the objectives and strategy outlined at national, regional, and local level, the principle of the development as proposed within the county, and which is of a strategic scale, should be fully supported.

It is noted however that there will be a range of local level effects on the environment that may be impactful. At a general point it is considered that the proposal includes sufficient mitigation measures, as detailed within the EIAR, to minimise these impacts to an acceptable level. The following section of the report outlines these potential impacts and considerations. It should also be noted that there would be associated benefits of the development including of an economic nature (e.g. job creation and economic spend in the area). These are also detailed within the EIAR (within the section on material assets and other issues) and weight should be given to these matters when forming a view on the application.

#### **3.1 Landscape and Visual Impacts**

The proposed development, and in particular the hydrogen plant (electrolyser building), and associated infrastructure is of a significant scale which would not be typical of a rural setting. The landscape around the site is designated as a Normal Rural Landscape within the CDP. The N59 to the west, is designated as a Scenic Route. The area is generally sparsely populated and developed. The landscape is of a rolling topography and includes pastures and some areas of forestry.

The application includes, as part of the EIAR, a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment. The core focus of this is the impact of the wind energy development within Co. Mayo however it does also include an assessment of the visual impact of the hydrogen plant / electrolyser building. This includes an assessment of the zone of theoretical visibility (ZTV) and a wireframe viewpoint assessment (from four points) within a 2km range (ZTV - based on a model of the development and topography of surroundings indicates locations where development will be visible as a worse-case scenario; Viewpoint Assessment - this is a process where photographs from the surrounding areas are compared with and without the development, and based on a 3D outline model of the development).

The assessment outlines that the main unobstructed views of the hydrogen plant will be from unpopulated private land predominantly in agricultural and forestry use. Beyond that, and from the nearest public roads and residential buildings, and due to the landform surrounding the site, the views would be more sporadic and mainly of the upper profile of the electrolyser building only. There would be brief visibility from a section of the N59. The alterations to the N59 junction will be a much more intensive form of road infrastructure (when compared to the existing) and which would completely change the nature of the road (from a rural access/road). The assessment notes that beyond 1km the building would not have a notable impact on the landscape. The wireframe viewpoint assessment does include for additional landscaping (hedges etc) to mitigate in some way any visual impact. Given the separation of the proposed wind farm (and existing wind energy development) from the hydrogen plant site there would be limited cumulative impact on the rural landscape.

In conclusion, it is considered that while the proposed hydrogen plant would have a visual impact on the rural landscape given its scale and nature (as an untypical addition to a rural setting) due to the topography of the site and surrounding area any impact would likely be of a localised nature only. However, it is noted that within the submission there is limited information contained on the design detail and visual appearance of the hydrogen plant / electrolyser building to demonstrate the design quality and appropriateness of the appearance of the building, given its scale, to this rural setting (e.g. CGI images, design statement, site sections, evidence of consideration of detailed siting, materiality). The submitted information is limited to basic elevation and plan detail only. While it is understood that the development would likely be of a utilitarian appearance a more detailed examination of the site context and further understanding of the requirements of the building may have led to a more informed design or siting and possible reduction in the scale of the building and therefore visual impact of the development. The careful consideration of this matter by ABP is recommended.

### **3.2 Access widening / improvements to the N59 and traffic movements**

The EIAR includes an assessment on Traffic and Transport impacts. Within this significant consideration has been given to the turbine components delivery route and associated impacts. This involves junction widening, road widening, creation of passing areas including to the local road network within Co Sligo. Some of these changes may impact on the visual amenity of the area by changing the rural nature and character of these roads. As with any development of this scale there would be associated and changing impacts on the local road network during construction / delivery phase. However, these would be temporal, and the proposal appears to include sufficient mitigation to minimise these impacts (e.g. construction traffic management). There may be incidental long-term improvements for road users.

