

Notes of Meeting Regarding Drumlins Park Wind Farm, Monaghan

Date: 24th April 2019

Venue: Planning Meeting Room, Council Offices, The Glen, Monaghan

In attendance: Gavin Daly (GD) – Galettech Energy Services

James Carville (JC) - Galettech Energy Developments

Simon Carleton (SC) - Galettech Energy Services

Toirleach Gourley (TG) - Monaghan Co. Co. (TG)

JC opened the meeting by giving an overview of the project including consultations undertaken to date and ecological surveys carried out so far. He stated that the closest dwelling to the site was 620 metres away and that a number of the neighbouring dwellings had a land interest in the proposed development. He also stated that a public consultation event was to take place in Newbliss on 30th April 2019. He added that a community fund would be set up and that the closest dwellings would be provided with monetary electricity benefits. He referred to the amount of rates that would payable to the local authority as a result of the development as well as the benefits in terms of achieving reduced carbon emissions targets for the State.

TG stated that cost provision should also be made for the payment of development contributions levied on any grant of planning permission for the development such as those in respect of community, recreation and amenity development.

GD provided more detail in relation to considerations such as proximity to neighbouring dwellings and separation distances, and that the application was being prepared in anticipation that the forthcoming review of the Wind Energy Guidelines would specify the minimum distance to be four times the tip height.

SC referred to the Outline Scoping Report provided in advance of the meeting and the on going preparation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report. He provided information in relation to the three alternative sites considered and explained why this site was selected. He also provided further detail in relation to issues such as ecology surveys, assessment of impact upon birds, mammals, landscape, and cultural heritage as well as assessments in relation to shadow flicker, noise, hydrology, and geology, stating that to date there does not appear to be any significant issues that cannot be addressed.

TG raised the issue regarding the specific type of turbine included in the assessment given that the turbine referred to may not be the final turbine selected, and thus the potential for the assessment of noise, visual impact, etc to be different to the actual impacts of the selected turbine. GD accepted that the turbine may change due to reasons such as lack of availability or improvements in technology but that the common approach was to propose the maximum size of turbine and also to set noise limit thresholds at noise sensitive receptors by condition of planning permission.

SC also set out proposals in relation to transportation of turbines to the site, the works required to facilitate this and a summary of the consultations with the engineers in the North Monaghan and the Ballybay-Clones Municipal Districts. SC outlined the proposal to construct an access lane across agricultural land to transport the turbines from the regional road south of Newbliss and the proposals to provided visibility splays at this location.

TG raised the issue that the transportation facilitation works may be development and if so may be required to be included as part of the application. SC stated that he would provide specific detail on the facilitation works proposed to enable the planning authority to make an assessment as to whether or not it was development. TG referred to the potential of the access lane passing through areas at risk of flooding to which SC stated that account had been taken of flooding in proposing the route. TG advised SC that the requirements for visibility splays onto unimproved regional roads had been reduced to 120 metres in the Monaghan County Development Plan 2019-2025.

GD detailed the three alternative methods of connection to the grid and provided commentary on the status of each in relation to deliverability, including discussions with affected landowners along the routes of the connection. He stated that in accordance with case law these alternatives would be set out in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report but not included as part of the application as the preferred option had not been determined yet and consultations were still on going with EirGrid.

SC provided detail on the zone of theoretical visibility of the turbines and stated that regard had been had to impact upon areas of amenity, scenic routes and other designations. He explained that consultations had also been undertaken with authorities in N. Ireland on the basis that the development would be determined to have potential transboundary impacts. SC also referred to the assessment of the impact of the development on scenic routes, areas of amenity and record of protected structures in the area as set out in the County Development Plan.

TG confirmed that due to the proximity of the proposed development to the boundary with N. Ireland and the scale of the development, that it would be considered as an application likely to have significant transboundary effects. He also mentioned that particular regard would have to be had to the impact of the development upon sites such as Annaghmakerrig.

SC advised that as a higher metrological mast was proposed to be installed on the site which exceeded the exempt development restrictions, an application for permission for temporary period would be submitted shortly.

TG stated that an assessment of the potential impact upon telecommunications should be carried out, particularly in respect to the roll out of rural broadband and the provision of point to point connections, and advised that the matter should be discussed with John McArdle the Monaghan County Council Broadband Officer. SC stated that no issues had been identified in this regard but agreed to discuss the matter with J McArdle in respect of future broadband provision proposals. GD stated that solutions such as rerouting point to point communications around the proposed development could be employed if any issue arose.

GD stated that it was hoped to submit the application by this July.

Meeting concluded.