

Planning and Development Acts 2000 to 2021

Planning Authority: Galway County Council

Planning Register Reference Number: 21/1042

APPEAL by Natural Forces Renewable Energy Limited care of Rowan Engineering Consultants Limited of Unit 14, Scurlockstown Business Park, Trim, County Meath against the decision made on the 7th day of January, 2022 by Galway County Council to refuse permission for the proposed development.

Proposed Development: Construction and operation of one number 4.2-megawatt wind turbine with an overall height of up to 125 metres. Installation of the hardstanding area for the wind turbine. Installation of underground circuit cables which will run in underground cable trenches (circa 1.2 metres deep) from the proposed wind turbine to the proposed substation building on the site. Construction of the proposed substation building which will be located circa 85 metres from the proposed wind turbine and surrounded by stock proof fencing. It will be a single storey building measuring 53 square metres and circa five metres in height. Construction of proposed internal site access track constructed from permeable material and which will run from the site entrance to the wind turbine hardstanding area. All associated ancillary infrastructure and preparatory works such as provision of the site entrance, all at Knock South, Inverin, County Galway, as revised by the further public notices received by the planning authority on the 3rd day of December, 2021.

Decision

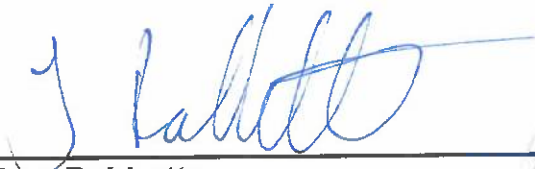
REFUSE permission for the above proposed development in accordance with the reasons and considerations set out below.

Reasons and Considerations

1. On the basis of the information provided with the application and appeal and in the absence of a Natura Impact Statement which assesses the impact on the Connemara Bog Complex Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004181) and the Inner Galway Bay Special Protection Area (Site Code: 004031), and in the absence of additional habitat surveys in respect of the Connemara Bog Complex Special Area of Conservation (Site Code: 002034), the Board cannot be satisfied that the proposed development individually, or in combination with other plans or projects would not be likely to have a significant effect on the above mentioned European sites in view of the sites' Conservation Objectives. In such circumstances the Board is precluded from granting permission.
2. The proposed development is located in an area where Wind Energy Developments are 'not normally permissible', as outlined in Map 15 of Renewable Strategy Appendix 1 of the Galway County Development Plan 2022-2028, and in an area designated 'wind energy buffer' which extends six kilometres inland from the coast where there will be no designation of lands as being either "Acceptable in Principle" or "Open for Consideration" or "Strategic Area" for wind energy development between An Spidéal to Minna in Cois Fharráige (policy objective RE9 of the development plan refers). The proposed development would contravene policy objective RE9 of the Development Plan and would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

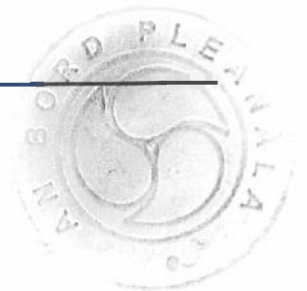
3. It is a policy of the Council under 'policy objective LCM 1' of the Galway County Development Plan, 2022-2028, to preserve and enhance the character of the landscape where the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it. The site is located in an area designated in the Development Plan as 'Uplands and Bog Landscape' character area, nationally iconic landscapes of scenic, cultural, ecological and historic significance, with a 'high sensitivity' throughout. Notwithstanding uncertainty with respect to landscape and visual impact, having regard to the design, scale and visual prominence of the proposed wind turbine on an elevated position within its landscape setting, relative to the existing smaller-scale nearby turbines, the proposed development would seriously injure the amenities of the area by reason of visual intrusion with resultant visual overbearing impact within what is an expansive landscape setting where it would be visible from near and far. The proposed development would adversely interfere with the intrinsic character and qualities of landscape setting which it is considered necessary to preserve under the development plan. The proposed development would, therefore, be contrary to the proper planning and sustainable development of the area, in particular 'policy objective LCM 1' to preserve and enhance the character of the landscape where the proper planning and sustainable development of the area requires it.

4. Due to a lack of information and clarity with respect to the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed development, it is not possible to conclude that there is no real likelihood of significant effects on the environment, nor is it possible to make a screening determination as to whether a sub-threshold environmental impact assessment report is required in respect of the proposed development. The Board is, therefore, not satisfied that the proposed development would not have significant environmental impacts and is precluded from granting permission for the proposed development.



Tom Rabbette

**Member of An Bord Pleanála
duly authorised to authenticate
the seal of the Board.**



Dated this 6th day of JUNE 2023.