

Derrygreenagh Power Project Environmental Impact Assessment Report

Chapter 6: Consultations

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6.0 CONSULTATIONS

6.1 Introduction

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

6.2 Strategic Infrastructure Development Pre-Application Consultation

6.2.1 The Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, have been considered 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 ABP-315916-23).

6.2.2 A request was submitted to ABP on 24 February 2023 to enter into pre-application consultation and the request provided an overview of the Proposed Development. ABP were informed that the power output of the Proposed Development will be in excess of 600MW. It was also noted that the development will provide for the transmission of electrical energy by overhead cables where the voltage will be 220kV. As the energy output of the Proposed Development will be in excess of 300MW, it was noted that it constitutes 'Seventh Schedule' development under the Planning and Development Act (the 'Act').

6.2.3 ABP were informed that the applicant considers that the Proposed Development constitutes 'Strategic Infrastructure Development' (SID) under the terms of Section 37A of the Act as it is of strategic economic importance to the State, will contribute significantly to the realisation of national and regional planning objectives and will have effect beyond the local planning authority area in which it is situated.

6.2.4 Following the submission of the request, a meeting was held with representatives from Bord na Móna Powergen Limited, their consultants and An Bord Pleanála on the 12 May 2023.

6.2.5 During this meeting a presentation was made to the Board's representatives addressing the need for the proposal, the planning history of the site, alternatives considered and the issues pertaining to the development in terms of planning policy and potential environmental impacts, as well as the applicants' opinion as to the SID status of the proposed development (i.e., that it does constitute SID).

6.2.6 Formal closure of the Pre-Application Consultation process was requested by the applicant on 09 June 2023 and acknowledged by ABP on 12 June 2023.

6.2.7 Under ABP Reference ABP-315916-23, it was determined by ABP on 05 July 2023 that the Proposed Development falls within the scope of the paragraphs 37A (2)(a)(b) and (c) of the Act and that the Proposed Development would be strategic infrastructure within the meaning of Section 37A of the Act. ABP confirmed that a planning application should be made to An Bord Pleanála (refer to **Appendix 6A**, EIAR Volume II, for An Bord Pleanála's response to the pre-application consultation, including Board Direction) under Section 37E of the Act.

6.3 Pre-Planning Consultation with Local Council

- 6.3.1 A pre-planning meeting was held with Offaly County Council's Planning and Environmental Team to discuss the principle of the Proposed Development and Overall Project, the preliminary design proposal, the environmental assessment of the proposal and the applicant's opinion regarding SID (i.e. that the proposal does constitute SID, but that this would be subject to a determination by ABP).
- 6.3.2 The meeting was held on 19 June 2023 and was attended by Bord na Móna Powergen Limited and their consultant team as well as representatives of the Council's Planning and Environmental Team. The Council representatives were informed of the Proposed Development, Overall Project, EIAR process and planning application timeline. The Council representatives were given the opportunity to provide feedback or raise questions regarding the design process, EIAR contents, or any other information.

6.4 Pre-Planning Consultation with EPA

- 6.4.1 Pre-application engagement and consultation was undertaken with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in accordance with Section 6.1 of EPA Guidance (Licence Application Form Guidance, Industrial Emissions (IE), Integrated Pollution Control (IPC) and Waste Version 2.1 - June 2021) to discuss requirements in relation to EIA and the approach to the project with regard to licencing. Meetings were held on the 07 July 2022 and 27 March 2023, attended by Bord na Móna Powergen Limited and their consultant team.
- 6.4.2 The EPA were informed of the Proposed Development, Overall Project and planning application timeline. The EPA were given the opportunity to provide feedback or raise questions regarding the design process, EIAR contents, or any other information.

6.5 Public Consultation

Consultation Methods

6.5.1 Community engagement initiatives were undertaken by Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd. prior to the submission of the planning application, these included:

- notification of local representatives;
- notification of local communities;
- community information sessions;
- direct correspondence and meetings;
- dedicated contact details;
- dedicated Project website.

6.5.2 Details of consultation methods are presented in the Bord na Móna Community Consultation Report, refer to **Appendix 6E**, EIAR Volume II.

Online Consultation

6.5.3 An online consultation was undertaken to provide an opportunity for the local community to view plans for the proposal and provide feedback. This included a questionnaire as part of the door-to-door pack. A dedicated website (<https://bnmenergypark.ie/derrygreenagh-power/>) for the Proposed Development was established which contains further detail on the project as well as contact details and an opportunity to join the mailing list.

