

Submission of Objection to Planning Application – Case Ref 323699

Proposed RWE Wind Farm Development at Kilconly & Caherlistrane, Co. Galway

To Whom It May Concern,
An Bord Pleanála,

We wish to formally object to the proposed RWE wind farm development in the Kilconly and Caherlistrane area (Case Ref 323699). We are the owners and residents of a home in Toberroe, Kilconly, Co. Galway, approximately 960 metres from the nearest proposed turbine location (T10) - placing us directly within the area most affected by this development.

We moved to Toberroe six months ago, drawn by its peace, tranquillity, and natural beauty. This is our family home and where we intend to build our future. The area's calm, biodiversity, and rural community spirit are central to our daily lives and well-being.

1. What we value most about living here

Our home is surrounded by open countryside and bogland rich in wildlife. The area is defined by natural sounds—birdsong, wind through trees, and distant farming activity—not mechanical or industrial noise. The qualities we cherish include:

- **Nature & Biodiversity:** The boglands and hedgerows support birds of prey, songbirds, bats, amphibians, and small mammals.
- **Peace & Quiet:** This area offers a rare level of serenity and stillness that supports mental well-being and connection with nature.
- **Community:** Toberroe and Kilconly are close-knit, with shared respect for land, heritage, and environment.

These qualities make the area uniquely valuable and are the very things this project threatens to permanently alter.

2. Concerns about the proposed wind farm

The proximity of turbines - some as close as approximately 960 metres - raises serious concerns regarding our health, quality of life, and environment:

- **Construction Noise, Vibration & Traffic:** The construction phase would bring months—if not years—of disruption. Activities such as piling, which involves driving deep foundations into the ground, generate intense vibration and repetitive low-frequency noise that can cause

stress, sleep disturbance, and physical discomfort for nearby residents. Continuous heavy machinery, excavation, and HGV traffic would add to noise and dust pollution. These quiet rural roads are not designed for industrial traffic and will pose safety risks to residents, particularly children and older people.

- **Operational Noise & Infrasound:** Modern turbines emit both audible "swooshing" and low-frequency infrasound. Studies suggest this can lead to sleep disturbance, headaches, irritability, and reduced concentration—particularly problematic as one of us works from home and requires a quiet environment.
- **Shadow Flicker:** With turbines up to 180m in height, shadow flicker will intrude into our home and garden, especially at sunrise and sunset, creating a persistent and distressing nuisance.
- **Lighting and Night-time Intrusion:** Required aviation lighting will introduce constant night-time illumination, eroding rural darkness and tranquillity.
- **Property Devaluation:** Homes within 1km of large-scale turbines often experience significant value decline, sometimes exceeding 20–40%. As far as we know, no compensation or mitigation is being offered to affected homeowners. While this is unfair, our objection is not about seeking compensation—we simply do not want our lives, well-being, and surroundings to be disrupted and permanently harmed.
- **Communication Interference:** We are also concerned that large turbines can interfere with mobile phone and Wi-Fi signals, particularly in rural areas where coverage is already limited. This would severely impact our ability to work from home and stay connected.
- **Loss of Amenity:** The peace, safety, and rural character that define this area would be permanently altered. Our family's ability to enjoy our home, garden, and local environment would be seriously diminished.

3. Environmental & Ecological Concerns

The proposed site includes sensitive peatlands and water systems crucial to biodiversity and carbon storage. Construction activity would threaten these fragile habitats through:

- Peat disturbance, carbon release, and alteration of bog hydrology
- Sediment run-off and contamination of local streams, wells, and drainage systems
- Habitat fragmentation affecting breeding birds (curlews, lapwings, skylarks) and protected bat species such as the Lesser Horseshoe Bat

We find it particularly ironic that in recent years, the rehabilitation and conservation of bogs have become national environmental priorities—featured regularly in the news and supported through government initiatives—because of their crucial role as carbon sinks and biodiversity refuges. Yet, this project proposes industrial-scale construction, excavation, and piling on peatland, directly contradicting these efforts.

Disturbing peatlands through excavation, piling, or drainage can release significant stored carbon,

alter hydrology, and cause irreversible environmental harm. Given the ecological sensitivity and irreplaceable nature of these habitats any renewable energy benefits from this project are unlikely to adequately offset the environmental damage that would result.

