



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ACP 323811-25

Development	Design Flexibility Request for the Proposed Wind Farm Repowering of the existing Dunneill and Kingsmountain Wind Farms
Location	Located in the townlands of Ballyglass, Crowagh, or Dunneill Mountain, Tawnadremira, Ballygreighan Barr, Dunowla and Kingsmountain, Co. Sligo
Planning Authority	Sligo County Council
Prospective Applicant	SSE Renewables (Ireland) Ltd.
Type of Application	S37CC Pre-application Consultation on Design Flexibility.
Date of S37CC Pre-Application Meeting:	2 nd December 2025
Date of Site Inspection	30 th October 2024
Inspector	Heidi Thorsdalen

1. Introduction

This report relates to pre-application discussions held with SSE Renewables (Ireland) Ltd. in respect of a proposed development, known as Crumhach Wind Farm, which is to comprise of 17 no. of turbines and ancillary works including the removal of the 23 no. turbines pertaining to Dunneill and Kings Mountain Wind Farms.

The prospective applicant is seeking an Opinion on Flexibility from the Commission. The request was received by the Commission on 17th October 2025.

The Commission's representatives met with the prospective applicant on two occasions in relation to the proposed development under Section 37B of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The presentations provided by the prospective applicant and written records of the meetings are on the said file (ref. ABP 320934-24). The Commission's representatives also met with the prospective applicant on one occasion in relation to the requested Opinion on Flexibility, 2nd December 2025. The presentation provided by the prospective applicant and the written record of this meeting are on this file.

2. Site Description

The subject site is located approximately 3.5km south of Dromore West and approximately 3.7km southwest of Templeboy in Co. Sligo. The N59 is located approximately 4.3km to the north.

The site comprises the sites of the existing Dunneill and Kingsmountain Wind Farms and an area to the west and southwest of the existing windfarms. The predominate land use comprises windfarm development, peatlands, commercial forestry and agricultural. The local area is sparsely populated.

This is a rural upland landscape, and the site is located on the northwestern foothills of The Ox Mountains or Slieve Gamph. A number of watercourses cross the site, generally flowing in a northerly direction, including the Dunneill River, Buncrowey River, Owenminna River, and tributaries. The site is located adjacent to Ox Mountains Bogs Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Easkey Bog Nature Reserve.

The existing windfarms are accessed via L6309 and proposed access is via both the L6309 and the L2702.

3. Proposed Development

The Commission will note that the proposed development at the time of closure refers to the repowering of the existing Dunneill and Kingsmountain Wind Farms operated by SSE Renewables (Ireland) Ltd. The proposed development will remove the existing 23 turbines with a combined generating capacity of 36.1MW. In this regard, it is noted that proposed turbines T8 to T17 largely intersect with the existing infrastructure layouts of, or are located in close proximity to, Dunneill and Kingsmountain Wind Farms. Proposed turbines T1 to T6 and proposed 110kV substation are located within a new development area to the west and southwest along the L2702, at a distance of approximately 1km to 3km, from the existing Dunneill and Kingsmountain Wind Farms. Having regard to this, the Commission should note that it was agreed during the pre-application process that the proposed development comprises a new application rather than repowering given the extent of new development areas.

The proposed development at the time of the closure request comprises the following:

- 17 no. wind turbines with a total rated power output of between 93.5MW to 112.2MW. The turbines are to have a blade tip height in the range of 176.6m to 180m inclusive, a rotor diameter blade of 133.2m to 150m and a hub height of 105m to 110m. Each turbine will be capable of generating from 5.5MW to 6.6MW.
- Removal of 23 no. existing turbines with an existing generating capacity of 36.1MW.
- 2 no. permanent Lidar compounds.
- 1 no. new permanent onsite 110kV substation compound.
- Upgrade to and continued use of 2 no. existing control buildings.

- Underground electrical (33 kV) and communication cabling.
- New site entrance and access roads and upgrade to existing site entrances (4 no.) and access roads.
- Temporary works incl. temporary construction compounds (4 no.), borrow pits (3 no.), and peat and spoil management areas.
- Turbine delivery route accommodation works.
- All associated ancillary and site development works.

The prospective applicant confirmed in pre-application closure correspondence that the proposed development is located in the following townlands:

- Crowagh or Dunneill Mountain, Ballyglass, Tawnadremira, Doonbeakin, Dunowla, Kingsmountain, Ballygreighan Barr, Co. Sligo.

