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Innealtóireacht agus Mórhionscadail,
Aon Lárcheantar Aerfort Bhaile Átha Cliath,
Clochrán, Co. Bhaile Átha Cliath, K67 XF72, Éire
Fón +353 1 703 8000

Engineering and Major Projects,
One Dublin Airport Central, Dublin Airport,
Cloghran, Co. Dublin, K67 XF72, Ireland
Phone +353 1 703 8000

An Coimisiún Pleanála,
64 Marlborough Street,
Dublin 1,
D01 V902.

7th April 2026

AN COIMISIÚN PLEANÁLA	
LDG-	087281-26
ACP-	
09 APR 2026	
Fee: €	4,500 card
Time:	3:06 By: Hail

Re: Application for pre-planning consultation in accordance with section 182A of the Planning & Development Act 2000, as amended.

Site Location: Boyhill 110 kV/38kV & 110 kV/MV Substation in the townland of Boyhill, County Galway.

Prospective Developer: ESB Networks DAC (ESBN).

Dear Sir/Madam,

1. Introduction

The ESB is seeking confirmation from An Coimisiún Pleanála (ACP) as to whether a proposed development constitutes Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) in accordance with Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) [hereafter, referred to as the PDA].

To facilitate that determination, please find below a description of the proposed development, accompanied by appropriate drawings.

The statutory fee of €4,500 has been paid by way of credit card accompanying this submission.

2. Required Information

As per the *Guidelines for Applicants* published on the ACP website, please note the following:

- The **prospective applicant** is ESB Networks DAC, Three Gateway, East Wall Road, Dublin 3, D03 R583, Ireland.
- The **ESB Contact**, who should receive all correspondence in relation to this submission is – *Janette McDonald, Networks Planning and Environmental Team Leader, ESB Engineering and Major Projects, 6 Eastgate Ave, Castlevue, Little Island, Co. Cork, T45 YW71, Ph. 086 0840492 or email janette.mcdonald@esb.ie.*



- A **general description** of the nature and scale of the proposed development, including drawings are provided in Section 3 below.
- The **address of the proposed development** and a brief description of the site and surrounding area is provided in Section 3 below.
- A **site location map and site layout maps** are attached.
- The **planning authority** in whose functional area the site is situated is **Galway County Council (GCC)**.
- It is considered that the proposed development falls within the scope of **Section 182A of the PDA**. A **statement** is included as to why the prospective applicant considers the proposed development should be regarded as SID, in accordance with the criteria set out in section 182A of the PDA.
- The **attached drawings** which show preliminary details of the proposed development, are as follows:
 - **PE492-D321-005-001-001 SITE LOCATION MAP**
 - **PE492-D321-005-002-001 SITE LAYOUT**
 - **PE492-D321-005-003-001 PROPOSED GRID CONNECTION**

3. The Proposed Development

3.1 Location of Proposed Development

The proposed development involves the installation of a new 110/38 kV & 110 kV/MV station at a site located approximately 2 km from the centre of Athenry, County Galway – Refer to **Figure 1 Site Location Map**.

