



White Hill Wind Farm

# Environmental Impact Assessment Report

## Annex 1.2: An Bord Pleanála Record of Meeting

White Hill Wind Limited

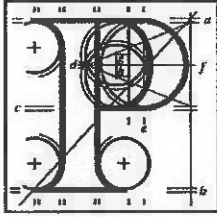
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**An  
Bord  
Pleanála**

**Record of Meeting  
ABP-312224-21 1<sup>st</sup>  
meeting**

<b>Description</b>	ABP-312224-21 - Proposed 7 turbine wind farm with a predicted output of 50.4 megawatts (mw) located in Ridge (Ridge E.D), Knockabranagh and Knockbaun, and Baunreagh Co. Carlow and Coolcullen, Co. Kilkenny.		
<b>Case Type</b>	Pre-application Consultation.		
<b>1st / 2nd / 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> Meeting		
<b>Venue</b>	Virtually by Microsoft Teams		
<b>Date</b>	13/04/2022	<b>Time</b>	11:00am – 12:00pm

<b>Representing An Bord Pleanála</b>		
Brendan Wyse, Assistant Director of Planning (Chair)		
Kevin Moore, Senior Planning Inspector		
Sarah Caulfield, Executive Officer	s.caulfield@pleanala.ie	01-8737287
<b>Representing the Prospective Applicant</b>		
James Carville - Project Manager, White Hill Wind Limited		
Bláithín Rafferty - Galetch Energy Services		
Simon Carleton - Galetch Energy Services		

## **Introduction:**

The Board referred to the letter received from the prospective applicant on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021, requesting pre-application consultations and advised the prospective applicant that the instant meeting essentially constituted an information-gathering exercise for the Board; it also invited the prospective applicant to outline the nature of the proposed development and to highlight any matters that it wished to receive advice on from the Board. The Board mentioned the following general procedures in relation to the pre-application consultation process:

- The Board will keep a record of this meeting and any other meetings, if held. Such records will form part of the file which will be made available publicly at the conclusion of the process. The record of the meeting will not be amended by the Board once finalised, but the prospective applicant may submit comments on the record which will form part of the case file.
- The Board will serve notice at the conclusion of the process as to the strategic infrastructure status of the proposed development. It may form a preliminary view at an early stage in the process on the matter.
- A further meeting or meetings may be held in respect of the proposed development.
- Further information may be requested by the Board and public consultations may also be directed by the Board.
- The Board may hold consultations in respect of the proposed development with other bodies.
- The holding of consultations does not prejudice the Board in any way and cannot be relied upon in the formal planning process or in any legal proceedings.

## **Presentation by the prospective applicant:**

The proposed development consists of 7 wind turbines and is located in counties Kilkenny and Carlow, approximately 14 kilometres northeast of Kilkenny City and approximately 4 kilometres west of Oldleighlin in Co. Carlow.

The current land use is agricultural pasture with sections of commercial forestry on the northern, western, and southern perimeters of the site. The prospective applicant said the area is sparsely populated and can generally be characterised by one-off rural dwellings regularly accompanied by agricultural buildings.

Part of the proposed site was the subject of a previous wind energy proposal, about 10 years ago, which was refused permission by the Board. The previous application consisted of 21 turbines with an output between 30-33MW. The prospective applicant said the main reasons for refusal included visual impact concerns relating to the number of turbines, absence of detailed geotechnical assessment, absence of details relating to effects on bats, residential amenity, and surface water management. The prospective applicant said considerable attention has been given to these areas for the current proposal.

In relation to the site selection process, the prospective applicant said the subject site has been of interest for a number of years given its' history. It was submitted that the lands are identified as 'Acceptable in Principle' in the Kilkenny City & County Development Plan 2021-2027 and a 'Preferred Location' within the Carlow County Development Plan 2015-2021. It was noted that the draft Carlow County Development Plan 2022-2028 has moved from a location-based identification system to criteria-based and no longer includes a map of suitable locations.

It was submitted that the site displays a number of positive features including the absence of European Sites, the absence of significant groundwater vulnerability, the absence of complex geologies or ground stability concerns and the absence of cultural heritage features. It was submitted that the site adheres to a setback distance of 4 times tip height, as recommended in the Draft Revised Wind Energy Guidelines 2019, and, therefore, reduces the possibility of likely significant noise, vibration and shadow flicker.

The prospective applicant said discussions are currently ongoing with ESB Networks and Eirgrid in relation to a grid connection option at the existing Kilkenny 110kV substation. The connection would be via underground cable, to be placed within the carriageway of local and regional roads. The grid connection will be assessed but will not form part of the application.