The connection to the national grid is proposed as follows:

- Via the existing grid connection to Cunghill 110kV Substation (c. 20km southeast) which has an existing capacity of 36.1MW, currently shared by Dunneill and Kingsmountain Wind Farms.
- Via a new underground connection from the proposed onsite 110kV electrical substation to Srananagh 220kV substation, for additional energy generation. This will be subject to a separate Section 182A application.

4. Request For An Opinion On Flexibility

4.1 Context

The Planning and Development, Maritime and Valuation (Amendment) act 2022, provide for design flexibility in the case of application for permission for any development specified in the Seventh Schedule, primarily relating to the rapidly changing technology available in renewables, and the potentially long lead-in times between the making of a planning application and procurement of equipment.

The prospective applicant has entered into pre-application discussions with the Commission under ABP 320934-24 with respects to the development of the proposed windfarm. Concurrent to this, the prospective applicant has submitted this request to the Commission for an Opinion on Flexibility under Section 37B with

respect to specific elements of the development that may be provided later for the Commission's approval.

4.2 Request

Section 37CC material for formal consultation was submitted to the Commission on 17th October 2025 including prescribed Form 20 as set out in the Planning and Development (Amendment) (No.3) Regulations 2023. The request included all relevant information as set out in Section 37CC (2) of the Act, in order to assist the Commission in informing its opinion, including:

- Name and address of the applicant,
- A site location map,
- Description of the nature and purpose of the proposed development and its possible effects on the environment,
- A draft layout plan of the proposed development,
- Details of the development which are considered unlikely to be confirmed at application stage and the need for flexibility for the following reasons:
 - lengthy timescales associated with developing a wind farm project;
 - continuously evolving wind turbine technology;
 - uncertainty of make/model availability at construction; and
 - competitive tender process for turbine selection process.

At the time of closure, the following elements (details) of the development are those for which flexibility is being sought:

	Minimum (metres)	Maximum (metres)
Turbine Tip Height	176.6	180
Rotor Diameter	133.2	150
Hub Height	105	110

5. Consultation

1 no. meeting was held with the prospective applicant's representatives on 2nd December 2025. The presentation to the meeting and the meeting record are on the file. Issues raised at the meeting are identified and considered in Section 8 below.

6. Legislative Provisions

6.1 Planning and Development, Maritime and Valuation (Amendment) Act 2022

This Act, in recognition that certain applications require a degree of flexibility, introduced amendments to the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) and the Maritime Area Planning Act 2021, to facilitate procedures that will enable planning authorities and the Commission to consider design flexibility as part of the assessment of planning applications.

6.2 Section 37CC Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended)

This section of the Act sets out the requirements for requesting the Commission to consider design flexibility, and the Commission procedures for consideration of the request as part of the assessment of planning applications.

Section 37CC (1) states that a prospective applicant who proposes to make an application for any development specified in the Seventh Schedule may, before making such an application, request a meeting with the Commission for the purpose of section 37CD as part of consultations referred to in section 37B(1).

Section 37CC(2) (a-d) lists the details required in the application. (incl. site location map, draft layout plan, brief project description & possible effects on the environment).

Section 37CC (2) (e) requires a description of -

(i) the details, or groups of details, of the proposed development that, owing to the circumstances set out in subparagraph (ii), are unlikely to be confirmed at the time of the proposed application, and

(ii) the circumstances relating to the proposed development, including such circumstances as the Minister may prescribe in relation to any class or description of development for the purposes of this subparagraph, that indicate that it is appropriate that the proposed application be made and

decided, before the prospective applicant has confirmed the details referred to in subparagraph (i) including, in particular, whether the prospective applicant may be able to avail of technology available after making the proposed application that is more effective or more efficient than that available at the time of the application,

Section 37CC (2) (f) requires an undertaking to provide with the proposed application either—

(i) two or more options in respect of each detail or group of details referred to in paragraph (e)(i), containing information on the basis of which the proposed application may be made and decided,

(ii) parameters within which each detail or group of details referred to in paragraph (e)(i) will fall and on the basis of which the proposed application may be made or decided, or (iii) a combination of subparagraphs (i) and (ii),

Section 37CC (2) (g-h) lists other information that may be provided or prescribed.

Section 37CC (3) provides for the Commission to convene a meeting.

Section 37CC (4) provides for the Minister to make regulations in relation to procedures and administration for the purposes of holding a meeting.