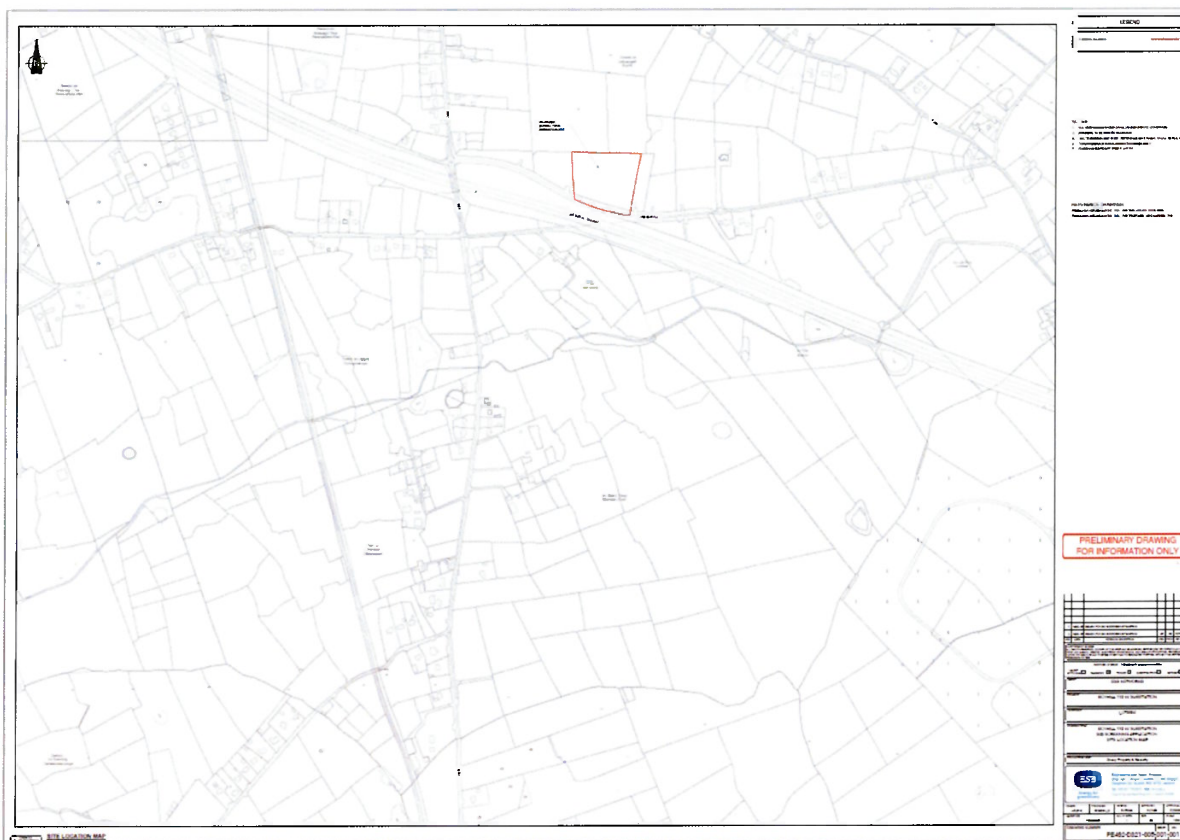


Figure 1 Site Location Map

The proposed substation site is surrounded by agricultural lands to the north, east and west, with the L7159 and then the M6 forming the southern boundary of the site. The site will be accessed from the L7159.

3.2 Description of Proposed Development

The proposed development is at a preliminary design stage and design elements of it are likely to change but the general technical requirements for the project which will remain unchanged – Refer to **Figure 2 Site Layout Plan**.

The proposed development constitutes the provision of a new 110 / 38 kV & 110 kV / MV Gas Insulated Switchgear (GIS) electrical substation and will include the following elements:

Construction of:

- i. A new substation compound (c. 8,370 sqm.) with 2.6 m high palisade fence;

- ii. A 110 kV GIS building with 8 x 110 kV bays;
- iii. A 38 kV / MV GIS Building with 12 x 38 kV bays and 16 x MV bays.
- iv. Three 110 / 38 kV 63 MVA transformers in transformer bays with associated electrical equipment.
- v. Two 110 kV / MV 31.5 MVA transformers in transformer bays with associated electrical equipment;
- vi. Three Arc-Suppression Coils with associated electrical equipment;
- vii. A steel lattice telecommunications mast of c.36m in height,
- viii. Associated and ancillary outdoor electrical equipment and other apparatus, including installation of underground cables;
- ix. All associated site development works including provision of access roads, lighting, boundary walls with site services including drainage and all other works.



Figure 2 Site Layout Plan

It is proposed that the substation will loop into the existing Cashla - Shannonbridge - Somerset 110 kV overhead line which is located approximately 1.25 km south of the proposed substation.

An indicative grid connection route is shown on drawing PE492-D321-005-003-001. The grid connection will consist of 110 kV underground cables installed between the proposed substation and the existing 110 kV overhead line. Two new Line-Cable Interface masts (LCIMs) will be constructed along the existing overhead line to facilitate the connection of the underground cable to the overhead line. An existing section of the overhead line will be removed following construction of the new LCIMs.



The final grid connection route and methodology will be dependent on a connection agreement with the transmission system operator (TSO), route analysis and planning and environmental assessments.

The grid connection works will be included in the SID application where they do not fall within the relevant planning exemptions.