The main on-going transport impact from the development would therefore be the requirement of the local and national transport network to accommodate the 'tube-trailers' (HGVs) for the hydrogen plant and traffic for workers at the hydrogen plant. The assessment identified that there would be a maximum of 26 tube trailers filled with gaseous hydrogen transported away from the plant everyday (therefore 52 total movements), and approximately 10 cars attending the site for workers. The assessment states that post-reconfiguration of the N59 junction, this would represent just 5.9% of the capacity of this junction. As such the conclusion of the assessment is that traffic generated would be imperceptible due to the type of traffic and the low volume of traffic generated during operation. It is noted that the assessment includes a Road Safety Audit however it is considered this does not appear to fully address the implications of the safety of the new junction to the N59 and instead focuses on the design of the roundabout access. Furthermore, it is unclear if the



applicant has adequate control from adjoining landowners to maintain the sightlines at this new junction. These matters should be fully considered by ABP.

It is noted that policy P-NR-1 of the CDP seeks to protect the carrying capacity of the national road network to perform efficiently, and this includes limiting increased traffic generation at existing junctions outside of the 50km/hr speed limit. Where development is of a regionally important strategic nature it would be necessary to have this identified within the new draft CDP and in consultation with Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII). Policy P-NR-1 reflects national policy and as such further appraisal of this proposal would be required against this policy approach by ABP and this will need to be informed by the response received from TII.

### 3.3 Amenity Issues

In relation to the hydrogen plant site, it is well removed from any sensitive premises (e.g. residential development) within Co Sligo. This would negate against many impacts that typically arise from development such as loss of light or overshadowing. Otherwise, there would be the potential for visual impacts (discussed above) for near neighbours and traffic impacts which would impact on local populace, road users etc (also discussed above). The EIAR does include a further assessment on noise and disturbance and based on a baseline noise survey taken for the environs of the hydrogen plant site and recognising that the (industrial) process involved will generate noise and HGV tube trailer deliveries will generate noise. The conclusion of this assessment is that there will be no significant noise impact associated with the construction phase and that the design of hydrogen plant includes mitigation measures (mainly insulation) to ensure it would comply with EPA guidance on noise. It is noted that a shadow flicker analysis is provided in relation to the wind energy part of the development.

### 3.4 Other

**Population and human health** – This part of the EIAR assessment concludes that hydrogen has a proven track record as a fuel for a significant period and is non-toxic and non-poisonous. It notes that the development is adequately positioned from existing properties, open spaces etc. One conclusion is that the proposed development would be beneficial to human health as it will replace fossil fuel use.

**Shadow flicker** – The assessment identifies that all except one property meets minimum set-back distances (740m) from wind turbines and the occupier of that property is financially involved in the project and therefore has provided written agreement to accept the reduced set-back.

**Biodiversity** – The application includes an NIS. Ecological surveys have been undertaken to establish the status of ecological features (habitats, mammals, bats, fish, and aquatic invertebrates). The development of the windfarm will result in the loss of some habitat (0.48ha of intact high bog and 15.23 ha of cutover bog). Mitigation will include the implementation of a Biodiversity and Enhancement Management Plan (BEMP). The hydrogen plant site is located within a field of improved agricultural grassland, and which is of a low ecological interest.

**Ornithology** – A series of bird surveys were undertaken in line with best practice. The loss of habitat (noted above) at the wind farm would impact on the habitats of red-listed species. The assessment concludes that this would not be significant. The hydrogen plant site, as active agricultural use,

would not support bird species. Implementation of the BEMP would mitigate against any loss of habitat.

**Hydrology, Geology, and the Water Environment** – A Site Flood Risk Assessment has (SFRA) been undertaken for the development and identifies there is no residual risk of flooding at the site and a low risk to nearby receptors. The closest known well to the hydrogen plant is 1.1km and used for agricultural and domestic purposes. The hydrogen plant will require relatively large volumes of water to produce hydrogen, but the assessment identifies that two boreholes can meet supply requirements and without depleting aquifer levels or impacting on wells nearby. This part of the assessment also includes for a peat stability assessment relevant to the wind farm.

**Vulnerability of the project to major accidents and natural disasters** – a full risk assessment has been undertaken and which identifies 'transportation of hydrogen during operation', 'peat stability during construction', 'contamination' and 'industrial accident fire/gas explosion during construction, operation and decommissioning' as having the highest risk score. The assessment outlines that the development has been designed in accordance with best practice measures (and as set out in the EIAR) to mitigate against the risk of major accidents and/or disasters through the design.