4. Birdlife and Habitat Impact

The developer's environmental reports state that bird collisions with turbine blades are expected to be "negligible." We strongly disagree with this conclusion. Even if the number of direct collisions were low, the overall impact on birdlife cannot be considered negligible when the wider picture is taken into account.

This project would involve extensive excavation of peatland to install turbine bases—each requiring deep concrete foundations and hardstanding areas roughly comparable in size to a football field, along with new access roads and drainage. Such disturbance would permanently destroy or fragment habitats used by curlews, lapwings, skylarks, and birds of prey that depend on these boglands and hedgerows for nesting and feeding.

Birds are not only threatened by collisions but also by the loss and degradation of the landscapes they rely on. Large turbines introduce constant movement, shadow, and noise, deterring many species from using the area altogether. For a site of this scale, in such an ecologically sensitive location, these effects are significant and long-lasting. We therefore believe that the assertion of "negligible impact" is inaccurate and misleading.

5. Hydrology, Peat Stability, and Flood Risk

We have reviewed the developer's reports on soils, hydrology, and peat stability. While they show that some testing was carried out, all of this work was commissioned and interpreted by consultants hired by RWE. There has been no independent review of the data or modelling, which is troubling given the deep peat and the site's drainage link to the Corrib system.

The studies rely mainly on hand-held field probes and average peat-strength values, without testing how heavy rainfall, drainage, or climate change might affect the bog's stability over time. From living here, we know that this is soft, waterlogged ground that floods easily after prolonged rain. Any disturbance could have serious and lasting effects on the environment and nearby homes. Disturbing this delicate hydrological balance could also increase surface-water run-off, redirect natural drainage paths, and heighten flood risk for properties in lower-lying areas.

We are particularly concerned that the full effects of this development on the local ecosystem, hydrology, and geology have not been fully understood or adequately assessed. The proposed turbine sites form part of the wider Corrib catchment—a complex and interconnected system of peatlands, groundwater, and surface water that ultimately drains toward Lough Corrib. Any disturbance to drainage patterns, groundwater movement, or peat structure could therefore have far-

reaching and cumulative impacts well beyond the immediate area. Given these risks, and the fact that the developer's assessments have not been independently verified, it would be irresponsible to proceed without a comprehensive, independent review of the hydrological and geological implications.

We therefore ask An Bord Pleanála to require such an independent review before any decision is made. If permission were ever granted, there should also be ongoing, publicly available monitoring to ensure the land remains safe, stable, and environmentally sound. The proposed development does not exist in isolation — it sits within a living, interconnected ecosystem whose integrity must be safeguarded through independent scrutiny and precaution.

6. Impact on Mental Well-being and Sense of Place

Modern turbines emit both audible “swooshing” sounds and low-frequency infrasound. While there is no conclusive scientific consensus on the direct health impacts of infrasound, there is growing anecdotal and community evidence of residents living near large wind farms experiencing sleep disturbance, headaches, stress, and general decline in well-being. At a distance of approximately 960 metres, and with turbines reaching up to 180 metres in height, such effects cannot reasonably be dismissed.

In a quiet, rural setting like Toberroe, even low-level or rhythmic turbine noise can intrude on daily life and rest, especially at night or during calm weather when background sound is minimal. For our family—one of whom works from home—the constant presence of low-frequency noise, vibration, and movement would make concentration and recovery increasingly difficult, affecting both health and quality of life over time.

Beyond physical or mental health effects, the loss of peace, stillness, and natural quiet would profoundly alter the emotional character of this place. The sense of calm, refuge, and connection with nature that makes this our home would be lost.

7. Lack of Genuine Consultation and Transparency

We received one letter inviting us to a public meeting that we could not attend. It stated that representatives would visit homes in the area, yet despite one of us being home throughout, no one called or followed up.

This leaves us feeling that consultation requirements are being fulfilled on paper but not in practice. Our neighbours share this frustration, feeling uninformed and unheard on a development that will reshape our community.

8. Precedent: High Court Cases on Wind Turbine Noise

We have also become aware of two recent High Court cases in County Wexford, where wind farms with smaller turbines than those proposed here were ordered to either shut down permanently or cease operation at night due to ongoing noise breaches and residential disturbance.

