

Tobberoe  
Kilconly  
Tuam  
Co Galway

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála (ABP Ref: 323699)

Subject: Objection to the Proposed Shancloon Windfarm

Dear Sir / Madam,

I grew up in Kilconly, and after living in various countries, cities, and towns, returned in 2020 to the farm where many generations of my ancestors have lived. My background is in IT – mainly in leading teams to deliver large, complex IT projects. My current role is as a Product Owner, which is all about ensuring that both the Business Area that has the requirements, and the Technical Team that are delivering on those requirements, are in alignment, and that both sides are working together in harmony, because that is the best recipe for success. These things are relevant because they explain the perspective from which I reviewed the EIAR for this project - the perspective of someone who lives in and has deep roots in Kilconly, and the perspective of years of experience in working with and engaging with stakeholders on all sides of a project.

### **Community Engagement**

I was very disappointed with the quality of Community Engagement on this project. I feel it fell very much short of what is expected, and very much short of what the people of Kilconly and Caherlistrane deserve. The impacts of this project on the people who live in the areas surrounding the Windfarm will be life changing. No matter what. And so they deserve to have their voices, not just heard, but listened to. That didn't happen here. There was absolutely no attempt to gain the trust of the wider community, and without that trust, the developers have made delivery of this project much more challenging than it needed to be.

The first issue was that they started too late. From reading the EIAR you can see for example that bird surveys began in 2020. We are aware that conversations with landowners began much earlier than that. But in their own Scoping and Consultation Chapter, they state that public engagement started in April 2023. That's a gap of at least 3 years, during which plans were being made which had the potential of huge impacts on the lives of hundreds of households, without those households being consulted. Public engagement should have started at a point when all options were open so that people could have had meaningful input into the design.

The next issue for me is their handling of feedback. They state that the main concerns raised were Noise, Shadow Flicker, and Visual Impact. But that's contrary to my own experience. Over the past 6 weeks, we have spoken to hundreds of our neighbours in Kilconly, Caherlistrane and beyond, and, while noise, flicker, and visual impact were certainly mentioned, the main concerns that came up were actually the risk of flooding, the bog, and the Whooper Swans. Other topics came up also, but those were the ones that came up again, and again, and again. Many of these people have lived here all their lives and they understand where they are living. They may not be able to explain to you about underground aquifers, but they can certainly tell you which fields usually flood, when not to go in the bog, and what direction the Whooper Swans usually fly over their house. This extremely valuable local knowledge, and these very real concerns, should have been gathered and addressed but they weren't.

There was no Public Information . The only event provided was a single one-day clinic in Tuam, approximately 10 miles from the proposed development site. It was by appointment only, it was not publicly advertised, and it was located outside of the communities of Kilconly and Caherlistrane, who are the most impacted. We repeatedly asked for a public meeting but the reason given was that it was against health and safety. This is extremely disappointing and reflects a poor opinion of a community that I am extremely proud of. We held 3 public meetings ourselves with no issues and would absolutely have worked with them on a public meeting had we been approached. They were also offered Kilconly Community Centre as the venue for any public meeting by the Chairman of the Kilconly Development Association, but they never responded.

I was one of the people that attend the Clinic in Tuam. Only 2 representatives from RWE were present (though I'm told a third man had been present as other people's bookings). There were no representatives from Fehilly Timoney. I was told that someone FT had intended to be there but was ill. This of course does happen, but there should have been a backup plan. The two people that were there were very pleasant but I very much got the feeling that I was being told what was going to happen rather than being consulted in any meaningful way. I got similar feedback from other people who attended. This is not in compliance with the 2019 Draft Guidelines' emphasis on meaningful, two-way engagement. They also had very little material with them. No photo montages, no detailed explanations of the plans, no displays. Essentially all they had were the flyers that they had distributed house to house.

And something that's missing from the EIAR is a chart showing the concerns raised during the Community Engagement Process, and the changes that were made to address those concerns. That is a lack of transparency.

## **The Bog and the Turloughs**

In 2024 Ireland was referred to the Court of Justice of the European Union for failing to protect its raised and blanket bogs from turf cutting. And yet here we have a proposal to dig up large parts of the bog and put Turbines, Hard Stands, and floating roads through a beautiful bog which a Community Group already have plans to restore. It's both devastating and dangerous. The full impact and dangers are discussed in other submissions by people far more qualified than me – all I know is that I, and many more in my community, would be heartbroken at the loss of our beautiful bog.

In this area of North East Galway we are also fortunate enough to be surrounded by beautiful, enigmatic turloughs. These are almost unique to Ireland and a lot is still not known about them. It is known that they provide wonderful feeding grounds for migrating winter birds but how the birds use them is not fully understood. Work on the bog to install turbines is definitely going to have an impact on the turloughs and the birds that use them. Again, much better explained elsewhere by someone more qualified than me.

## **Conclusion**

I would urge An Coimisiún to consider refusal of this application. Unfortunately, I don't think Further Information would be of any help in this case. The work proposed on the bog could never be undone. And would be a huge shame. They failed to gain the trust of the community and in that failure, not only jeopardized this particular application, but any other renewal energy project proposed for this area. The trust of the community will be extremely hard to win now.