The substation will be a combined Transmission and Distribution substation with the 110 kV circuits feeding the substation, the 110 kV GIS building and 110 kV transformers forming part of the 110 kV Transmission Network operated by Eirgrid as the Transmission System Operator (TSO). The 38 kV & MV electrical equipment will be part of the Distribution Network operated by ESB Networks as the Distribution System Operator (DSO).

The combined substation will be owned by ESB Networks as the Transmission Asset Owner (TAO) and the Distribution Asset Owner (DAO).

A draft proposed connection route is shown in Figures 3 & 4.

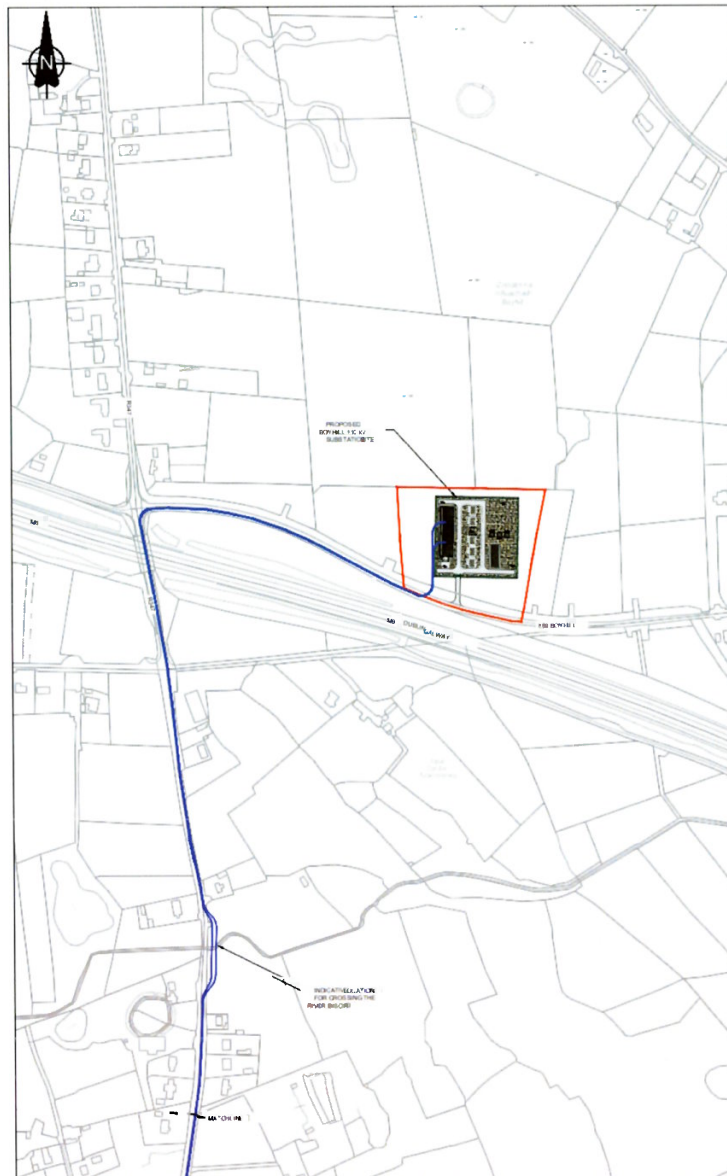


Figure 3 Connection Route (Map 1)

