

Galetech Energy Services,
Clondargan,
Stradone,
Co. Cavan,
H12 NV06

Date: 13th July 2020

Re: Pre-Application Scoping Request: Proposed Wind Farm Development, Bracklyn, Co. Westmeath.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Further to your correspondence dated the 25th March 2020, please find below comments in relation to the pre-application scoping request with regard to a proposed windfarm development at Bracklyn, Co. Westmeath.

Reference is made in Section 2.1.2 of the submission to the Draft "*Guidelines on the Information to be contained within an EIAR*" dated August 2017. Please note that these draft guidelines were superseded by the "*Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment*" published in August 2018 and due regard must be had to these adopted guidelines when preparing the EIAR for the proposed development. The EIAR must include the expected effects arising from the vulnerability of the project to risks of major accidents and/or disasters that are relevant to the project. Where appropriate, the description of expected significant effects should include details of the preparedness for and proposed response to such emergencies.

Statutory Planning Context

The status of existing developments under the Planning Acts and the legal implications of same shall be considered. Regard shall be given to relevant policy objectives contained in both the Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 and the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2021-2027, in particular policy objectives in relation to wind energy, climate, biodiversity, rural economy, tourism and the protection of environmental assets. Furthermore, the contents of both the Westmeath County Heritage Plan 2018-2023 and the Westmeath Biodiversity Action Plan 2014-2020, and any revisions made thereto, should be given due consideration. The Applicant shall also have regard to both the "Wind Energy Development Guidelines" (2006) and the "Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines" (December 2019) in the preparation of the EIAR.

Environmental Considerations

The EIAR shall take account of all ecological sensitivities and of the likely environmental effects of the proposed project on the receiving environment. All in combination and cumulative effects of development within the zone of influence of the proposal are to be considered together with the following:

The River Boyne And River Blackwater Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Area (SPA) are located in close proximity to the subject site. Impacts on the conservation objectives for designated habitats such as river lamprey, salmon, otter and kingfisher require consideration and analysis. Impacts on water quality including construction impacts need to be assessed given water quality is one of the factors influencing vegetation and input of nutrients.

The application site is surrounded by peatlands. Impacts of the proposed development on the hydrology of adjoining peatlands should be given due consideration in the EIAR.

Impacts of infrastructure provision (e.g. roads, power supply) on nature conservation objectives of designated habitats should be assessed.

Impacts of the proposed development (including existing and future operations) on the local and regional road networks including haul routes, volume of traffic, delivery of the turbines etc. should be included in the EIAR.

Impacts resulting from emissions connected with construction traffic and dust generated from disturbed ground during dry periods is another important consideration.

The EIAR should include a Decommissioning and Restoration Plan which provides for the reinstatement of the temporary set-down areas at each turbine.

Natural & Built Heritage

You are advised to have regard to the protected ringfort WM014-019 which is located approximately 80m from the application site and must be protected at all times.

In relation to biodiversity, it is noted from the submitted documentation that several surveys have been undertaken and that early stage scoping has identified a series of potential significant likely effects of the proposed development. The EIAR should include the results of these surveys and provide detail in relation to all potential impacts of the proposal on birds, mammals and associated habitats. Where significant adverse effects are identified associated with the implementation of the proposed development, there should be a clear link with relevant and appropriate mitigation measure(s). The emphasis should, in the first instance, be on avoidance of significant adverse effects.

Impacts on birds/mammals should be assessed in terms of the construction, operational and decommissioning phase of the proposed development.

In relation to landscape, consideration should be had to the Protected Views outlined in the Draft County Westmeath Development Plan 2021-2027, which have been subsequently updated since the adoption of the County Westmeath Development Plan 2014-2020. Applicant is also advised to reference the Landscape Character Assessment outlined in Section 13.6 of the Draft Westmeath County Development Plan 2014-2020 with regard to the suitability of the landscape to absorb the proposed development.

