

Appendix 6E

Derrygreenagh Power Community Engagement Report

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Bord na Móna

Derrygreenagh Power Community Engagement Report

Dated: February 2024

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Part 1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This Report has been prepared to record the consultation carried out with the local community in respect of the proposed Derrygreenagh Power development. Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. has carried out a detailed consultation process in relation to the Proposed Development with local stakeholders, members of the public, residents, and community groups. The objective of the consultations was to ensure that the views and concerns of all were considered as part of the project design and Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process.

This Report is informed by the EPA Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports (2022) which state that:

“While it is generally best to commence pre-application consultation as early as possible, it is not obligatory during the preparation of an EIAR. The extent to which it is carried out is decided by the developer and their team on a case-by-case basis.....Consultation by a developer with the local population can be helpful in identifying potentially significant concerns and issues.”

This report outlines the consultation and community engagement initiatives undertaken by Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. prior to the submission of the planning application. It also outlines the main issues identified during this process, how the final proposal reflects community consultation and the steps taken to ensure that the Proposed Development will be of enduring economic benefit to the communities concerned.

For the purposes of community consultation and for ease of reference within consultation material, the wider landbank in which the Proposed Development is located has been referred to as the Bord na Móna Energy Park. The Bord na Móna Energy Park refers to a landbank identified for the potential future development of energy generation projects within a subset of the Derrygreenagh Bog Group, namely the Derryhinch, Drumman, Derryarkin and Ballybeg Bogs in the counties of Meath, Westmeath and Offaly. The Proposed Development (i.e. the Power Plant Area and Electricity Grid Connection) is located within the Bord na Móna Energy Park landbank (with the exception of agricultural land for the 400kV substation and associated sections of electricity and cable line connections). The Proposed Derrygreenagh Power Development is entirely within County Offaly.

Part 2 Consultation with the Local Community

2.1 Notification of Local Representatives

Prior to engagement with the local community Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. informed Offaly County Councillors for the Municipal District of Edenderry and Westmeath County Councillors for the Municipal District of Mullingar / Kinnegad of the company's intention to develop a gas power plant on Bord na Móna lands, by way of electronic communication in February 2023. Councillors were informed on the location of the Proposed Development, which is located off the R400 road between the villages of Rochfortbridge in County Westmeath and Rhode in County Offaly and were also informed that the Proposed Development will commonly be referred to as 'Derrygreenagh Power'. As part of this communication, the Councillors for the above-mentioned Municipal Districts were invited to attend an initial briefing session on the 28th of March 2023 in Rhode Parish Hall, Co. Offaly. The purpose of this briefing session was to provide them with information on the Proposed Development in advance of the planned Community Information Sessions.

As part of this communication in Spring 2023, as described above, the local Councillors were provided with a Project Information pack containing:

- Project Information Booklet,
- A2 Double sided Map,
- Project Information Letter and
- a Feedback Questionnaire.

In addition to informing the Councillors about the Proposed Development, relevant TDs representing the Dáil Éireann Constituency of Laois/Offaly and Longford/Westmeath were also sent an electronic communication in February 2023 to provide them with information on the Proposed Development and invite them to attend a briefing session prior to the commencement of the Community Engagement Sessions mentioned above.

In January 2024, by way of electronic communication, Councillors for the above-mentioned Municipal Districts and the relevant TDs representing the Dáil Éireann Constituency of Laois/Offaly and Longford/Westmeath were issued a copy of the final layout for the proposed development.

2.2 Notification of Local Community

To inform local Residents about the Proposed Development, the project's Community Liaison Officer (CLO) distributed a Spring 2023 Project Information Pack regarding the Proposed Development to households within a minimum of 1.5km distance from the Derryhinch, Drumman, Derryarkin and Ballybeg Bogs. The Community Liaison Officer visited 783 homes between 27th February and 16th March 2023. The Spring 2023 information pack distributed to each household consisted of:

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- A project introductory letter regarding the Proposed Development including details of the planned Community Information Sessions;
- Project Information Booklet containing contact details for the Project's CLO for any follow up queries or concerns;
- An A2 single sided map outlining the Study Area for the Derrygreenagh Power Development;
- A feedback sheet to submit any comments/suggestions or identify other people/groups who should be included on the circulation list for project updates. Communications Opt-in Form – to sign up for project updates;
- A freepost envelope.

2.3 Community Information Sessions

Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. organised a series of Community Information Sessions to be held in the villages closest to the Proposed Development namely, Croghan, Rhode and Rochfortbridge. The Community Information Sessions were held between 28th and 30th March 2023 from 5 - 9pm each day, in the following venues:

- 28th March 2023: Rhode Parish Hall
- 29th March 2023: Rochfortbridge, St. Joseph's Parish Hall
- 30th March 2023: Croghan Community Centre



2.3.1 Print Advertisement of Community Information Sessions

Prior to the Community Information Sessions events, details of the Sessions were advertised in four local papers, namely the Westmeath Independent, Midland Tribune, Offaly Independent and Tullamore Tribune commencing week beginning the 20th of March 2023.

2.3.2 Broadcast Advertisement of Community Information Sessions

Details of the Community Engagement Sessions were broadcast on local radio (Midlands 103) four times daily from the 23-28th March 2023 to inform the local community of the dates, times, and venues of the Sessions.