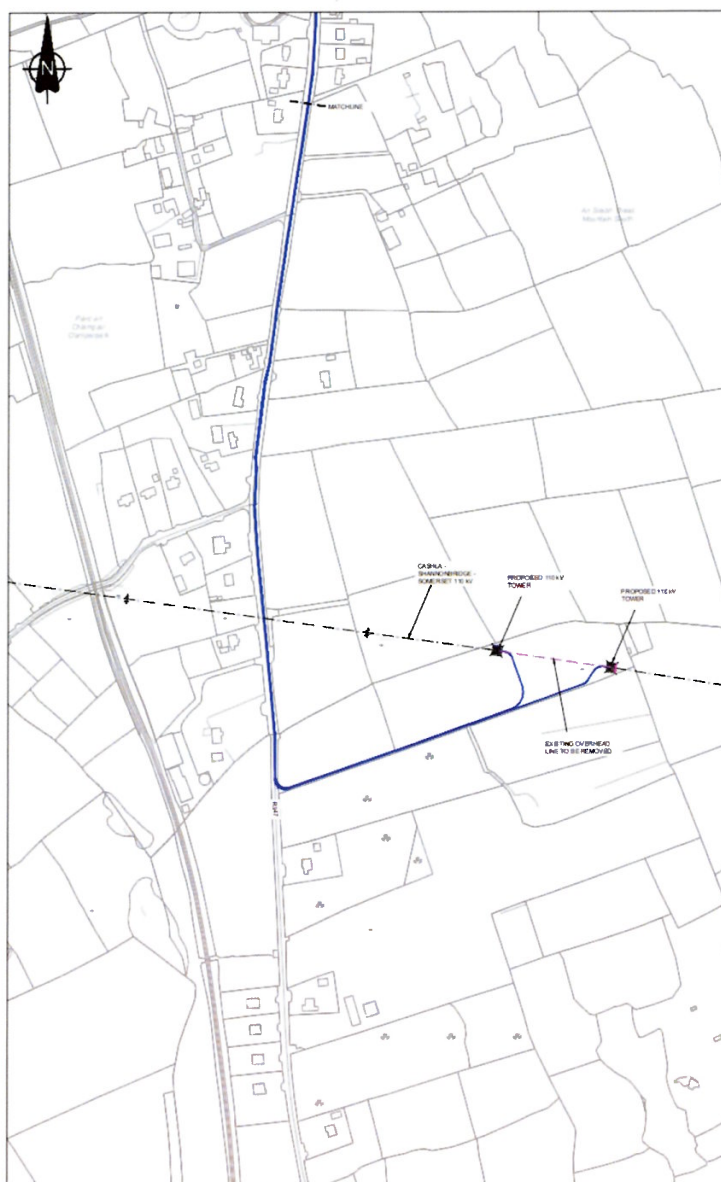


Figure 4 Connection Route (Map 2)

3.3 Purpose of the Proposed Development

In their Networks for Net Zero strategy, ESB Networks has committed to delivering a net zero ready electricity distribution network by 2040 to enable Ireland to achieve its legally binding net zero target by 2050. ESN has published its Ten-Year Distribution Network Development Plan ([DNDP](#)) to provide information on the existing distribution network capacity, assess future capacity to accommodate customer needs and identify areas of the distribution network that requires investment to provide the necessary capacity and security supply across the distribution grid.

As outlined in the DNDP, significant investment is required over the next decade to build the distribution capacity to enable:

- Connection of the renewable generation to our network that will generate the clean electricity.
- Increase in demand associated with significant population growth, new housing developments, economic growth, as well as a significant increase in demand due to electrification of heat, transport and industry.

Forecasted distribution system peak demand for Galway area is estimated at between 3.0 – 4.7 % for the period 2025-2030.

Following a network assessment and investment appraisal, ESBN have determined that a new 110 / 38 kV & 110 kV / MV distribution substation is required in the East Galway area to provide network reinforcement and increased capacity.

East Galway is currently served by two 110 kV substations; Cashla and Somerset, and three 38kV substations in Athenry, Oranmore and Loughrea. Athenry and Loughrea 38kV substations are nearing capacity and do not have sufficient capacity to cater for the forecasted load growth.

There are a number of drivers for this new 110 / 38 kV & 110 kV / MV station, all of which will contribute to additional capacity and improvements in the security of supply for the area these include:

- Provide additional capacity required for future load demands and improving security of supply to the greater Athenry area. This has multiple benefits for the wider area in terms of additional capacity for future industrial, commercial and residential connections and improving the local networks ability to deal with both fault (unplanned) and maintenance (planned) outages.
- The proposed substation will resolve the overloading issues at the existing Athenry and Loughrea substations by offloading existing MV loads to the new substation. This will address and improve the Load Indices ranks of the two substations which will contribute to improvement of Load Index ranks which is tracked by CRU targets.
- The Galway County Development Plan (2022-2028) and the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) identify Athenry as an area of strategic economic potential, in particular the Oranmore – Athenry Strategic Economic Corridor. Future industrial, commercial and enterprise developments will be served by the additional capacity provided by the proposed development including the further development of IDA business parks in both Athenry and Oranmore.
- Large customer connection request for a pharmaceutical manufacturing facility located in Athenry.
- Provide capacity for future electrification of motorway services stations including new EV/HGV charging facilities to comply with EU Alternative Fuels Infrastructure regulations. Athenry is located at a key motorway junction of the M6 and M18.
- Provide capacity in the wider region for the electrification of heat and transport as per Government targets.