The Cultural Heritage Section should refer to Architectural Heritage features included in the Record of Protected Structures and any other architectural heritage features of merit, such as those included in the National Inventory of Architectural Heritage (NIAH).

Due consideration should be given to the potential impact on subsurface archaeological material during geotechnical investigations (pre-construction) and at construction phase.

Grid Connection

Whilst it is noted that the exact connection to the national grid has not been determined at this stage, it is imperative that assessment of the routing of all three potential connections to the national grid is included in the EIAR as the windfarm and connection to the grid should be assessed collectively to avoid project splitting.

Reasonable Alternatives

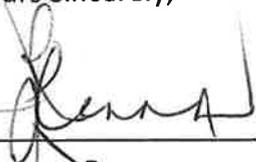
A detailed review of all reasonable alternatives considered for the proposed development shall be undertaken and incorporated into the EIAR to demonstrate that the proposed development represents the optimum form and siting for the project. The assessment will also include the main reasons for selecting the chosen option and shall include a comparison of the environmental effects of the reasonable alternatives.

Miscellaneous

The EIAR should include an analysis of the socio-economic impacts of the proposal including impacts on tourism and tourism potential. Consideration should be given to inclusion of proposals for community dividend/gain in the document. Impacts on residential amenity should be discussed within the section on Population & Human Health.

We respectfully request that you take into consideration the comments listed above together with the advice from the TII, HSE and the Irish Aviation Authority as attached, in the preparation of the EIAR.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eamonn Brennan', written over a horizontal line.

Eamonn Brennan,
Administrative Officer,
Planning Department,
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Galetech Energy Services,
Clondargan,
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H12 NV06

Date: 16th April 2020

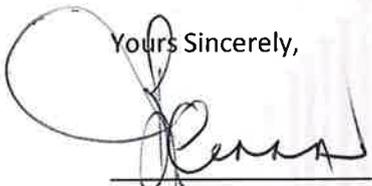
Re: Pre-Application Scoping Request: Proposed Wind Farm Development, Bracklyn, Co. Westmeath.

Dear Sir/Madam,

With reference to your recent correspondence dated 25th March last, requested in accordance with Section 173 (2) (a) (ii) of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended, I wish to advise that further to order dated 29/3/20 in the context of the most up-to-date public health advice during this COVID-19 Emergency, the Government has introduced a suspension of all time periods associated with statutory processes under the Planning and Development Acts. Please note that the period of time for assessments required under EIA, SEA and Habitats Directive are also extended by the period covered by the Section 251A Order, as specific time limits are set out in national (planning) legislation.

In this regard, you are advised that time afforded to the Planning Authority to respond to your Scoping request has been extended by 23 days, or until such further time as determined by the Minister for Housing Planning and Local Government (further details will be provided in the event of a further extension of the public consultation period). The response to your Scoping request will therefore issue on May 29th.

Yours Sincerely,



Eamonn Brennan,
Administrative Officer,
Planning Department,
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E-Mail: ebrennan@westmeathcoco.ie

14 MAY 2020

Galetech Energy Services,
Clondargan,
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H12 NV06

Date: 8th May 2020

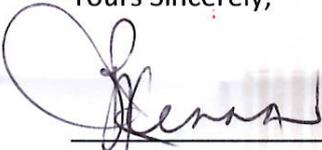
Re: Pre-Application Scoping Request: Proposed Wind Farm Development, Bracklyn, Co. Westmeath.

Dear Sir/Madam,

Further to previous correspondence dated 16th April 2020, I wish to advise that in the context of the most up-to-date public health advice during this COVID-19 Emergency, the Government has introduced a further suspension of all time periods associated with statutory processes under the Planning and Development Acts, until the 30th June 2020.

Please note that the Planning Authority has consulted with the relevant Prescribed Bodies and has requested comments/observations on your Scoping Submission by the 30th June 2020. Thereafter the Planning Authority has three weeks to collate the information and will furnish a response to you by the 21st July 2020.

Yours Sincerely,



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