



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Record of Meeting ACP-324187-26 (VC)

Case Reference / Description	Proposed Development of 110kV substation and associated infrastructure within the townlands of Ashwood Lower, Coolroe Little and Whitepark, Co. Wexford & Springfield, Rockbog, Bogland and Kish, Co. Wicklow		
Case Type	Pre-application consultation		
1st / 2nd / 3rd / 4th Meeting	1 st Meeting Record		
Date	25 May 2026	Start Time	11:00am
Location	MS Teams	End Time	11:55am

Representing An Coimisiún Pleanála

Stephen Rhys Thomas, Assistant Director of Planning, Chair

Tómas Bradley, Senior Planning Inspector

Ellen Moss, Executive Officer

Representing the Prospective Applicant

Dónal Keogh, Highfield Energy

John Brennan, Highfield Energy

Christopher Doogan, Highfield Energy

Introduction

The Commission referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 27th March 2026, requesting pre-application consultations under section 182A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and 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 Commission. The Commission's representatives mentioned the following general procedures in relation to the pre-application consultation process.

- The Commission 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 Commission once finalised, but the prospective applicant may submit comments on the record which will form part of the case file.
- The Commission 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 Commission, and public consultations may also be directed by the Commission.
- The Commission may hold consultations in respect of the proposed development with other bodies.
- The holding of consultations does not prejudice the Commission in any way and cannot be relied upon in the formal planning process or in any legal proceedings.

Presentation made by the prospective applicant:

The prospective applicant began their presentation by discussing the proposed development.

Discussion:

REDIII

- The prospective applicant queried whether this development would fall under the scope of the REDIII Directive. The Commission's representatives clarified that applications under Section 182A are not currently subject to this Directive.

EIA

- The prospective applicant advised that an EIA screening report will be submitted with any future application. The Commission's representatives noted this and reminded the prospective applicant that the onus is them to screen out the proposed development for EIA and that they should consider whether other classes of development and their thresholds are applicable including removal of hedgerows, and the restructuring of rural lands in particular.
- The Commission's representatives reminded the prospective applicant of the importance of the Water Framework Directive, and it should submit a report indicating how the proposed development would be in compliance with same.

Development

- The Commission's representatives queried whether the application for the solar farm had been submitted to Wexford County Council. The prospective applicant advised that it has not been submitted and they are awaiting consultation meetings with Wexford and Wicklow County Councils.
- The Commission's representatives advised the prospective applicant that they should clearly set out the planning history for the lands in Kish Business Park and clarify their interest in said lands. The Commission's Representatives noted that the proposed grid connection for the solar farm appeared to rely directly on the data centre (and its grid connection) being built out. The applicant was questioned on the sequencing of these developments and how the solar farm would be connected to the national grid in the event that the data centre does not proceed.
- The prospective applicant advised that the ownership of the substation will be transferred to ESB or EirGrid.

Battery Storage (BESS)

- The Commissions representatives queried the relationship between the proposed BESS and the proposed substation. The prospective applicant provided information on the benefits of collocating solar farms and battery storage.

- The Commission's representatives advised that BESS has previously been decided as not falling under the scope of strategic infrastructure. The prospective applicant noted that some pre-applications containing a BESS element were considered SID.
- The Commissions representatives advised that if the BESS is considered SID, extensive and direct consultations with the fire officer in Wexford County Council, and an Emergency Response Plan and an Incident Response Plan would be expected as part of the application documents.

Grid Connection

- The prospective applicant advised that approximately 1.25km of the cables would run on public roads.
- The Commissions representatives queried whether water crossings or Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD) were required. The prospective applicant advised that from the initial assessment, no water crossings or HDD are required.
- The provision of joint bays and passing bays is required and will be outlined in any future Construction Traffic Management Plan.

Policy

- The Commission's representatives reminded the prospective applicant to include a Policy Statement demonstrating compliance with the relevant development plans. This should include compliance with non-energy-related policies (for example protection of trees/hedgerows). The prospective applicant was reminded to provide rationale for any material contravention of the development plan that they consider arises.

Next Steps

- The prospective applicant intends to submit the solar farm and substation applications in Q4 of 2026.
- It is intended to seek a determination in respect of this consultation as soon as may be. The prospective applicant was reminded that should the proposed development change in a material way, another meeting may be required. The prospective applicant acknowledged this and, if required, stated that it would re-enter the consultation process.

SID Status

- It was the preliminary opinion of the Commission's representatives that the proposed development of the substation and grid connection falls within the scope of strategic infrastructure; however, further consideration is required for the battery storage element. The final determination is ultimately a matter for the Commissioners.

Conclusion:

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

The Meeting concluded at 11:55am.



03/02/20

Stephen Rhys Thomas

Assistant Director of Planning