Figure 5 shows the location of the proposed substation in the context of the surrounding 110 kV transmission network (source: [ESBN DNDP Part 2](#)).

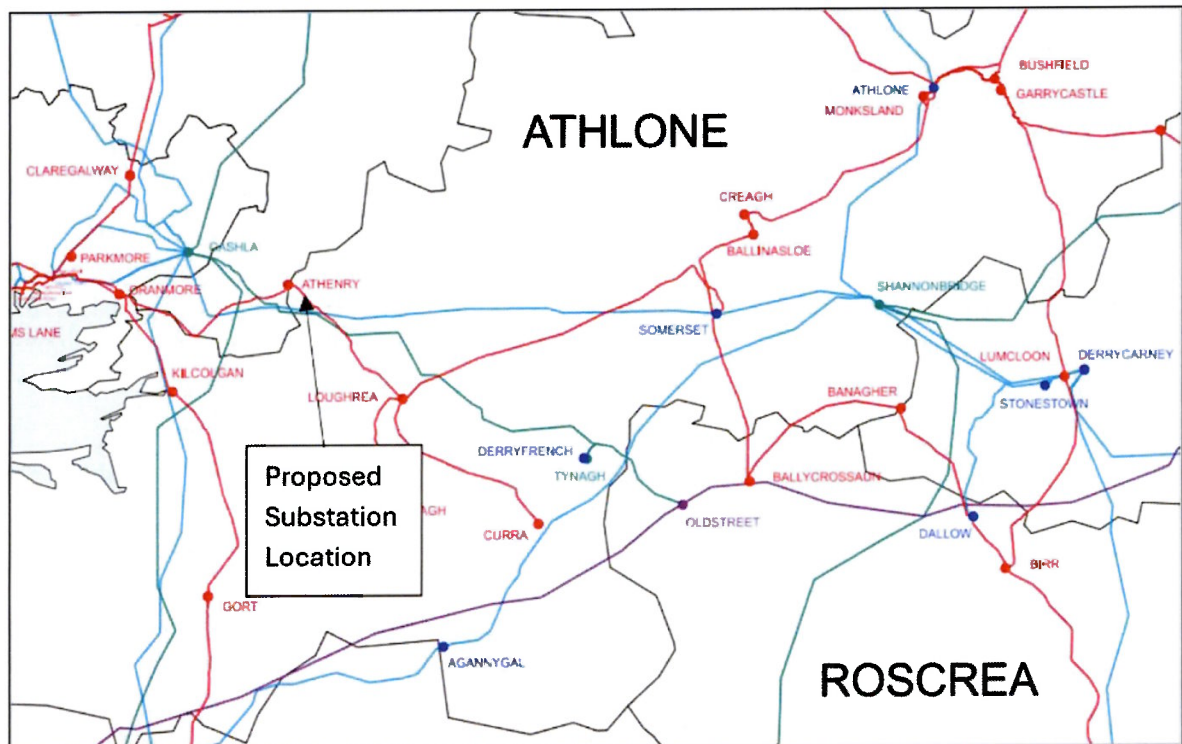


Figure 5 Electrical Network in Surrounding Area

4. Legislative Basis for a Determination by the Board

4.1 Legislation

Section 182A (1) of the PDA, as amended, provides that where a person, (hereafter referred to as the 'undertaker') intends to carry out development comprising or for the purposes of electricity transmission, (hereafter referred to in this section and section 182B as 'proposed development'), the undertaker shall prepare, or cause to be prepared, an application for approval of development under section 182B and shall apply to the Board for such approval accordingly.

Subsection 9 states that 'transmission' in relation to electricity, shall be construed in accordance with section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999 but, for the purposes of this section, the foregoing expression, in relation to electricity, shall also be construed as meaning the transport of electricity by means of:

- (a) a high voltage line where the voltage would be 110 kilovolts or more,
- (b) an interconnector, whether ownership of the interconnector will be vested in the undertaker or not.