**Development Contributions** – If the determination by ABP is to grant permission, consideration should be given to applying a condition requiring a development contribution in line with Sligo County Council's Development Contribution Scheme 2018-2024. Based on the total floorarea of development proposed within Co. Sligo (15,018 sq.m) this would result in a contribution of €300,360.

### 3.5 Conclusion

As noted above a review of the submission and accompanying assessments has tended to identify that the local impacts associated with the development can be mitigated to an acceptable level. There are specific points noted above where the planning authorities view is that further consideration should be given to some aspects of the proposed hydrogen plant development and the reconfiguration of the junction to the N59. As a general point, it is noted that the submitted application and assessment tends to focus of the impact on the wind energy development and with less emphasis on the hydrogen plant. While this is partly understandable, it should be noted that, on an individual basis, the hydrogen plant site is a significant scale of development. As such, the Board, in making its decision, should ensure that appropriate weight and consideration should be given to this aspect of the development and the potential impacts on the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of Co. Sligo.

### 4.0 Chief Executive's recommendation to the members of the Council:

- Section 1.0 of this report outlines background to the Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) process including the role of the ABP as the determining authority and the role of the planning authority to submit a report to ABP on the planning merits or otherwise of the proposal.
- Section 2.0 provides a more detailed description of the development and with a particular emphasis on those parts of the application that are within Co Sligo (the hydrogen plant site and reconfiguration of the access on to the N59).
- Section 3.0 provide the planning authority's assessment of the proposed development again with an emphasis on those parts of the development that are located within Co Sligo, and outlines matters that ABP may wish to give further consideration.

It is recommended that this report, which reflects the views of the planning authority, is submitted to ABP. Furthermore, and as noted within Section 1.0 of this report (and as per the proposed resolution for this item) members will be able to include, by resolution, additional recommendations to this report.

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**Dorothy Clarke**

Director of Services

Planning, Community & Economic Development

Documents Attached with this report:

Appendix 1 – Site Location plan and Description of Development

Appendix 2 – Additional comments made by the members of Sligo County Council at their monthly meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023

Appendix 3 – Extract from *Draft* minutes of Monthly meeting

**END**

## APPENDIX 1 – Full Description of Development and Site Location Plan

### Full Description of Development as per the public notices:

The proposed development will consist of the following:

- Construction of 13 No. wind turbines with an overall ground to blade tip height of between 177 m and 185 m inclusive. The wind turbines will have a rotor diameter of between 149 m and 155 m inclusive and a hub height of between 102.5 m and 110.5 m inclusive.
- Construction of permanent crane hardstand areas, turbine foundations and temporary laydown/storage areas.
- Construction of new permanent internal wind farm site access roads and the upgrade of existing internal bog tracks to include passing bays and all associated drainage infrastructure.
- Development of a site drainage network for the wind farm site including sediment control systems.
- All associated underground electrical and communications cabling connecting the wind turbines to the wind farm substation.
- Construction of a permanent on-site 110 kV wind farm electrical substation including two no. control buildings with welfare facilities, all associated electrical plant and equipment, security fencing and gates, all associated underground cabling, wastewater holding tank, and all ancillary structures and works.
- All works associated with the permanent connection of the wind farm to the national electricity grid, which will be via a loop-in 110 kV underground cable, in permanent cable ducts from the proposed permanent wind farm substation in the townland of Carrowleagh, and through the townlands of Carha, Carrownaglogh, Rathreedaun, Drumsheen and Bunnyconnellan West County Mayo into the existing 110 kV overhead line in the townland of Rathreedaun County Mayo, with two new 16 m high steel lattice loop-in/out masts at the connection point.
- Construction of a wind farm site temporary construction compound with associated temporary site offices, parking areas, welfare facilities and security fencing.
- Construction of a temporary construction materials storage area for use during the construction of the wind farm.
- Forestry felling to facilitate the construction and operation of the wind farm substation and any onsite forestry replanting.
- Upgrade works on the turbine delivery route to include the following to facilitate the delivery of abnormal loads and turbine component deliveries:



