

SSE Tarbert Next Generation Power Station

Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR)
Volume I
Chapter 06 Consultations

SSE Generation Ireland Limited

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Prepared for:

SSE Generation Ireland Limited

Prepared by:

AECOM Ireland Limited
4th Floor
Adelphi Plaza
Georges Street Upper
Dun Laoghaire
Co. Dublin A96 T927
Ireland

T: +353 1 238 3100
aecom.com

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Table of Contents

6.	Consultations	6-1
6.1	Introduction	6-1
6.2	Strategic Infrastructure Development Pre-Application Consultation	6-1
6.3	References	6-5

Appendices (EIAR Volume II)

Appendix 6A: Pre Application Submission

Appendix 6B: Pre Application Response

Appendix 6C: Tarbert Next Generation Power Station Banners

Appendix 6D: Tarbert Next Generation Power Station Newsletter

Appendix 6E: Tarbert Next Generation Power Station Newspaper Advertisements and Media Coverage

Appendix 6F: Tarbert Next Generation Power Station Public Consultation

Appendix 6G: Tarbert Next Generation Power Station Feedback Form

6. Consultations

6.1 Introduction

This chapter details of the consultation undertaken prior to submission of the planning application and Environmental Impact Assessment Report ('EIAR') in relation to the Proposed Development.

Consultation with relevant statutory and non-statutory bodies forms an important part of the EIA process. The 2022 EPA Guidelines '*Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*' confirms that '*Consultation is a key element of each stage of the EIA process*'. *The requirement for consultation is included in the definition of EIA in the Directive and there are procedures for statutory consultation at various stages in the EIA process*¹.

6.2 Strategic Infrastructure Development Pre-Application Consultation

The Strategic Infrastructure Development ('SID') provisions in the Planning and Development Act 2000 (hereby known as "the Act" in this document), as amended, have been adhered to in making this application with a formal Pre-Application Consultation (refer to Appendix 6A, EIAR Volume II) carried out between the Applicant and An Bord Pleanála ('ABP') prior to the finalisation and submission of this application (Reference 316229-23).

A pre-application consultation request was submitted to ABP on the 11 of April 2023 to commence pre-application consultation and the request provided an overview of the Proposed Development including:

- The Proposed Development's heat output will be 300MW or more. As the Proposed Development comprises an industrial installation for carrying gas, steam or hot water with a potential heat output of 300MW or more, it constitutes 'Seventh Schedule' development under the Act (as amended).
- It is considered that Proposed Development constitutes SID under the terms of Section 37A(2)(a) of the Act as it is of strategic economic importance to the State and the region in which it is situated.
- Furthermore, with reference to Section 37A(2)(b) of the Act, it was highlighted that the Proposed Development - by helping to maintain security of supply and facilitating the integration of more renewable generation into the electricity network - would contribute significantly to the fulfilment of national and regional objectives to deliver a "secure and reliable electricity network".

Following the submission of the request, a meeting was held with the representatives from the Applicant, their consultants and ABP on the 28 of August 2023. The meeting record is included in Appendix 6B (refer to EIAR Volume II).

¹ EPA (2022). *Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*.

During this meeting a presentation was delivered to ABP representatives addressing the need for the Proposed Development, the planning history of the Proposed Development Site, alternatives considered and the issues pertaining to the development in terms of planning policy and potential environmental impacts, as well as the Applicant's opinion as to the SID status of the Proposed Development (i.e., that it does constitute SID).

The main points discussed during the meeting included:

- Introduction to the project;
- Site Details;
- Project Background;
- Proposed Development;
- Planning Context;
- EIAR and AA; and.
- Stakeholder Engagement

The Board concluded (refer to Appendix 6B, EIAR Volume III), on the 16 October 2023, that under Section 37B(4)(a), the Board was of the opinion that the Proposed Development is within the scope of paragraphs 37A(2)(a) and (b) of the Act:

“Accordingly, the Board has decided that the proposed development would be strategic infrastructure within the meaning of section 37A of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended. Any application for permission for the proposed development must, therefore, be made directly to An Bord Pleanála under section 37E of the Act”.

In addition, an information sharing session was held with officials from Kerry County Council (KCC), AECOM (Environmental team), Gravis Planning and SSE on 03 July 2023. The briefing outlined an overview of the Proposed Development and project programme.

