

## **Letter of objection to Cooloo Windfarm Planning Application**

### **An Bord Pleanála Case reference PAX07.323761**

Local residents and landowner – John Oliver and Sharon Meehan, Ballinastack, Moylough, Ballinasloe, Co. Galway. H53P593.

I, John Oliver Meehan, am an adjoining farmer to the Cooloo windfarm. My land, folio number Gy125567F, is situated on the cusp of the windfarm, only 250 metres from turbine number 8. I also am the owner of a vacant house, Eircode H53YC62, Located 800 metres from turbine number 8.

I am a full-time dairy farmer; this is my only source of income. I am a liquid milk supplier, supplying milk all year round to the Aurivo co-op. I am very proud of what I do, and my milk is of the highest quality. This was proven to be the case when I was the recipient of the award of Highest protein in a pedigree Friesian herd in Galway.

The milk produced on my farm is used to produce drinking milk, butter and milk powders. In addition to this, I also produce beef.

I am a derogation farmer and must farm under extremely strict environmental regulations to protect and preserve the environment. Having farmed my entire life, I love and respect the nature that I work in every day and too raise my children to share that love and respect also.

### **I wish to object to the Cooloo Windfarm on the following grounds.**

- I. The lack of community engagement, blatant lies told by the developer therefore questions must be asked of the integrity of the project.
- II. One rule for food production and another for energy production??
- III. Badgers??
- IV. Property devaluation and shadow flicker.
- V. EU Nature restoration plan.
- VI. Regulation outdated.

**I. The lack of community engagement, blatant lies told by the developer therefore questions must be asked of the integrity of the project.**

I am going to give a brief history of my experience dealing with MKO and Neoen, their lies, mistruths about community engagement and dealing with issues / problems that arose in the lead up to looking for planning for the Cooloo Windfarm.

The first I heard of the Windfarm in the Cooloo area in late 2021 when I enquired about a mast in the Cooloo area. A neighbouring farmer informed me that it was part of a survey being conducted regarding the construction and building of a Windfarm. It is worth noting this mast was erected without planning permission and only got retention planning on the 26/06/2023 (planning reference number 23119), over two years after its erection.

I did not receive any form of communication from Neoen, MKO, or anyone associated with them or this project at any stage even though I am so near the potential Windfarm. I visit my farm daily in Elmhill to herd and feed my replacement dairy heifers. At one point, I seen a jeep parked in my land without my permission. The following day when I returned to my land, my heifers were disturbed, and the surrounding fence was broken. I spoke with a local landowner, and he informed me that two females from MKO were surveying the area. I had never been asked or given permission for anyone to enter my lands.

In January 2024, I was down in Elmhill to check my land and for my regular walk to clear my head and get some peace and quiet. I met and began chatting with a local neighbour, when the question was asked, if I was going to the "public meeting" in Barnaderg hall regarding the Windfarm. I had never received any notice or communication whatsoever regarding the meeting even though I am right beside and involuntarily involved in the proposed Windfarm.

I attended the public meeting to get some information regarding this proposed Windfarm. At this meeting, I spoke with Niall Quain of Neoen, who offered to give me a guided tour of the displays in the hall. I was totally and utterly blown away and taken a back by the sheer scale of the project and the towering 180 metre high turbines.

Niall Quain showed me the outline of the Windfarm on the map and informed me that everything inside the red line was the Windfarm. He said all landowners inside this red line were signed up and fully consulted with. He said a detailed survey was conducted on the lands inside the red line with the landowner's permission. As I studied the map, I seen my farm was inside this red line. I questioned Niall Quinn about this to which his reply was "this is not possible". I told him I knew this was my land and pointed out my fields on the map. Niall was lost for words and had absolutely no explanation how or why this happened.

Niall took my details and said he would get back to me ASAP. I left the meeting in Barnaderg very upset, dismayed and angry as my land was on public display as been part of something I absolutely was not and did not consent or agree to.

I did not receive any communication from Niall Quain; therefore, I sent him a text message on the 09<sup>th</sup> of February 2024. This message contained my folio numbers and a request for him to get back to me and explain what had gone wrong. Niall Quain never acknowledged or replied to my message. I phoned Niall on numerous occasions, but he did not answer nor return any of my calls. I then contacted the community liaison person, Toni Burke. She answered my initial call but never returned my call as she said she would.

This coupled with the previously stated events caused both my family and I a great deal of stress and distress. These maps were still being used by Neoen up until January 2025.

I am a very upstanding member of my community, as was my late father before me, and stand by my word and beliefs. The maps that Neoen had on public display with my farm included in, without my permission or consent, made me look like an absolute hypocrite and that I was talking out of both sides of my mouth.