## APPENDIX 1 – Full Description of Development and Site Location Plan

- Improvement of the N59 and L-2604-0 junction in the townland of Ballymoghany County Sligo to include for the temporary widening of it. The associated accommodation works will include the installation of new drainage pipes, the construction of a 1.2 m high concrete retaining wall and the erection of timber stock proof fencing and two agricultural gates.
- Localised widening of the L-2604-0 road in the townland of Cloonkeelaun County Sligo. The associated accommodation works will include the construction of a 1.2 m high concrete retaining wall and the erection of concrete post and timber rail stock proof fencing and two agricultural gates.
- Localised widening of the L-2604-0, L-5137-0 and L-5137-9 roads in the townlands of Ballymoghany, Muingwore and Cloonkeelaun County Sligo, and Carrowleagh County Mayo to achieve a surfaced road width of 4.5 m.
- Localised widening of the L-5137-9, L-5136-0 and L-6612 roads in the townlands of Carraun and Knockbrack County Sligo, and Carha and Carrowleagh County Mayo to establish passing bays.
- Localised road widening at the N17/N5 roundabout in the townland of Ballyglass East County Mayo.
- Localised road widening at the road junction with the N5 in the townland of Ballyglass East County Mayo.
- Alterations to the embankments at the N5 junction with the L-5339 and L-1331 roads in the townland of Cloonmeen West County Mayo.
- Localised road widening at the junction of the L-5339 and L-1331 in the townland of Lavy More County Mayo.
- Construction of a new wind farm site entrance off the L-5137-9 local road in the townland of Carrowleagh County Mayo with the creation of a splayed entrance to facilitate the delivery of abnormal loads and turbine component deliveries.
- Construction of a hydrogen plant and an access road to it along with upgrades to the L-6612-1 and the construction of a roundabout. The hydrogen plant includes the electrolyser building measuring 130 m by 110 m and 16 m in height, and equipment, underground water storage tanks, drainage system, constructed wetlands, hydrogen dispensing station, tube trailer parking, water treatment building, fin fan coolers, fire water tanks, compressors, offices and welfare facilities and all ancillary equipment.
- Construction of a permanent on-site 110 kV hydrogen plant substation including two control buildings with welfare facilities, all associated electrical plant and equipment, security fencing and gates, all associated underground cabling, wastewater holding tank, and all ancillary structures and works.

## APPENDIX 1 – Full Description of Development and Site Location Plan

- Abstraction of groundwater from 2 no. boreholes in the townland of Carraun County Sligo and pumping to the proposed hydrogen plant site and all associated ancillary works.
- Construction of a hydrogen plant site temporary construction compound with associated temporary site offices, parking areas, materials storage and security fencing for use during the construction of the hydrogen plant site.
- All works associated with the permanent connection of the wind farm to the hydrogen plant comprising a 110 kV underground cable in permanent cable ducts from the proposed, permanent, wind farm substation, in the townland of Carrowleagh County Mayo and onto the townlands of Carha County Mayo, Knockbrack County Sligo and terminating in the hydrogen plant substation in the townland of Carraun County Sligo.
- Demolition of one agricultural shed and partial demolition of one agricultural shed in the townland of Carraun County Sligo to facilitate the construction of the upgraded L-6612-1 local road and roundabout.

This application is seeking a 10-year permission and, in respect of the wind farm, a 40-year operational period from the date of overall commissioning of the entire wind farm. A permanent planning permission is being sought for the grid connection, interconnector, hydrogen plant and hydrogen plant substation as these are to remain in place upon decommissioning of the wind farm. The wind farm substation will become an asset of the national grid under the management of EirGrid.

The proposed development includes activities which are subject to an Industrial Emissions License from the Environmental Protection Agency. In addition, the proposed development relates to an establishment which falls within the requirements of Directive 2012/18/EU on the control of major-accident hazards involving dangerous substances and which will be subject to regulation from the Health and Safety Authority.

This application is accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EiAR) and a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).