6.5.4 The consultation webpage provided interested parties with access to information on this Proposed Development in advance of the submission of a planning application and enabled them to put forward their own ideas, allowing them to take an active role in developing the proposals through providing feedback. Further details on the consultation process and feedback forms are provided in the Community Consultation Report, refer to Appendix 6E EIAR Volume II.

Community Consultation Events

6.5.5 Public consultation and information events were held to provide members of the public with information on this Proposed Development in advance of the submission of a planning application and enabled them to put forward their own ideas, allowing them to take an active role in developing the proposals through providing feedback.

6.5.6 The events took the form of staffed exhibitions where plans and project information for the Proposed Development were displayed on 'roll-up' banners. The events were held between 28 March 2023 and 30 March 2023 as follows:

- Rhode – Rhode Parish Hall (1700-2100hrs on 28 March 2023)
- Rochfortbridge, St Joesph's Parish Hall (1700-2100hrs on 29 March 2023)
- Croghan, Croghan Community Centre (1700-2100hrs on 30 March 2023)

6.5.7 Information set out on the consultation materials and presented at the events was as per the consultation booklet and included information panels relating to:

- **About Derrygreenagh Power** – this panel explained the purpose and aims of the consultation
- **Derrygreenagh Power Development Area** – this panel comprised a map presenting key settlements, the Derrygreenagh Power Plant Consented Boundary and the Derrygreenagh Bog Group Boundary;

- **National Need for Derrygreenagh Power** – including reference to key legislation and requirements;
- **Derrygreenagh Power Proximity Map**– this panel comprised a map presenting key receptors, proposed boundaries and included proposed features;
- **Strategic Infrastructure Planning Process Explained** – an overview of the proposed planning process;
- **Benefits of the Development** – including how it will be modern efficient plant, contribute to security of supply, employment opportunities and attract industry to the region;
- **How to get in touch** – contact details to participate in the engagement process by telephone, email, letter or by joining a mailing list.

6.5.8 Key members of the project design team including Bord na Mona were present to assist attendees, talk through the proposals and respond to questions or issues raised.

6.5.9 Feedback forms were available to enable those who attended the event to express their viewpoints about different aspects of the Proposed Development. The feedback forms included an email address specifically created for the Proposed Development to enable individuals to send further comments if desired.

6.5.10 Feedback from attendees was recorded by the project design team and via the feedback forms and subsequently collated in the Bord na Móna Community Consultation Report, refer to **Appendix 6E**, EIAR Volume II.

6.5.11 Attendees included members of the local community, elected representatives, local employees and those with an interest in the surrounding environment. From the optional sign in sheets available to attendees the approximate/estimated number of attendees at each of the public consultation events was 40-45 at the Rhode event, 50-55 at the Rochfortbridge event and 50-55 at the Croghan event.

6.6 Engagement with Stakeholder Groups

- 6.6.1 Stakeholders were engaged with and given opportunity to provide feedback or raise questions regarding the design process, EiAR contents, or any other information. Statutory environmental bodies, local authorities, other public authorities with environmental responsibilities, and other key stakeholders are likely to have views on the scope of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. In addition to consultation with Statutory Consultees, it is considered good practice to consult with non-statutory stakeholders to ensure that the issues are appropriately addressed in the evolving scheme design and indeed the EiAR itself.
- 6.6.2 Any dialogue with stakeholders was directed towards establishing:
- whether and where there are existing resources or receptors that may need further investigation;
 - whether existing environmental problems occur in the locality that may be ameliorated or potentially made worse by the Proposed Development;
 - whether opportunities exist to improve environmental conditions which may coincide with delivery of the Proposed Development;
 - whether any trends or intermittent events occur that would be of relevance to the assessment, such as an activity occurring under some circumstances such as a large public event, diverted traffic, exceptional loads; and
 - forthcoming events, activities, developments and land use changes that may have a bearing upon the future state of the environment.
- 6.6.3 The purpose of the consultation was to inform consultees of the Proposed Development and to provide them with an opportunity to offer environmental feedback on the proposals.
- 6.6.4 An email detailing the Proposed Development along with technical details and plans was issued to a number of stakeholders with the request of providing any environmental specific information or comments in order for them to be taken into consideration in the assessment process. The initial email was sent on the 02 June 2023 with a response requested by 30 June 2023. A copy of all the consultation pack issued is presented in **Appendix 6B** (refer to EiAR Volume II).
- 6.6.5 Those consultees who had not provided a response by 30 June 2023, were issued a reminder email.