6.2.1 Public Consultation

6.2.1.1 Consultation Methods

Details of the consultation methods are presented in the SSE Community Consultation Report, refer to EIAR Volume II Appendix 6F.

6.2.1.2 Community Consultation Events

An SSE Thermal led public consultation was held between 10 July and 02 August 2023 to provide members of the public with information on the Proposed Development in advance of the submission of the planning application and enabled them to express their own ideas, allowing them to take an active role in developing the proposals through providing feedback.

Prior to the launch of the public consultation, the dedicated Community Liaison Officer for the project went door-to-door on 28 April 2023 to households in close proximity to the existing Tarbert Power HFO Station in addition to the town of Tarbert to introduce himself and highlight the forthcoming consultation related to the Proposed Development, alongside providing an update on the TEG project.

On the week commencing 03 July 2023 a newsletter was circulated to households in close proximity to the existing Tarbert HFO Power Station, the town of Tarbert and the surrounding area which provided

an overview of the Proposed Development alongside advertising in-person and online consultation activities. A copy of the newsletter was provided to local political stakeholders in advance of its circulation. Also, on the week commencing 03 July a press release providing an overview of the Proposed Development and consultation activities was issued to local media publications either side of the Kerry-Limerick border. In addition to the aforementioned press release issued on week commencing 03 July, paid advertising was taken out with The Kerryman, Kerry's Eye and The Weekly Observer newspapers on week commencing 10 July to further promote in-person and online consultation activities. The public consultation took the form an online virtual consultation room and in-person staffed exhibitions. Both the online virtual consultation room and in-person events presented plans and project information for the Proposed Development on 'roll-up' banners. The virtual consultation room was launched on 10 July, while in-person events were held on 18 and 19 July 2023 as follows:

- Tarbert Community Centre (1730 – 2100hrs on 18 July 2023),
- Listowel Arms Hotel (1730 – 2100hrs on 19 July 2023).

Details on the Proposed Development presented online and at the in-person events related to:

- An overview of the Proposed Development
- Site Location
- Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) fuel and it's benefits
- Overview of how an Open Cycle Gas Turbine Works
- Key Local Issues
- Just Transition
- Next Steps for the Proposed Development
- Other SSE Developments in the wider Tarbert area

Key members of the project team from SSE, Gravis Planning and AECOM were present to assist attendees, talk through the proposals and respond to questions or issues raised. Attendees included members of the local community, elected representatives, local employees and those with an interest in the surrounding environment. Feedback Forms were available to enable those who attended the events to express their viewpoints about different aspects of the Proposed Development. The Feedback Forms included the contact details of the Community Liaison Officer to enable individuals to send further comments if desired. A Feedback Form mechanism was also provided for the online virtual consultation room.

The virtual consultation room closed on 02 August, marking the end of the SSE Thermal led community consultation.

6.2.2 SID Statutory Consultation and Public Notices

In accordance with the requirements of ABP and Article 214 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001- 2023 and section 37E(3) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended,) the applicant has notified the public of this application by means of:

- **Site Notices:** Site notices have been erected on the relevant lands. The location of these notices are shown on the submitted planning application drawings. A copy of the notice is included in the planning application pack.
- **Newspaper Notices:** Newspaper notices have been published in two newspapers in circulation in the area. A copy of the newspaper notice is included in the application pack.

In addition, an application website (www.ssetarbertnextgen.com) has been set up, which is referenced in the public notices and contains a full set of the submitted application documents for ease of inspection by members of the public.

6.2.3 Planning Application Stage

As noted above, the planning application is made under Section 37E of the Act (as amended).

The planning application is accompanied by a Planning Statement, an EIAR and an Appropriate Assessment (AA) Screening and Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

The Proposed Development planning application documents will be available electronically to interested parties on the EIA Portal, and on ABP application website.

6.3 References

Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government (DHPLG) (2018). Guidelines for Planning Authorities and An Bord Pleanála on carrying out Environmental Impact Assessment.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) (2022). Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports.

European Commission (EC) (2013). Guidance on Integrating Climate Change and Biodiversity into Environmental Impact Assessment.

European Commission (EC) (2015). Interpretation of definitions of project categories of Annex I and II of the EIA Directive.

European Commission (EC) (2017a). Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects - Guidance on EIA Scoping.

European Commission (EC) (2017b). Environmental Impact Assessment of Projects, Guidance on the preparation of Environmental Impact Assessment Reports.

European Union (EU) (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018 (S.I. No. 298 of 2018).