**APPENDIX 2 – Additional comments made by the members of Sligo County Council at their monthly meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

Having noted the Chief Executive's Report, prepared in accordance with the provisions of Section 37E of the Planning and Development Act 2020 (as amended), on the Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) application for the development of a Hydrogen plant at Castleconnor, Co Sligo and 13 no. wind turbines in Bunnyconnellan, Co Mayo; the members of Sligo County Council at their monthly meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> September 2023 resolved to submit this report to An Bord Pleanála subject to the attachment of the following additional views:

**Consultation & Process:**

- A resolution of the Member's was passed to request an Oral hearing.
- Inadequate consultation has taken place with local residents prior to lodging the SID application particularly given the nature, scale and significance of the proposed development.
- Regard should be given to local resident's concerns raised directly to ABP through the consultation process.
- No facility to appeal decision of An Bord Pleanála which will force those opposed to decision to take judicial review.

**Highways & Access:**

- Local roads effected by the development should be improved and maintained. There should be a Bond in place to ensure that roads damaged during the construction phase will be repaired and reinstated.
- Any decision on the intensification of the use of the access onto the N59 should be consistent with previous advice and responses of TII relating to other development (including one-off dwellings) seeking permission for a new access or intensification of the use of an existing access onto the N59.
- Concern that the proposed access onto the N59 would be prejudicial to highway safety given the number and nature of proposed vehicular movements serving the hydrogen plant.

**Hydrology:**

- Noting that the proposal requires significant volumes of water, and this will be partly sourced from bore holes and potentially from mains water supply, that this would have a significant impact on ground water level and water supply within the vicinity of the proposed development in the long-term.

**Other:**

- Acknowledge the importance of providing alternative (green) energy
- Query if a hydrogen plant is premature given the lack of an established market for hydrogen.
- The proposed wind farm will result in the loss of peatland (within Co Mayo) currently used by Co. Sligo residents.

**MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING OF SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL  
HELD AT 10.00AM ON MONDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023 IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY  
HALL, RIVERSIDE, SLIGO.**

**17. REPORT ON  
STRATEGIC  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
DEVELOPMENT  
(SID) APPLICATION  
FOR A HYDROGEN  
PLANT WITHIN  
CASTLECONNOR,  
CO SLIGO AND 13  
NO. WIND  
TURBINES IN  
BUNNYCONNELLAN,  
CO MAYO, TO BE  
SUBMITTED TO AN  
BORD PLEANÁLA:**

**Proposed by Cllr. D. Gilroy  
Seconded by Cllr. M. Casserly**

**AND AGREED**

*"To note, pursuant to Section 37E of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), the report on the Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) application for a Hydrogen Plant within Castleconnor, Co Sligo and 13 no. wind turbines in Bunnyconnellan, Co Mayo, which will be submitted to An Bord Pleanála subject to the attachment of any additional recommendations agreed by resolution at this meeting by Members."*

In response to Cllr. Queenan's request for clarity on the development and the process involved, Director of Services, Ms. Clarke informed the meeting that a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) application was submitted to An Bord Pleanála (ABP), rather than with the Local Planning Authority. A SID is a specific class of development as defined in the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended) and generally includes large-scale projects in energy, transport, environment and health sectors.

In accordance with the Act the Local Planning Authority is required to prepare and submit a report setting out the views of the authority on the effects of the proposed development on the environment and the proper planning and the sustainable development of the area. The report must be submitted to the members of the authority and their views be sought on the proposed development. The members' comments/feedback will be recorded and will be attached to the report that will be sent to ABP.

As per the report circulated in advance of the meeting to the Members, the proposed development comprises the installation of 13 no. wind turbines in Bunnyconnellan in Co Mayo and a hydrogen plant in Castleconnor in Co Sligo. There are various items of ancillary infrastructure to accompany and facilitate the development and this includes the interconnector between the wind farm and the hydrogen plant and which will partly be located in Co Sligo. The development will also require both construction and alterations to the local road network to allow for the delivery of turbine components and a significant element of this will be within Co. Sligo. The focus of today's meeting relates to the proposed development within the administrative area of Co. Sligo only. The meeting was informed that the deadline for the submission of the report and Members comments to ABP is 14<sup>th</sup> September next.