Stakeholder Pre-Application Consultation

- 6.6.6 The Statutory and Non-Statutory bodies consulted with for the Proposed Development and Overall Project are as follows:
- Offaly County Council
 - Westmeath County Council
 - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
 - Geological Survey Ireland (GSI)
 - Health and Safety Authority (HSA)
 - Health Service Executive (HSE)
 - Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications (DECC)
 - Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage (DHLGH)

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- National Parks Wildlife Services (NPWS) under the DAU
 - National Monuments Service (NMS) under the DAU
 - Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment (DETE)
 - Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)
 - Minister for Rural and Community Development (DRCD)
 - Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media (DTCAGSM)
 - Minister for Defence (respect of air ambulance re motorway routing)
 - Minister for the Transport
 - Irish Water
 - Office of Public Works (OPW)
 - Transport Infrastructure Ireland (TII)
 - National Transport Authority (NTA)
 - An Taisce
 - Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU)
 - Inland Fisheries Ireland (IFI)
 - The Heritage Council
 - Failte Ireland
 - Arts Council
 - Waterways Ireland
 - Eastern River Basin District (ERBD)
 - South-Eastern River Basin District (SERBD)
 - Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly
 - Bat Conservation Ireland
 - Bird Watch Ireland (BWI)
 - Butterfly Conservation Ireland
 - Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC)
 - Irish Red Grouse Association
 - Irish Raptor Study Group (IRSG)
 - Irish Wildlife Trust
 - Commission for Communications Regulation
 - Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI)
 - EirGridGas Networks Ireland (GNI)
 - Three Ireland
 - Vodafone Ireland
 - Eir Mobile

- Imagine Broadband
- Virgin Media
- Irish Water
- Irish Aviation Authority (IAA)
- Irish Rail
- Córas Iompair Éireann (CIE)

Telecommunications & Aviation Consultation

- Imagine Broadband
- Three Ireland
- Vodafone Ireland
- Eir
- Virgin Media
- Cellnex Ireland
- 2RN
- Tetra Ireland
- An Garda Síochána
- Comreg
- ESB Networks
- Irish Water
- Air Ambulance
- Department of Defence
- Irish Aviation Authority
- AirNav Ireland

6.6.7 A summary table of all responses from the Statutory and Non-Statutory bodies consulted with regard to the EIA is presented in the EIAR Consultation Responses – Summary Tracker, **Appendix 6C** (refer to EIAR Volume II). A full copy of all responses is included in EIAR Consultation Responses, **Appendix 6D** (refer to EIAR Volume II). The Telecommunications & Aviation Assessment Report, which is included **at Appendix 16A** (refer to EIAR Volume II) also provides detail of responses received from telecommunications and aviation stakeholders.

6.7 SID Statutory Consultation and Public Notices

- 6.7.1 In accordance with the requirements of An Bord Pleanála and Article 214 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, 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 locations 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: A newspaper notice has been published in 2 no. newspapers in circulation in the area. A copy of each newspaper notice is included in the application pack.
- 6.7.2 In addition, an application website (www.derrygreenaghpowerplanning.ie) 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.
- 6.7.3 The prescribed information set out in Article 97B of the Regulations (as substituted by article 65 of S.I. No. 296/2018 - European Union (Planning and Development) (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2018) has been uploaded to EIA Portal in advance of submission.

6.8 Sectoral Stakeholders

EirGrid

6.8.1 The Applicant consulted EirGrid on the electricity grid connection early in the design process on elements of the grid connection and substations; including the underground cable as required by CDS-GFS-00-001-R1 (110 kV, 220 kV and 400 kV Underground Cable Functional Specification). All associated documentation on plant to be built, including details as required by XDS-GFS-00-001-R4 (Functional Specification 110/220/400 kV Substation General Requirements), has been submitted to EirGrid.

Gas Networks Ireland

6.8.2 The Applicant initially sought an indicative high level gas connection proposal from Gas Networks Ireland (GNI) in 2018 for a gas connection to the Derrygreenagh Site. GNI subsequently undertook gas connection feasibility study works in 2023 evaluating a number of route options to the site. A Gas Connection Corridor for connecting the Proposed Development to the GNI high pressure pipeline (BGE/77) has been provided by GNI, though this is subject to separate consenting application processes and supporting assessments for the final Gas Connection Corridor selected by GNI.

6.8.3 The Applicant has subsequently received a connection offer and is working with GNI to progress the connection offer through a signature of a formal Large Connection Network Agreement.

6.9 References

Planning and Development Act 2000 (Revised) Updated to 10 March 2023

Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended). Irish Statute Book.

Government of Ireland.