The actions of Neoen put my long-standing good name in jeopardy. I received abuse in the community, and it was a very difficult time for me. I had to get my solicitor involved and after numerous correspondents, they eventually fixed the map in Spring 2025, over a year after I has informed them of the error.

Neoen denied that they trespassed my lands. If this is true;

- How could they have surveyed all the land inside the red line as I was told at the public meeting?
- How do they know what they did survey?
- Did they even do a proper survey if they had not a proper map of the site?
- If they treated me like this before planning is granted, how will they act with issues or problems that arise while the Windfarm is under construction or functioning?

They claimed they engaged with the local community regarding this development, **THAT IS LIES**. I am proof of how they treated every person in the community that has not signed up to their Windfarm.

## II. One rule for food production and another for energy production??

As a farmer, I have to farm under a host of updated and reviewed regulations, some of these monthly, others annually. Yet a Windfarm outside my fence, can be built with regulations from 2006 and **NO** regulation on Battery storage facilities.

I farm under “code of good practice”, this covers;

- A. Food safety and quality
- B. Environmental protection
- C. Health and Safety and animal welfare
- D. Economic viability.

If Cooloo Windfarm goes ahead, it will impact on my ability to farm in Elmhill and Gurteenlahard.

### A. Food safety & Quality

With the construction of the Cooloo Windfarm, the moving of peat, pouring of concrete and the felling of a plantation will cause flooding on my land. When water rises on land, it will increase diseases and create poorer grazing ground. The badgers and other wildlife will be disturbed, as previously witnessed in the construction of Motorways. This will lead to TB and increased disease rates in livestock and therefore effect the quality of my product.

### B. Environmental Protection

I must farm under very strict environmental regulations, including;

- Can't plough lands
- Can't let chemicals or nitrates enter water courses
- Can't remove hedges or trees
- Can't cut hedges in late spring or summer
- Can't out winter cattle or poach lands
- Can't disturb badgers or kill if at risk of T.B

But yet over the fence, Neon and Cooloo Windfarm are looking to;

- Dig up and remove tens of thousands of tons of Peat (release significant volumes of carbon)
- Let sludge and sediment into rivers
- Cut down and remove mature trees and hedges
- Knock down and destroy badger sets and other wildlife habitats

This simply does not add up.

### **C. Health & Safety and Animal welfare**

My lands are only 250 metres from turbine number 8. I rear my Weanling heifers and in calf heifers on this land every year. With the shadow flicker and noise from these turbines, it will affect the temperament and health of my animals thus affect them from thriving towards getting in calf and too developing their impregnated calf. If these animals get frightened or spooked, it will absolutely result in injuries and possible abortions in heifers.

### **D. Economic viability**

If this Windfarm goes ahead, it will destroy my farms viability. I am at the start of the rivers and drains that flow through Cooloo bog. When the bog is dug up, filled with gravel roads, 1000+ metres of concrete per turbine base, the drains and rivers will be disturbed and will, without any doubt, back up, resulting in my land flooding and render it useless to farm, worthless in value and reduced grass growth from temperature disturbance as a result of spinning turbines.

If my animals are not in good health nor settled in their familiar and natural environment, they will not reach target weights for breeding. Not reaching target weights for breeding will result in;

- Animals that are too light- will not come in to calf. This will result in the culling of non in calf animals.
- If in calf heifers abort, this will hugely affect my viability and that of my family.

### **III. Badgers**

I questioned earlier about the quantity, quality and accuracy of surveys carried out by Neoen. I have only had the opportunity to read some of the enormous planning application placed by Neoen, and failed to locate any references to the presence of Badgers on the proposed Windfarm site? This again is untrue. There are several Badger runs on my land, visible to any person that looks. In fact, these were seen by the Department of Agriculture officials who checked my land for Badger sets after a neighbouring farm had a T.B outbreak three years ago. These runs continue into the lands of folio number GY14170, which is part of the proposed Windfarm, and continue down to the forest that is planned to be removed to facilitate the Windfarm construction.

How can this be possible that as a farmer, we can not harm, kill or destroy Badgers or their homes but Neoen are proposing to destroy Badger sets??

#### **IV. Property devaluation and shadow flicker.**

If the Cooloo Windfarm is constructed, it will lead to a devastating devaluation to my lands and house.

The vacant house, EIRCODE H53YC62, is located 800 metres from turbine number 8. This is a beautiful old cottage that I purchased to renovate as a retirement home for my wife and I. It is currently in an idyllic, peaceful and picturesque location, full of nature and character. This property will be worthless if the Windfarm is constructed. The cost of the renovations and close proximity to the Windfarm will make it uninhabitable. A study conducted by NUIG in 2023, found properties devalues greatly if located within 2km of a Windfarm. This house is to the East of the Windfarm. A low setting sun coupled with these astronomically sized turbines only a short 800 metres from this house, will make it impossible to have any quality of life or enjoyment. Also, the turbine noise and vibration will cause considerable issues for a resident like me that suffers from migraine and vertigo.

