



HARLEY PLANNING CONSULTANTS LTD.

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The Secretary
An Bord Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
DO1V902
26th January 2021

RE: Pre-application Consultation request under Section 37(b) of the Planning & Development Act 2000 (as amended)

Dear Sir/madam

Please find enclosed a request for pre-application consultation, in relation to a wind energy project and associated grid connection. Two sets of detailed drawings of the proposal are attached, as agreed with a member of the SID department. A fee of €4,500 is also enclosed.

I would be obliged if the Board could confirm if the proposal is SID development and/or if a planning application should be submitted to the Board under Section 182B or to the LPA under Section 34 of the P&D Act 2000 (as amended).

1. BACKGROUND

In February 2011, planning permission was granted on appeal, to PJ Molloy for a wind park outside Glenties, Co. Donegal in the townlands of Graffy, Meenaleenaghan, Dalraghan More, Meenamanragh, Meenavale, Greenans, Stralinchy & Mully. The project provided for the development of 13 turbines, a control building, ESB substation and compound and associated site roads and works – planning reference (PL 05B.237656).

The planning permission has now been acquired by Cuilfeach Teoranta and details of the company and its agent (Harley Planning Consultants) are set out below under Appendix A. To take account of newer and more efficient wind turbine technologies, which have become

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available since the original application was granted, it is now proposed to develop and repower the wind park by reducing the number of turbines to eight (8) larger and more efficient turbines.

2. LOCATION

The wind park is located in a rural upland area, close to the upper catchments of the Stracashel and Stranagoppoge Rivers and along the foothills of Aghla Mountain in County Donegal. It is located approximately midway between the R250 and R253 regional roads, each of which join Glenties to Ballybofey. It is circa 8.5kms ENE from Glenties and 6kms SW of Fintown. Map 1 shows the location of the wind park in relation to Glenties.

Map 1: General location of wind park



3. DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

The precise model of the eight turbines has yet to be confirmed, but for assessment purposes, a turbine with a hub height of 84m, a blade diameter of 132m and a blade tip height of 150m

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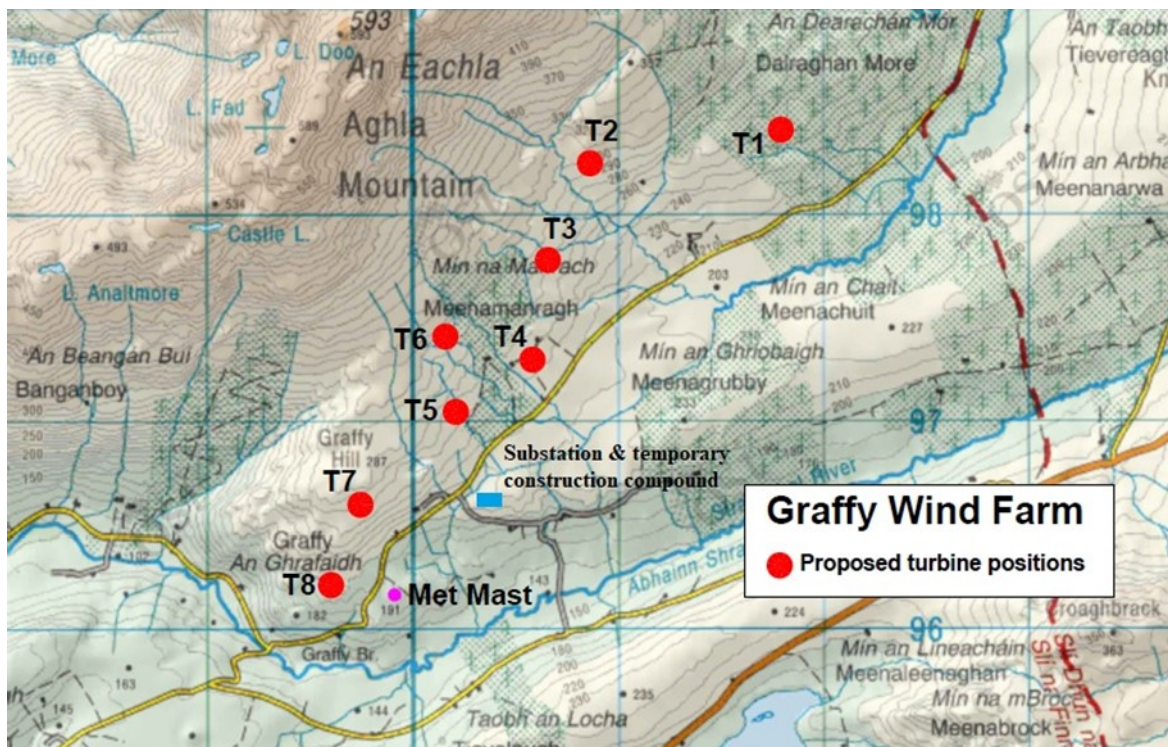
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is proposed. Access tracks to each turbine, a substation, electricity cables (33kv) connecting the turbines to the proposed substation, a meteorological mast, peat recovery areas and a temporary construction compound, all form part of the new proposal. In addition, the planning application will include the development of a grid connection (110kv) from the proposed substation serving the wind park to the Tievebrack Eirgrid station at Drumnalough, approximately 7.5kms west of the wind park site.