6.3 Circular Letter PL11/2023 – New Design Flexibility Provisions with regard to certain unconfirmed details as part of application for planning permission

This document refers to the opinion on flexibility which developers may wish to avail of. It notes that applicants may wish to seek permission before certain details of the proposed development are confirmed. It provides an example of a windfarm and notes that details such as the precise height or blade length of a turbine or the precise grid connection point and route may not be confirmed at the time of application. In addition, it notes that the process is not intended to apply to points of detail generally dealt with by way of compliance condition and agreed between the applicant and the Commission post-consent.

The document states that the applicant must set out the circumstances why it would be appropriate for the proposed application to be made and decided before the details are confirmed. It provides that a separate meeting may take place to discuss the flexibility request as part of the existing pre-application arrangements. It also states that existing consultations which may take place in advance of the flexible

meeting request may concern the scope of details not likely to be confirmed at application stage and likely to be subject to a request for an opinion on unconfirmed details.

It further provides for matters of public notification and transparency in respect of the new arrangements and prescribes the forms to be used for the various stages of the process - flexible meeting request (Form 19); opinion on unconfirmed details issued by the Commission (Form 20); and supplementary statement of unconfirmed details to accompany a planning application (Form 21).

7. Planning History/Precedent Cases

A sample of other Opinion of Flexibility issued by the Commission for windfarm developments are listed below:

- **322632-25:** Opinion on design flexibility in relation to a proposed windfarm at Cooloo and adjacent townlands, Co. Galway (pre-application consultation file ref. ABP. 316466-23).
- **321495-24:** Opinion on design flexibility in relation to a proposed windfarm at Beagh More and adjacent townlands, Co. Galway (pre-application consultation file ref. ABP. 321507-24).
- **ABP 319602-24:** Opinion on design flexibility in relation to a proposed windfarm at Scart Mountain, Co. Waterford (pre-application consultation file ref. ABP 319601-24).
- **ABP 319240-14:** Opinion on design flexibility in relation to a proposed windfarm at Clydaghroe and Cummeenabuddoge, Clonkeen, Co. Kerry (pre-application consultation file ref. ABP 319219-24).
- **ABP 319151-24:** Opinion on design flexibility in relation to a proposed windfarm at Knockshanvo and adjacent townlands, Co. Clare (pre-application consultation file ref. ABP 319215-24).
- **ABP 318971-24:** Opinion on design flexibility in relation to a proposed windfarm at Brittas and adjacent townlands, Co. Tipperary (pre-application consultation file ref. ABP 315655-23).

8. Assessment

The table below sets out the details and circumstances for section 37CC flexibility requested by the prospective applicant as well as my consideration and recommendation in relation to the various elements.

Details / Groups of Details	Circumstances	Consideration	Accept Flexibility
Turbine Tip Height Range - 176.6 to 180 metres	- Lengthy timescales associated with developing a wind farm project. - Continuously evolving wind turbine technology. - Uncertainty of make/model availability at construction. - Competitive tender process for turbine selection process.	I am satisfied that the flexibility sought in tip height is reasonable and minimal and note that the height of the turbine is dependent on the final turbine design. Notwithstanding that the prospective applicant is not limited to the specific ranges detailed in the request, I am satisfied that the range of flexibility sought can be considered and assessed fully in any future application and EIAR.	Yes
Rotor Diameter Range 133.2 to 150 metres		I am satisfied that the flexibility sought in rotor diameter is reasonable and note that rotor diameter is dependent on the final turbine design. Notwithstanding that the prospective applicant is not limited to the specific ranges detailed in the request, I am satisfied that the range of flexibility sought can be considered and assessed fully in any future application and EIAR.	Yes

Hub Height Range 105 to 110 metres		I am satisfied that the flexibility sought in hub height is reasonable and minimal and note that hub height is dependent on the final turbine design. Notwithstanding that the prospective applicant is not limited to the specific ranges detailed, I am satisfied that the range of flexibility sought can be considered and assessed fully in any future application and EIAR.	Yes
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9. Conclusion

Following the completion of the section 37CC meeting on 2nd November 2025, and having regard to the information provided by the prospective applicant in relation to the request for flexibility and to the circumstances which support this request, and based on my consideration of the request as set out above, I consider it reasonable that the following details/groups of details of the proposed development, may be confirmed after the proposed application has been made and decided by the Commission:-

Turbine dimensions:

- a) Turbine Tip height
- b) Rotor diameter
- c) Hub Height

For each of the details or group of details listed above, the prospective applicant shall provide with the proposed application two or more options in respect of each detail or group of details and/or parameters within which each of the detail or group of details will fall.

