

Special Meeting to seek and record (following the circulation by the Chief Executive of the Report of the Planning Authority in respect of a Strategic Infrastructure Development lodged with An Bord Pleanála on behalf of Knockanarragh Wind Farm Ltd, for development of 8 no. wind turbines with a ground to blade tip height of 175-180 meters, rotor blade diameter of 155-162 meters, and hub height of 97.5 meters and associated foundations and hard standing areas. A thirty-five-year operational life from the date of full commissioning. Construction of 1 no permanent 110kV electrical substation west of Clonmellon, Co Meath. Construction of 33kV underground electrical cabling along the L5542 and N52 connecting to main wind farm development. Townlands of Clonmellon, Kilrush Upper, Kilrush Lower, Newtown, Ballinlig, Carnybrogan, Cavestown and Rosmead, Co Westmeath and Galboystown, Co Meath)

- The views of the members on the proposed development

- Any resolution made by the Members to attach recommendations to the report of the planning authority to be submitted to An Bord Pleanála

Full Council Meeting held on 27th May 2024 at 3.00 pm.

Meetings Administrator's Record

Presiding	:	Cllr. Liam McDaniel
Members Present	:	Cllr. John Dolan, Cllr. Tom Farrell, Cllr. Michael Dollard, Cllr. Andrew Duncan, Cllr. John Shaw, Cllr. Denis Leonard, Cllr. Paul Hogan, Cllr. Vincent McCormack, Cllr Frank McDermott, Cllr Paddy Hill, Cllr Johnny Penrose, Cllr Ken Glynn.
Online Attendees	:	Cllr Frankie Keena, Cllr Louise Heavin, Cllr Aoife Davitt.
Apologies:		Cllr. Emily Wallace, Cllr. Carol Okeke, Cllr Billy Collentine.
Officers Present	:	B Kehoe, A/Chief Executive A Clarke, A/Director of Services D Reilly, Director of Services J Finney, Director of Services P Browne, Senior Engineer, Capital Housing M Goldsberry, A/SEO C Byrne, Staff Officer S Eades, Clerical Officer C. Hartin, Senior Planner B O'Brien, A/Senior Executive Planner P Murtagh, Senior Executive Officer L McGuinness, Staff Officer

- (a) Roll Call and Declaration of Conflict of Interests.
- (b) Presentation by Brendan O'Brien, A/Senior Executive Planner.
- (c) Recording of the views of the Members on the proposed development; and to resolve, if necessary, to attach recommendations to the Report of the Planning Authority as circulated by the Chief Executive.

Conflict of Interest Declared:

No conflict of interests was recorded.

Agenda Item No 6 introduced by Cllr Liam McDaniel.

To consider the Chief Executive's Report on Knockanarragh Wind Farm Ltd. Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) application to An Bord Pleanála; to seek the views of the Members on the proposed development; and to resolve, if necessary, to attach recommendations to the Chief Executive's Report.

Presentation to the Members:

Brendan O'Brien, A/Senior Executive Planner, made a presentation to the Members setting out the salient details of the development proposal including the SID process, obligations to consider in the assessment of the proposal and the role of the Elected Members.

Elected Members Views:

Cllr Leonard submitted that the Wind Farm Guidelines 2006 in relation to renewal energy, are outdated and an inappropriate reference point for the consideration of such a strategic wind infrastructure development.

It was stated that there are far more appropriate forms of renewable energy that need to be considered within the county such as hydro, biomass, hydrogen, solar etc. (noting the offshore potential for wind energy in other areas) and that local residents must be supported. It was submitted that offshore is the most obvious location for wind energy development in Ireland and not the midlands.

Specific concerns were also highlighted in respect to shadow flicker mitigation measures and the devaluing of property in the area. In addition, concerns were raised in relation to the effect these turbines would have on tourism, heritage, and the visual amenities of the area. Comments were raised in relation to the quarrying component of the development in terms of subsiding and flooding. Reference was also made to a previous policy which had a separation distance standard of 10 times the tip height that was later removed, Cllr Leonard suggested that this should still be in place and if so, would offer greater protection to residential amenities associated with such proposals.

In terms of CPD policy 10.146, directing this type of development to cutover/cutaway bogs, attention was drawn to the extent of bogs in the County, with it being submitted that bogs are more suitable and better than using built-up areas for this form of development.

Cllr. Duncan endorsed the views of Cllr. Leonard and expressed his own view that he is not in support of this application. It was submitted that the application was cherry picking standards set out under various guidelines for this type of development and that the proposal was submitted under a developer led process. He stated that this application was not an application that should be considered a SID as it would not achieve the predicted outputs due to inefficiencies that exist with renewable wind energy, and as such it should have come before the Local Authority as a planning application.

It was suggested that this application should be refused based on Westmeath County Council Development Plan policy.

Concerns were expressed in respect of the payment of €1,000 per dwelling directly affected by the turbines as part of the Community Gain proposals as this amount would not adequately compensate locals for the devaluing of their properties once the development was commenced.

It was further expressed that the noise assessment associated with the application is inappropriate as no independent baseline noise measures are available for the area. In this context it was requested that an independent baseline noise measurement be carried out by Westmeath County Council. Reference was also made to a recent High Court Case which, it was submitted, determined that noise associated with wind turbines is a nuisance.

Cllr Duncan agreed with Cllr Leonard that there are many other forms of renewal energy that would be more suitable. He welcomed the decision of Westmeath County Council to refuse the application.

Cllr. Hogan agreed with the previous speakers and outlined his past support for alternative renewable energy proposals in the County, such as solar, biomass, biogas, and hydro energy however, highlighted that renewable wind energy proposals need to be situated in the right locations and be cognisant of concerns raised by the local community. Cllr Hogan stipulated set back distances in line with 10 times tip height and baseline noise levels would provide additional protection for homes. He agreed with Cllr Duncan that this application should

not be a SID application and it should have been brought before the Local Authority as a planning application.

Concerns were also raised in respect of the assessment on shadow flicker that was provided by the developer. Support was given for the preparation of a base line study on noise for the area.

It was expressed, in terms of CPD policy 10.146, that this policy provides clarity in approach by the Local Authority, in directing this type of development to cutaway bogs and as such the policy should be strictly adhered to. Reference was made to policy reflecting local democracy and the benefits of including protections in our planning frameworks.

Support was expressed for renewable energy, but it was submitted that there are alternative options to wind such as those mentioned above.

Cllr. Glynn agreed with the previous speakers on this issue. It was submitted that this is a rinse and repeat application for a wind farm in Westmeath similar to previous attempts.

It was submitted that all the members of the council have been in agreement on this type of development for the last 10 years and that the development should not proceed.

This concluded the item on the agenda.