2.3.3 Attendance and Feedback

Over the three days, approximately 160 people attended the Community Information Sessions. Attendees were provided with an A2 map of the location of the Proposed Development and an

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information booklet. At the sessions, there were a series of information panels on display that contained details on the following:



Members of the public were invited to submit comments, concerns, and opinions regarding the Proposed Development through a feedback form at the Sessions. The main queries raised and recorded by Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. staff present at the sessions were:

| Community Benefit | Employment | Grid Connectivity |
|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Roads/Local Infrastructure | Gas connectivity | Visual Impact |
| Substation Location | Cumulative Impact | Proximity to Houses |
| Site Boundary | Noise | Amenity |

In respect of the Feedback questionnaires which were available in the Project Information Pack, at the Community Information Sessions and accessible online through the Project website, 29 responses were recorded. The main issues/concerns raised were broadly similar to those mentioned above that were raised at the Community Information Sessions. Since 27th February 2023 34 people signed up for the project mailing list.

2.4 Publication of Final Development Layout

In January and February 2024, the project’s Community Liaison Officer delivered an updated layout for the proposed development on an A2 map to approximately 155 homes within the proximity of the proposed development. The map depicted the proposed substations, the proposed Power Plant Area,

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existing gas transmission pipeline, a gas connection corridor and supporting infrastructure for the proposed development.

2.5 Direct Correspondence and Meetings

As outlined in the preceding sections, the Community Engagement Team engaged with the local community on an ongoing basis throughout the pre-planning stage through Community Information Sessions, written communication with households and meetings with local representatives.

In addition to this, at the request of individuals, the Project Team also facilitated a small number of meetings with individual residents to discuss the Proposed Development and ideas / issues/ concerns they had in relation to the Proposed Development.

2.6 Dedicated Contact Details

As outlined in Section 2.2, in February 2023 Bord na Móna circulated a project information pack to residents. This Information pack also provided dedicated contact details for the Project Team including a dedicated phone number, email address and postal address. These channels have facilitated 76 enquiries about the Proposed Development.

2.7 Project Website

A dedicated Derrygreenagh Power webpage hosted at www.bnmenergypark.ie was launched in Spring 2023 and provided dedicated contact details for the project team, downloadable material relating to the Proposed Development, such as project information booklet, development layout map and feedback questionnaire.

2.8 Dedicated Community Liaison Officer

In February 2023, the project appointed a dedicated Community Liaison Officer (CLO) for the Proposed Development to ensure a continued 'on the ground' engagement presence with the local community. As the company's main point of contact for the local community, their role is to represent, communicate, consult and inform residents through regular updates via formal and informal meetings.

2.9 Engagement with Community Groups

As the Project Team did not have a database of community groups in the vicinity of the Proposed Development, the team liaised with Offaly Public Participation Network (PPN) to distribute the material to registered community groups in the area.

The following information was distributed to the PPN

- **Spring 2023:** Project Introductory email with advert outlining the times and dates of the three Community Engagement Sessions.

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- **Winter/Spring 2024:** the final Derrygreenagh Power Infrastructure Map with accompanying letter.

On each occasion contact details were also provided should any of the groups require additional information on the project or requested a meeting with the project team to discuss the Proposed Development.

Part 3 Community Input into Proposed Development

3.1. Substation Location

Based on feedback received from the public consultation sessions in Spring 2023, along with further desk-based and environmental surveys and engagement with Offaly County Council, the location of the proposed 400 kV substation was moved to a more suitable location.

3.2. Power Plant Area

The planning application includes the Power Plant Area, which already has the benefit of existing planning permission (ABP Ref.19.PA0011) for a c.600MW gas-fired power plant. This existing planning permission will expire in April 2025. The inclusion of the Power Plant Area allows for the Proposed Development to comply with best available modern technology for the Large Combustion Plant industry. The assessments of the Power Plant Area supporting the Proposed Development application are therefore up-to-date against modern legislative and environmental standards, which was expressed as a concern in feedback from Community Engagement in consideration of the extant planning permission.

Part 4 Enduring Economic Benefit

4.1. Enduring Economic Benefit

4.1.1 Short Term Economic Benefits

During the construction phase, it is estimated that there will be a requirement of an average 400 staff throughout construction (2025-2027), with approximately 750 staff at peak construction of the Power Plant area, and an additional peak of 120 staff numbers in construction of the Electricity Grid Connection. This will have a knock-on effect on the local economy through the supply of services to the workforce. While at a regional level additional employment will be created in the region through the supply of services and materials (such as stone and concrete) to the Proposed Development.

Additionally, the payment of a development contribution to Offaly County Council in respect of public infrastructure and facilities will potentially provide benefits to the local community.

4.1.2 Long Term Economic Benefits

The Proposed Development will provide a number of long-term economic benefits to the surrounding communities including:

Employment

Once operational, the Proposed Development will support 45-50 long term, high quality technical jobs in operation and maintenance of the proposed Power Plant.

Rates

Annual rates paid by the Proposed Development to the relevant local County Council will potentially support the provision of local services.

Community Benefit Fund

A Community Benefit Fund will be set up for the Proposed Development. The fund shall be made by five annual payments of €90,000 (ninety thousand euro), beginning on commencement of construction of the Proposed Development contributing to a total fund of €450,000 (four hundred and fifty thousand euro) over the five-year period. As the project is at an early stage of its development, the exact nature and structure of the proposed Community Benefit Fund including details of the management and operation of the Fund is not known at this time. It is envisaged that the Community Benefit Fund will operate in a similar manner to other Bord na Móna Community Benefit Fund models currently in operation.

Part 5 Conclusion

Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. has pro-actively engaged and consulted with the local community from an early stage during the pre-application phase. The consultation process has been an extremely valuable exercise and has provided a detailed and enhanced understanding of the key issues and concerns of the local community, which has ultimately shaped the Proposed Development.

The development of Derrygreenagh Power will provide an enduring economic benefit to the communities surrounding the Proposed Development area including the generation of significant employment during the construction and operation of the development. Additionally, the local authority will benefit through the development contribution and rates payable.