Map 2 below, shows the proposed turbine, substation, temporary construction compound and meteorological mast locations, while Map 3 outlines the 110kv grid connection between the proposed substation at Meenagrubby to the Tievebrack Eirgrid station at Drumnalough.

Map 2: Proposed turbine, substation, temporary construction compound and meteorological mast locations



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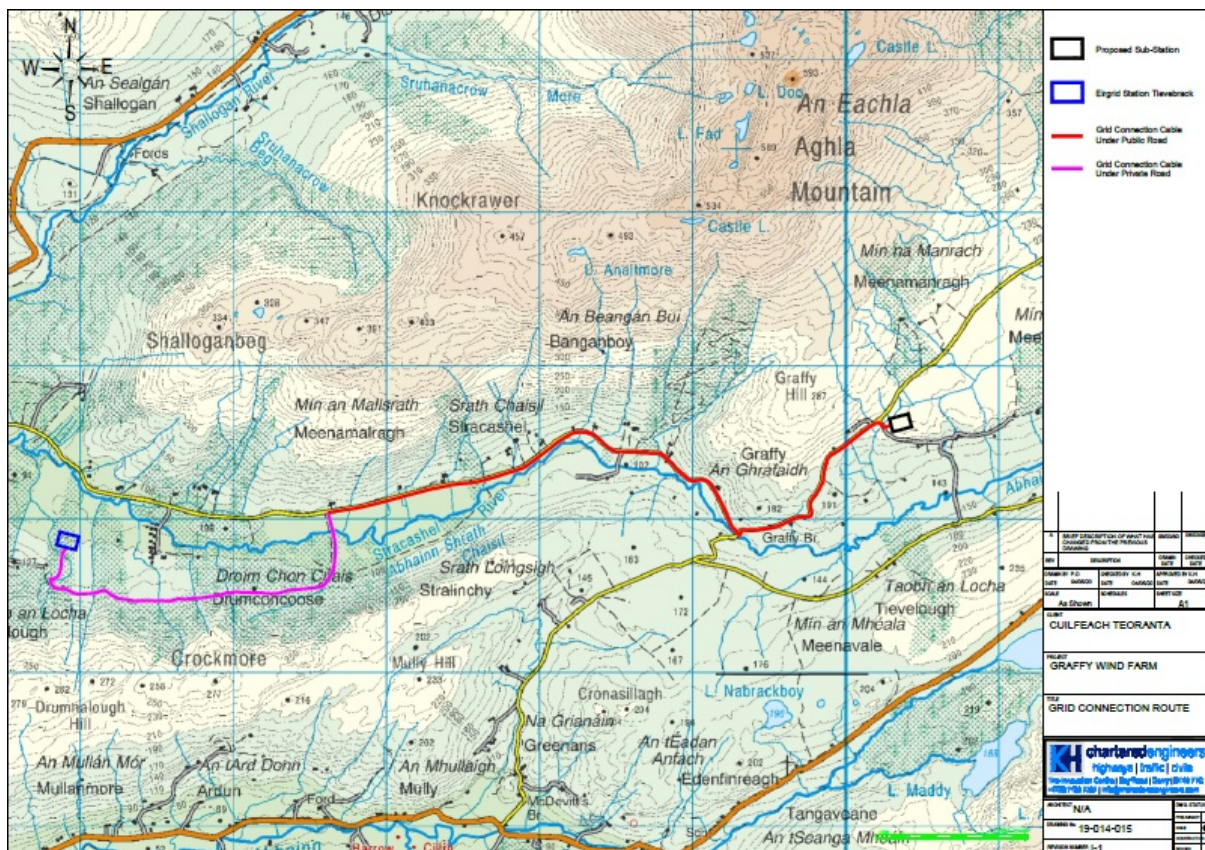


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The proposed substation at Meenagrubby will be constructed at the same time as the wind turbines and grid connection. The substation and parking area will have a total footprint area of 2804m².