Cllr. Queenan acknowledged that the Hydrogen Plant will be good for the environment. He noted the development will straddle the Sligo-Mayo border with the Wind Turbines being located in Co Mayo. He expressed his concerns that if the development gets the go-ahead,



**MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING OF SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL  
HELD AT 10.00AM ON MONDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2023 IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, COUNTY  
HALL, RIVERSIDE, SLIGO.**

during the construction phase, heavy machinery will be using the roads in West Sligo so it imperative that a sufficient bond is put in place to ensure that all the local roads affected are brought up to standard and re-instated accordingly.

In relation to the proposed Hydrogen Plant in Co Sligo, Cllr. Queenan stated that the principle of the development is fine but there are mixed views held by the people in the locality. The matter has been diluted somewhat by the company's PR, offering a €500,000 a year fund to community groups in Sligo and Mayo once the development is in place.

A further issue of high concern is the amount of water that will be used to operate the Hydrogen Plant. The Company have said that ground water and rain water will mainly be used to power the plant but it may also be necessary to utilise some water from Lough Easkey as a back up supply. However, with the vast amounts of water that will be required to power the plant, this may have an impact on the water levels.

Cllr. Queenan also noted the significant level of unsuccessful planning applications over the years along the N59 from Ballisodare to the Mayo border and questioned if the TII will be consistent in their consideration of this development.

In summary, Cllr. Queenan stated that his main areas of concern include the traffic impact on the locality; the putting in place of a bond to cover the upkeep/re-instatement of the roads and the impacts on water levels and the environment. Co Sligo needs to be looked after and protected in all respects, Cllr. Queenan concluded and we need to ensure that the project is planned correctly from the outset.

Cllr. Casserly, agreeing with Cllr. Queenan, acknowledged that there are legitimate concerns in the West Sligo community around this project. In relation to this process, apart from the report presented to the Members today, Cllr. Casserly queried if there are any other observations/queries to be submitted by the SCC Planners as there appears to be some questions that are not answered adequately in the report that would allay the concerns of the local residents. There is an issue in relation to access and Cllr Casserly queried if the existing roads are able to cater for this level of development. She stated the N59 and associated junctions are barely mentioned in the report. Also in relation to the green energy, as we are not currently using this type of energy, i.e. hydrogen, Cllr. Casserly queried if the development is, in fact, premature. She also wondered if, having to transport the hydrogen to the other side of the country, is this defeating the purpose of this green energy project?

The report mentions the abstraction of ground water in Carns and pumping to the proposed Hydrogen Plant and Cllr. Casserly is concerned that the amounts of water that may need to be used will lower the water levels, particular in light of the fact that it is being proposed to use the mains water supply as a back up. There are, Cllr.

**MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING OF SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL  
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HALL, RIVERSIDE, SLIGO.**

Casserly stated, a lot of issues that need to be clarified and addressed at this point.

The developers need to engage a lot more and have more public consultations with the local communities. As it is straddling the two counties and as the submission goes straight to ABP it is very much out of the Council's hands so it is imperative that the Members make all these observations and add them all to the report and communicate the concerns of the local communities as part of the submission to ABP. While the local communities have made their own observations on the development, it is important that the Local Authority Members include these concerns as part of the submission to ABP.

Cllr. Clarke, concurring with the comments of his Council colleagues, asked for clarification in relation to the decision process on this development. He asked if the decision of ABP can be appealed or would a judicial review through the courts be required to overturn a ABP decision? It is crucial, Cllr. Clarke added, that the Members concerns and comments are properly documented and forwarded to ABP.

Director of Services, Ms. Clarke, stated that following the submission of the report to ABP, before a determination is made by ABP on the submission, ABP may decide to hold an Oral Hearing.

Cllr. Bree thanked the Director of Services for the report on the SID application in Castleconnor. Cllr. Bree added that whilst the provision of renewable energy is required to meet the needs of our national energy targets in replacing fossil fuels, it will also contribute significantly to climate change mitigation. He stated that it is understandable that the people in the local area have questions and concerns. However, because of the complexities involved, Cllr. Bree put forward the following motion and it was:

**Proposed by Cllr. D. Bree  
Seconded by Cllr. T. Healy**

**AND AGREED**

*"Given the complex nature of the application and the need for openness and transparency we request An Bord Pleanála to hold an oral hearing as part of the Strategic Infrastructure Development process."*

By way of clarification on the report circulated to Members, Ms. Clarke stated that local Road L6612, referred to in the report, should, in fact, have read L6612-1.