Normal construction related details that are intrinsic to the installation of the windfarm infrastructure that are not clarified at the application stage should be set

out and assessed in the application (incl. EIAR & NIS), and subject to a compliance condition which could include the submission of a CEMP.

10. Recommendation

I recommend that the following details of the proposed development may be confirmed after the proposed application has been made and decided by the Commission. The Commission should notify the prospective applicant of its Opinion in respect of flexibility under section 37CD of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended, in accordance with the following Draft Opinion.

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence, directly or indirectly, the exercise of my professional judgement in an improper or inappropriate way.



Heidi Thorsdalen

Planning Inspector

Date: 6th March, 2025

DRAFT OPINION

An Coimisiún Pleanála Opinion on Flexibility

(1) Request for meeting	
Request under section 37CC of the Act:	Request for Design Flexibility in relation to a proposed windfarm comprising 17 no. turbines.
Request reference Number:	ACP 323811-25
Name of the requestor/ prospective applicant:	SSE Renewables (Ireland) Ltd.
Location, townland or postal address of the land or structure to which the application relates (as may be appropriate):	Crowagh or Dunneill Mountain, Ballyglass, Tawnadremira, Doonbeakin, Dunowla, Kingsmountain, Ballygreighan Barr, Co. Sligo.
Nature and extent of the proposed development:	17 no. wind turbines with an electrical output of between 93.5MW and 112.2MW, removal of 23 no. existing turbines, a 110kV substation and upgrade to and continued use of existing control buildings, 2 no. permanent Lidar compounds, 33kV underground electrical and communication cabling, 4 no. temporary construction compounds, 3 no. borrow pits, peat and spoil management, new and upgraded site entrances and access roads, turbine delivery accommodation works, and all ancillary works.

Date of receipt of the request:	17 th October 2025
Opinion Reference Number:	ACP 323811-25
Date of Opinion:	

(2) Was the following information included where relevant, with the Flexibility Meeting Request under section 37CC of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.

Information	Enclosed with Request		
(a) A site location map sufficient to identify the maritime area/land on which the proposed development would be situated.	Yes: [✓]	No: []	
(b) A brief description of the nature and purpose of the proposed development and of its possible effects on the environment.	Yes: [✓]	No: []	
(c) A draft layout plan of the proposed development.	Yes: [✓]	No: []	
(d) A description of the details, or groups of details, of the proposed development that, owing to the circumstances set out in (e) below, are unlikely to be confirmed at the time of the proposed application.	Yes: [✓]	No: []	
(e) A description of the circumstances relating to the proposed development that indicate that it is appropriate that the proposed application be made and	Yes: [✓]	No: []	

decided, before the prospective applicant has confirmed the details referred to in (d) above.			
(f) An undertaking to provide with the proposed application, either - i. two or more options, in respect of each detail or group of details referred to in (d) above containing information on the basis of which the proposed application may be made and decided, ii. parameters within which each detail referred to in paragraph (d) above will fall and on the basis of which the proposed application may be made and decided, or iii. a combination of (i) and (ii).	Yes: [✓]	No: []	
(g) Such other information, drawings or representations as the prospective applicant may wish to provide or make available.	Yes: [✓]	No: []	N/A: []
(h) The appropriate fee.	Yes: [✓]	No: []	

(3) Opinion of the Commission under section 287B of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended and the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended.	
Information	Details/ Circumstances
a) The details, or groups of details, of the proposed development that may be confirmed after the proposed	1. Turbine Dimensions: a) Turbine Tip Height b) Rotor Diameter c) Hub height

application has been made and decided.	
b) The circumstances relating to the proposed development that indicate that it is appropriate that the proposed application be made and decided before the prospective applicant has confirmed the details referred to in paragraph (a) above.	i. Lengthy timescales associated with developing a wind farm project. ii. Continuously evolving wind turbine technology. iii. Uncertainty of make/model availability at construction. iv. Competitive tender process for turbine selection process.

For each detail, or groups of details, referred to in paragraph 4(a) above, the proposed application shall, in addition to any other requirement imposed by or under the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, be accompanied by the information referred to in the undertaking submitted with the flexibility meeting request under section, 37CC(2)(f) of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended.

The proposed application must be consistent with the opinion provided in accordance with section 37CD of the Act.