Map 3: Grid connection to the Tievebrack Eirgrid station at Drumalough.



The turbines will connect underground (33kv cables) to the proposed substation/control room and thereon to the EirGrid Tievebrack station at Drumalough (110kv cables). The proposed 110kv grid connection will extend for circa 7.5kms westwards from the substation/control room location at Meenagrubby, to the Tievebrack Eirgrid station at Drumalough. For the most part the grid connection will follow the public county road, before turning into and along the private road serving commercial forestry and the Tievebrack Eirgrid station.

The grid connection is likely to be constructed at the same time as the wind park and works will be carried out simultaneously at different sections of the grid connection route. The

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underground sections will use 150mm diameter PVC ducting with the cables pulled through at a later stage.

The cables will be placed in the existing bridge structure on the private road, which traverses the Stracashel River. The profile of the bridge surface and adjoining private road approaches will be raised to accommodate the cable. The cable ducting will be encased in concrete and covered with 6mm-thick galvanised steel plates at the Stracashel River crossing point.

There will be approximately 4810 metres of access road needed to service the proposed turbines. This will generally be of conventional road construction and if considered necessary floating roads.

Level hardstanding areas ranging between 3,300m² and 4,300m² will be created adjacent to each turbine location, to accommodate cranes during the assembly of the turbines and storage of the turbine sections pending erection.

Underground 33kv cables will link the turbines to the proposed substation/control building, along the new access tracks and over open ground where convenient. The construction of the control room and the substation electricity infrastructure will be to Eirgrid specifications.

A temporary construction compound, sited adjacent to the proposed substation site at Meenagrubby, will consist of temporary site offices, facilities and car-parking areas for construction staff. Temporary port-a-loo toilets located within the staff offices will be used during the construction phase and water supply will come from an underground rainwater harvesting tank. The compound will be removed and the ground reinstated following erection of the wind farm.

Felling of forestry will be required to facilitate an access track between turbine 4 and turbines 5/6 and around turbine T1, which is proposed to be located within Coillte commercial forestry. A tree felling licence application along with corresponding replanting of the felled trees, will be submitted to the Forestry Service for approval, before any felling takes place. Finally, engagement with TII for national routes and LPA roads engineers for local roads is on-going with respect to the turbine delivery route from Killybegs, Co. Donegal to the site. The route is shown on Map 3 below. However, it is acknowledged that strengthening works

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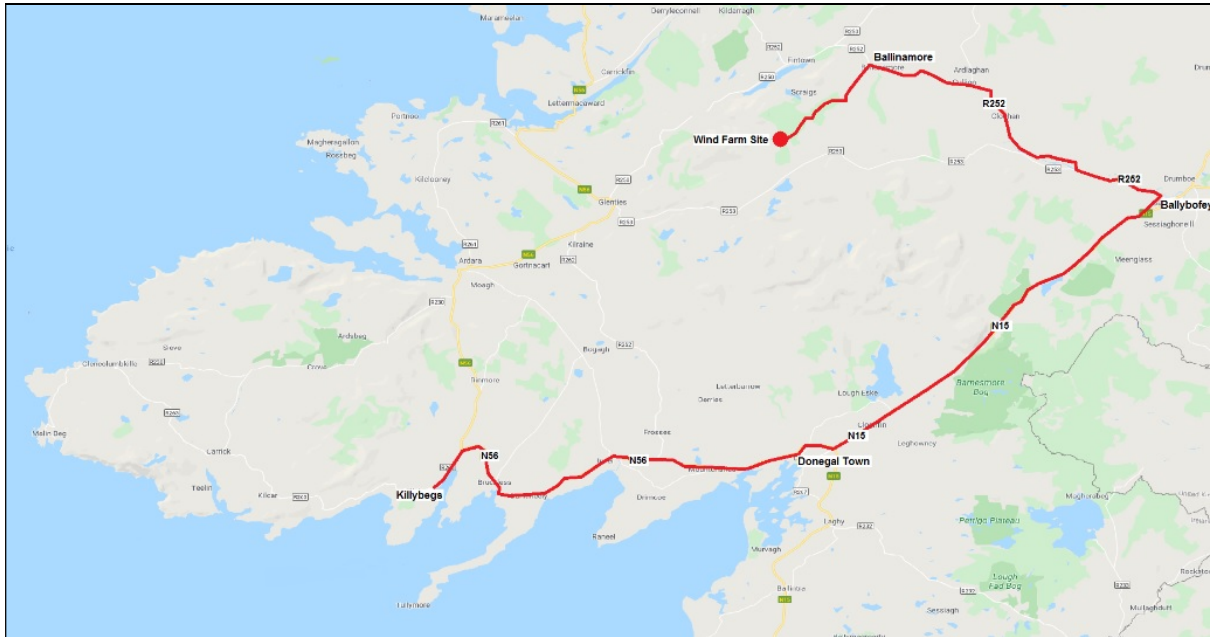