The Members requested that the extract from the minutes of the meeting detailing their concerns/feedback be circulated to them for

**MINUTES OF ORDINARY MEETING OF SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL  
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HALL, RIVERSIDE, SLIGO.**

review in advance of it being attached to the submission to go to ABP. Cllr. Bree stated that as the minutes of the meeting will not be adopted until the October plenary meeting this will be too late as it will be past the 14<sup>th</sup> September submission deadline.

Senior Planner, Mr. Moylan stated that the timeframe for submission of the application to ABP is set out in legislation. Any views expressed to the Planners at the meeting where the Chief Executive's report is being considered are attached to the report and sent to the Board. Cllr. Bree's motion submitted on this item, together with all of the views expressed by the Members here today will also be attached to the report.

Following a discussion on this matter, Chief Executive, Mr. Lydon, suggested that an extract of the draft of the minutes for this item would be compiled and shared with the Elected Members by the end of this week. The Members will have an opportunity to review same for completeness before it is submitted to APB. The full minutes of this meeting will then go formally to the Members for adoption at the October Plenary Meeting as is normal practice. This was agreed by the Members.

Cllr. Healy stated that this development and the whole process is a big step for councillors and queried if the Council has any concerns in relation to the Environmental Impact Statement they have received from the Company, on the Roads engineer's report on the amount of lorries that will be using the road and junctions in the area, and the amounts of water that will be used and effects on the water levels in the area.

Ms. Clarke informed the Members that the Planners have highlighted the concerns that need to be further considered by ABP in the report. The Council concurs with the issues in relation to the Roads and Environmental concerns. Quite a lot of the EIAR did focus on the Turbine site so the design of the Hydrogen Plant and the concerns around this issue are all highlighted by the Planners in the report.

Cllr Gilroy welcomed the fact that the County is getting a Hydrogen Plant, noting that we are the first in Ireland to do this if it goes ahead. Hydrogen, Cllr. Gilroy added, appears to be a very safe form of energy but it is vital that this is done properly. The conclusion in the Chief Executive's Report that the local impacts associated with the development can be mitigated to an acceptable level is crucial.

Mr. Moylan stated that, for clarity, a resolution needs to be passed at today's meeting indicating that the Councillors want the views of the Elected Members attached to the Chief Executive's Report.



SLIGO COUNTY COUNCIL

RESOLUTION

Item on Agenda: 17

Meeting date: 4 September 2023

PROPOSED BY: CLK. Donal Gilroy

SECONDED BY: CLK. Marie Casseedy

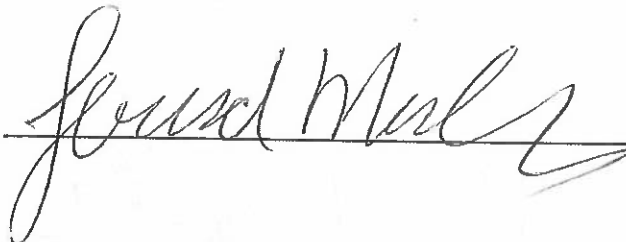
**AND RESOLVED:**

Having noted the Chief Executive's Report, prepared in accordance with the provisions of Section 37E of the Planning and Development Act 2020 (as amended), on the Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) application for the development of a Hydrogen plant at Castleconnor, Co Sligo and 13 no. wind turbines in Bunnyconnellan, Co Mayo; it is hereby resolved to submit this report to An Bord Pleanála subject to the attachment of any additional recommendations agreed by resolution at this meeting.

At the meeting of the Council held this 4<sup>th</sup> day of September 2023

the above Resolution was AGREED / CARRIED / LOST

SIGNATURE OF CATHAOIRLEACH:



MOTION

"Given the complex nature of the application and the need for openness and transparency we request An Bord Pleanála to hold an oral hearing as part of the Strategic Infrastructure Development process."

Proposed by 

Seconded by 