My land, folio number GY125567F. I have spent tens of thousands of Euros reclaiming, fencing, and reseeded all the farm. This farm is fully reliant on drains and rivers taking away water from it. If these drains or rivers are blocked or damaged, all my land will flood. Should this happen, all my hard work and expenses will be a huge loss and invain. My land will not be able to be farmed and will be valueless.

If Cooloo Windfarm received planning permission, I will have nothing to farm in Elmhill and Gurteenlahard. I will be holding Neoen and Cooloo Windfarm fully responsible for my property potential being destroyed and land flooded. I will be holding An Coimisun Pleanála responsible for granting planning in a most unsuitable location.

#### **V. EU Nature restoration plan**

The plan aims to focus on restoring degraded habitats through measures like rewetting peatlands, reforesting native woodlands and restoring rivers, aiming to improve biodiversity, water quality and carbon capture.

If this rule is to be Implemented in Galway, lots of bogs and low lying land will be rewetted to meet the E.U requirement. As a consequence I could be made rewet my farmland to comply with E.U law. BUT, outside the fence in my neighbour's land that is part of a bog, Neoen are planning on doing the complete opposite, cutting down trees, damaging rivers, destroying biodiversity and water quality and releasing tons upon tons of carbon (by peat extraction and pouring thousands of cubic metres of concrete). **HOW DOES THAT MAKE ANY SENSE?**

## **VI. Regulations**

This project needs to be stopped, at least until the Windfarm regulations are updated in Ireland. How can regulations that are almost 20 years old (2006), when turbines were half the size of the current proposed ones and no battery storage systems (BESS) were even regulated, be allowed??

## Summary

I whole heartily object to the development of the Cooloo Wind farm as the location is not suitable.

As turf cutting is phasing out, this bog, just like Carrownagappaul bog SAC “Galway’s living bog”, will have the opportunity to return to the way it was, buzzing with nature. Peat cutting ceased in Carrownagappaul around 2010/2011, it was closed up and restoration works began to help the nature and biodiversity to grow and flourish. It now welcomes people from all around the world to visit. This includes children from schools around our locality and the greater county of Galway. This gives them a unique opportunity to see what our original bogs looked like – full of nature, birds, bees, and wildlife. We too have a bog in Cooloo that has so much nature and Neoen want to destroy it by putting up a Windfarm that will never be carbon neutral and with devastating consequences like the bog mud slides that occurred previously on peat lands. Some examples of these are Meenbog Windfarm, Donegal, in 2020 and Derrybrien Windfarm, Galway, in 2003. Both resulted in significant environmental damage and subsequent legal action.

I love to bring my children down to Elmhill and Gurteenlahard to reset and refocus on nature. Our national and secondary schools around Ireland are continuing to introduce wellness and mindfulness programmes to reduce stress, encourage positive mental health and disengage with the digital world and reset with nature. The “NEART programme” and “mindfulness programme for national schools” are just two of many. We have a beautiful location in Cooloo to promote these initiatives within our communities and homes BUT again this will be destroyed if this Windfarm gets planning permission.

I am not against green energy, not suitable ones. I have solar panels fitted on our family home and am awaiting the erection of more on my farm. I see the benefit of these and encourage them. They are non-impactful on our daily lives, no negative effects from their function and benefit our environment. There is ample roof space across the country of Ireland for the promotion and erection of these as opposed to Windfarm turbines.

Neoen failed to engage with the community about this proposed development, evident from their absence of communication or collaboration with me. Their ignorance in ignoring numerous attempts by me to contact them is concerning.

Neoen’s very questionable survey is too of great concern. They had no idea I was a landowner on their map; had no idea a Badger run was present on my land as identified by the Department of Agriculture in 2023 and failed to render an explanation when this was questioned.

Seven of the turbines are on the Moylough side of this development however NO public meeting was held with the residents of this area.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, I firmly believe this application must be rejected.

Cooloo Windfarm fails to respect and include all of the people of this fine community.

Cooloo Windfarm fails to respect and protect the animals, birds and nature within this community.

Cooloo Windfarm fails to understand and grasp the history and heritage of this landscape.

We are only the guardians of these unique and natural habitats that are only found in the West of Ireland and will pass them on to the next generation to enjoy.

For all these reasons I urge An Coimisiun Pleanála to fully reject this Windfarm.

Go raibh míle maith agat.