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to the route will be necessary on the public road verges and culverts closer to the wind park site, to facilitate the HGVs and cranes required to deliver and erect the turbines.

Map 3: Delivery route



4. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT (EIAR) AND NATURA IMPACT STATEMENT (NIS)

The relevant classes of development that normally require Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) are set out in Schedule 5 (Part 2) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended. The relevant class of development in this case relates to

“installations for the harnessing of wind power for energy production (wind farms) with more than five turbines or having a total output greater than five megawatts” Item 3(i) Schedule 5]. The proposed development exceeds five turbines and five megawatts in scale, and therefore is subject to EIA.

Accordingly, an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) is being compiled for the development. The EIAR is being prepared using the grouped format structure as

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recommended in the EPA publications '*Revised Guidelines on the information to be contained in Environmental Impact Statements*' and '*Guidelines on the Information to be Contained in Environmental Impact Assessment Reports*'.

An AA assessment of the potential adverse effects of the project (in combination with other plans or projects) on European Sites. On the basis of the assessment, which stated that mitigation measures would be required in order to avoid potential significant effects, a Stage 2 Appropriate Assessment will be required in support of the proposal, resulting in a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

5. STRATEGIC INFRASTRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Under section 182A(1) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), electricity transmission development, with a voltage of 110 kv or more, is considered to be strategic infrastructure development (SID). As the grid connection is 110kv, the proposed development is considered to be SID, despite being below the thresholds for SID under Schedule 7 of the P&D Act 2000 (as amended). Moreover, as the grid connection is irrevocably attached to the wind farm, it is respectfully considered that, to avoid "project splitting" the entire development falls under SID.

6. CONCLUSION

The wind energy development is proposed within the administrative boundaries of Donegal County Council. The LPA has acknowledged on its website that *in light of both a recent High Court Order and also publication of the Draft Wind Energy Guidelines on 12th December 2019, Donegal County Council is preparing a Variation on Wind Energy with a view to publishing a draft Variation in Q2/Q3 of 2020.* To date no pre-draft discussion papers, initiating the review, have issued from the LPA in relation to wind energy and members of the Council have advised that no policy variation will be adopted into the County Development Plan 2018-24, until 2022.

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The High Court Order confirmed that certain wind energy provisions of the County Donegal Development Plan 2018-2024, were to be deleted from the plan. County. Because of this lacuna in Wind Energy policy, the LPA considers that it is not in a position to adequately assess wind energy proposals in the policy context of the current Development Plan and wind energy proposals are therefore refused planning permission. Recently a wind energy proposal in County Donegal (Ref 18/50156), was refused planning permission on this basis, leaving the Board to deal with an appeal case (ABP-304685-19) and granting permission.

It is conceivable therefore, that if the proposed development was submitted for planning permission to the LPA in the immediate future, it would be refused and in such circumstances, the applicant would certainly appeal that decision to the Board. Ultimately the decision on the proposal will lie with An Bord Pleanála. It is however acknowledged that the deficiency on the part of the LPA, to make a decision on wind energy projects, does not in itself determine that the proposal should be SID.

I look forward to hearing from you on this matter and please contact this office should you require any clarification on the information submitted.

Yours sincerely

Jim Harley

Harley Planning Consultants.

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APPENDIX A

Applicant details:

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Agent details:

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