Under Section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999 the following definitions are relevant:

- 'Transmission' is defined as: *"The transport of electricity by means of a transmission system, that is to say a system which consists, wholly or mainly, of high voltage lines and electric plant and which is used for conveying electricity from a generating station to a substation, from one generating station to another, from one substation to another or to or from any interconnector or to final customers but shall not include any such lines which the Board may, from time to time, with the approval of the Commission, specify as being part of the distribution system but shall include any interconnector owned by the Board"*.
- 'Distribution' is defined as: *"The transport of electricity by means of a distribution system, that is to say, a system which consists of electric lines, electric plant, transformers and switch gear and which is used for conveying electricity to final customers"*.
- 'Electric plant' is defined as: *"Any plant, apparatus or appliance used for, or for the purposes connected with, the generation, transmission, distribution or supply of electricity other than – (a) An electric line; (b) A meter used for ascertaining the quantity of electricity supplied to any; c) premises, or; d) (c)an electrical appliance under the control of the consumer"*.

4.2 Legislation Assessment

The proposed development comprises a new 110 kV/38 kV & 110 kV/MV electricity substation, located in the townland of Boyhill, County Galway looped into the existing Cashla - Shannonbridge - Somerset 110 kV overhead line. The primary purpose and technical design of the substation is to add capacity and improve distribution security of supply for the surrounding area.

Section 182A (9) of the PDA sets a threshold of 110 kV for a high voltage electricity transmission line to be considered strategic infrastructure. No threshold is set in respect of a substation.

The proposed substation constitutes 'electrical plant' as defined under section 4.1 above, as it will be used to distribute electricity. It falls within the definition of 'distribution' as its primary purpose is to convey electricity to final customers.

In deciding whether the proposed 110 kV/38kV & 110 kV/MV substation and ancillary works and equipment are or are not strategic infrastructure development, it should be noted that Section 2 of the PDA provides interpretations except where the context requires otherwise. Strategic infrastructure development means *inter alia* (d) any proposed development referred to in Section 182A(1). Under this Section, an undertaker shall apply to the Board for approval of a development comprising or for the purposes of energy transmission. Section 182A(9) states that 'transmission' shall be construed in accordance with Section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999 and shall also be construed as meaning *inter alia* the transport of electricity by means of a high voltage line where the voltage would be 110 kV or more.

Transmission shall also be construed in accordance with Section 2(1) of the Electricity Regulation Act, 1999 as *"the transport of electricity by means of a transmission system, that is to say a system which consists, wholly or mainly, of high voltage lines and electric plant and which is used for conveying electricity from a generating station to a substation, from one generating station to another, or to or from any interconnector or to final customers but shall not include any such lines which the Board may, from time to time, with the approval of the Commission, specify as being part of the distribution system but shall include any interconnector owned by the Board."* In this legislation, the Board refers to the Electricity Supply Board and the Commission refers to the Commission for Electricity Regulation.

ESB can confirm that whilst it is primarily a DSO substation, it has been specifically designed as a combined transmission and distribution substation (which is not the case for all DSO substations), the proposed development will therefore form part of the transmission infrastructure.

There is no threshold under Section 182A(9) of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 (as amended) in respect of a substation. This section explicitly refers to high voltage lines of 110 kV or more.

The proposed 110 kV/38kV & 110 kV/MV station will be looped into the existing Cashla - Shannonbridge - Somerset 110 kV 110 kV overhead line, thereby creating a new node on the transmission system.

Numerous similar projects involving the creation of a new node on the transmission system, have been determined by the ACP in the past to constitute SID.

Having regard to the precedent set by ACP in similar cases, it is submitted that the proposed development should be considered in a similar regard.

As the proposed station will form a node on the transmission network, it would, taken together with associated 110kV overhead line works and underground cabling, likely constitute strategic infrastructure. As such, the proposed development is considered to fall under section 182A of the PDA and deemed to be SID, necessitating an application direct to ACP.

The Board's determination in this regard is being sought to confirm the above.



5. Conclusion

I trust this information will allow ACP to screen the proposed development in accordance with the provisions of section 182A of the PDA. If you have any queries and need an electronic copy of this submission, please contact me on janette.mcdonald@esb.ie or 086 0840492.

Yours sincerely,

Janette McDonald

Networks Civil & Environmental Engineering
Planning and Environmental Team Leader

ATTACHMENTS

- PE492-D321-005-001-000 SITE LOCATION MAP
- PE492-D321-005-002-00 SITE LAYOUT
- PE492-D321-005-003-000 PROPOSED GRID CONNECTION