The prospective applicant said the turbine delivery route is not yet finalised, but it anticipates utilising the Port of Waterford, N29, N9, M9, N78 and local roads to the site entrance. Minor upgrade works will be required along the route such as removal of street furniture and street lighting. It said works will be required to 3 bridges along the route including pier cap removal (Crettyard Bridge), construction of a temporary slip road to navigate the N78/L1834 junction and the installation of a concrete slab across the carriageway of 'Black Bridge' (L1835/L3037), to increase the structural integrity of the bridge. The prospective applicant said these works have been agreed and approved by relevant local authority.

An environmental scoping process has been completed, which included consultations with Government departments and relevant authorities. The prospective applicant said a constraints analysis has also been completed both at a macro and site-specific scale.

In relation to Natura 2000 sites, the prospective applicant said the site is located close to the River Barrow and River Nore SAC. There is a hydrological connection with this SAC and it said significant attention has been given to the management of surface water, to ensure the protection of water quality in the area. The River Nore SPA is also located to the west of the site.

The prospective applicant presented a map which detailed the land, soil and water characteristics on the site. It was submitted that there are areas of mapped peat in the north of the site but said the infrastructure completely avoids these areas. The prospective applicant said site investigation works confirmed that the soil has a peat-like texture but is not peat in the traditional form.

The prospective applicant said minor changes were made to the project design following information received from statutory consultees and expert consultants. The final design includes 7 turbines (4 located in Co. Carlow and 3 in Co. Kilkenny). It

said with improvements in turbine technology, a new turbine, with an output capacity of 7.2MW can be accommodated at the site and, therefore, the turbine tip height has been increased from 180 metres to 185 metres. The overall output will now be in excess of 50MW. The prospective applicant said there are no non-involved residential dwellings within the recommended set back distance (4 times tip height).

The prospective applicant said approximately 15 hectares of commercial forestry will be felled to accommodate the project. A parcel of land has been identified in Co. Monaghan for the purposes of re-planting.

Community engagement has commenced and is continuing, It includes remote consultation, door-to-door visits, consultation clinics at local venues and a standalone project website ([www.whitehillwindfarm.ie](http://www.whitehillwindfarm.ie)).

It is the prospective applicant's view that the proposed development constitutes SID and the current intention is to submit a planning application in August 2022.

## **Discussion**

The following matters were discussed:

- In relation to the previous refusal, the Board's representatives said the reasons for refusal need to be addressed in significant detail in any future application. They also noted that the concerns previously raised in relation to visual/landscape impacts referred to the height of the turbines as well as their number.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said alternative sites were considered and these will be documented within the EIAR.
- The prospective applicant confirmed that the grid connection will not form part of this application but said that it will be fully assessed within the EIAR.
- A general discussion was had around providing specific tip heights in light of the Derryadd Judgement. The prospective applicant said their current intention is to submit a specific turbine tip height.

- The prospective applicant said a Natura Impact Statement will be submitted as part of the planning application, given its proximity to the River Barrow and River Nore SAC and the River Nore SPA.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said several studies have been carried out and are continuing, including birds (2 years of data), bats, aquatic, trial pitting and landscape and visual impact. Data from baseline noise monitoring is currently being compiled.
- In relation to residential dwellings, the prospective applicant said there are a small number of dwellings located within the zone of influence (4-time tip height) and said letters of acceptance will be submitted as part of the planning application.
- In relation to cumulative impacts, the prospective applicant said they are cognisant of existing and proposed wind farms in the area and said these will be fully considered and assessed as part of the EIAR.
- In response to a query on the matter, the prospective applicant said the excavations associated with the turbine foundations will generate a substantial volume of rock, which will be used in the construction of access tracks etc. It said borrow pits may be necessary if sufficient material is not gained from the site.
- The prospective applicant confirmed that there is no presence of blanket bog within the site.
- The prospective applicant said detailed feedback has been received to date from both local authorities and other statutory consultees. It said a meeting was held recently with Kilkenny County Council, which was very constructive.
- A general discussion was had around the inclusion of the re-plant lands in County Monaghan within the EIAR and NIS and the requirements under the forestry legislation. The Board said they would provide additional clarity on this aspect in the near future.

- In relation to the southern-most turbine proposed on the site, the Board's representatives advised the prospective applicant to be cognisant of its location, close to the site boundary. The prospective applicant said the exact location and distance will be assessed and details will be provided shortly.
- The Boards representatives confirmed their preliminary view that the proposed development is SID.

## **Conclusion**

The record of the meeting will issue to the prospective applicant and it will then be a matter for the prospective applicant to submit any comments on this if it wishes to do so. It will be a matter for the prospective applicant to revert to the Board if it requires a further meeting or if it wishes to close the pre-application consultation process.



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**Brendan Wyse**

**Assistant Director of Planning**

25 April 2022