It took affected residents over 12 years and significant legal costs to have their suffering recognised and action taken. Reading about these cases has been deeply distressing and has reinforced our fears that once turbines are constructed, residents have little to no effective recourse if noise, vibration, or health impacts occur. This further underlines the risk of permitting turbines of this scale so close to homes.

9. Visual and Landscape Impact

The proposed 180-metre turbines would dominate the rural skyline, visible from our home and across the surrounding countryside. The transformation from open, natural vistas to an industrial landscape would cause permanent visual blight, undermining the character of Toberroe and the wider Kilconly area.

This intrusion would also affect local tourism, the community's enjoyment of the landscape, and pride in the area's natural beauty. The development would visually overwhelm and degrade the setting of important cultural and archaeological sites, including Feartagar (Jennings) Castle, Kilconly Church, and surrounding ringforts.

Such impacts would directly conflict with Galway County Development Plan Objectives AHC 1 and LCE 1, which aim to protect Galway's archaeological heritage, scenic landscapes, and rural character from inappropriate or visually dominant development.

10. Policy Conflicts

- The **Galway County Development Plan 2022–2028** sets clear objectives to protect biodiversity, landscape character, and rural amenity. Objectives NHB 3 and NHB 4 require that developments with potential to impact sensitive habitats undergo rigorous ecological appraisal, and that projects causing cumulative or long-term harm should not be permitted. Objective CC 10 further promotes environmentally sensitive design and the integration of green infrastructure. In light of these principles, the placement of 180-metre turbines within approximately 960 metres of family homes, and across valuable peatlands, appears inconsistent with the intent of the Plan, given the inevitable noise, shadow flicker, and visual intrusion that would erode rural amenity, landscape integrity and environmental health.
- The **WHO's Environmental Noise Guidelines (2018)** recommend low night-time noise levels in order to protect health and well-being, and the Irish EPA acknowledges that these levels are lower than many existing regulatory thresholds. Given the very quiet rural setting of our home and the scale and proximity of the proposed turbines, it is highly unlikely that

the recommended noise exposure levels could be maintained especially when background noise is minimal and the potential for low-frequency, continuous turbine noise is present

- The **National Planning Framework (Objective 6.3)** calls for the efficient and sustainable use of Ireland's water resources and infrastructure, ensuring that development protects and conserves these vital systems. While peatlands are not specifically mentioned, their hydrology and carbon-storage functions make them integral to sustainable water management. This proposal involves large-scale excavation and drainage within deep peatland linked to the Corrib catchment, directly conflicting with the intent of this objective
- The **Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006**, which remain the operative national policy, require that developments protect residential amenity through appropriate siting and separation. However, those guidelines were written nearly twenty years ago when turbines were typically less than half the height now proposed. Applying the same standards to turbines of this scale is outdated and fails to safeguard nearby residents.
- The **Draft Revised Guidelines (2019)**, though not yet adopted, recognise this gap and propose stronger safeguards — including stricter limits on noise and shadow flicker, enhanced visual assessments,
- The **Draft Revised Guidelines (2019)**, though not yet adopted, recognise this gap and propose stronger safeguards — including stricter limits on noise and shadow flicker, enhanced visual assessments, and a clearer emphasis on community protection. The intent of those draft standards is clear: large-scale turbines must not dominate or degrade rural living environments.

Taken together, these conflicts demonstrate that the proposed development does not align with either the letter or the spirit of national and local planning policy.

11. Final Statement

We strongly urge An Bord Pleanála to refuse planning permission for this development.

Wind energy has an important role in Ireland's renewable future, but it must not come at the expense of residents' health, well-being, and the destruction of rural communities. Placing 180m industrial turbines approximately 960 metres from family homes and on fragile peatlands is fundamentally incompatible with sustainable and responsible planning.

We respectfully request that the Board protect the people, environment, and heritage of Kilconly and Caherlistrane by rejecting this proposal.

Thank you for considering our submission.

Sincerely,



Maria Smyth

Toberroe, Kilconly, Co. Galway

Eircode: H54 RY93

Date: 24/10/2025