An Coimisiún Pleanála Case reference: PAX07.323761

Address: located within Cloondahamper, Cloonascragh, Elmhill, Cooloo, Lecarrow, Dangan Eighter, Lissavally and Slievegorm, Co. Galway Description: Construction of wind energy development and all associated works

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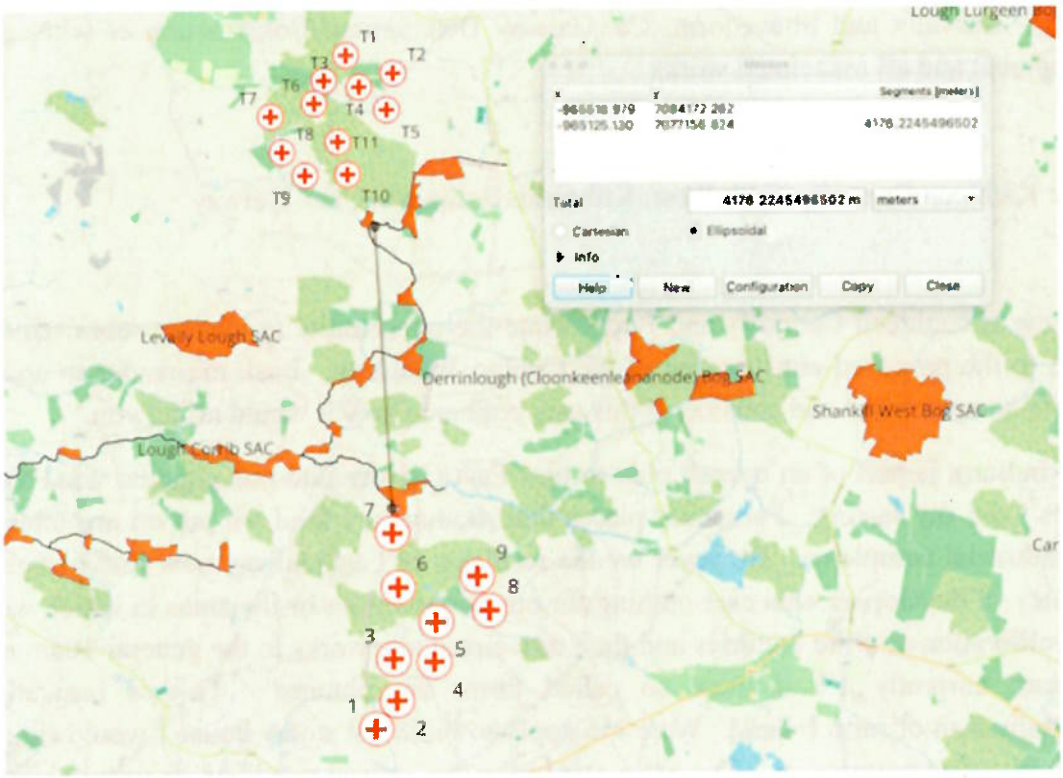
My name is Kathleen Connolly and I appreciate the opportunity to make a submission with respect to the proposed construction of the Cooloo Windfarm. I ask the reader to approach this with an open mind and consider if this was your area how it would affect you.

This windfarm is part of an overall plan to turn East Galway into one gigantic wind factory; and yes I did say factory. Farms are places that produce the food we put on our tables, not giant industrial complexes. However we the residents of East Galway now find ourselves at the mercy of developers who care nothing for our communities or the areas in which we live. The proliferation of wind factories and their associated site works in the general Tuam area is abhorrent; currently 17 of these so called farms are planned. This is basically the industrialisation of rural Ireland. Were I to apply to build a 4 storey house I would rightly be refused planning permission. The main reason for that refusal would be its unsuitability in a rural landscape. Why then are these mammoth turbines being allowed? These turbines are of a height only used off-shore until now; there is nothing comparable to them anywhere in the country at present. Our areas are becoming an experimental hub driven by the rampant greed of developers who are interested only in their own monetary gain. The size and height of them in a rural landscape is visually intrusive, they will dominate the skyline and be visible from all vantage points for miles on end.

I would also ask ABP to take cognisance of the fact that planning regulations with respect to the height of wind turbines and their proximity to dwellings have NOT been updated to take account of the ever increasing height and rotor span of same. At the very least all planning applications should be paused until the said regulations have been thoroughly reviewed and revised. This should be done in full consultation with the very communities whose lives are being impacted by these developments.

As previously stated, there are 17 windfarms of gargantuan proportions planned for Cooloo, Clonbern (my own area) and surrounding areas. The visual impact alone of turbines 600ft in height with rotor spans greater than the pitch in Croke Park is horrific to contemplate. From where I live I will be able to see the ones planned for Cooloo not mind the ones planned for Clonbern itself should they be allowed to proceed. I have no wish to live surrounded by turbines; rotors and flashing red warning lights for the rest of my life and I ask you the reader would you wish to live in such an area. These areas are beautiful, scenic and have huge potential for rural tourism. The map below shows the close proximity between Clonbern

with 11 proposed turbines and the further 9 proposed for Cooloo. Imagine 15 more industrial sized windfarms along with these.



We are aware that developers have a strategy with regards to our communities; divide to conquer, turn neighbours against each other, paint the area in the worst possible light on their planning applications, sparsely populated, poor quality land, very little of environmental or ecological importance, poor biodiversity. There is minimal engagement with the local communities at most it is a box ticking exercise on their behalf. We are told this is what's happening; live with it!

Our communities are vibrant and thriving; if these windfarms proceed our communities will be decimated as the younger generation will not wish to live here. The land is good quality and well cared for, we are the ones who produce the food that goes on your tables. Given the current political climate worldwide I contend that food security be the number one concern, not the windfarms these developers wish to erect.

The turbines themselves will in fact pose serious risks to our reputation as a country that produces quality food.

Turbine blades shed micro-plastics which then contaminate the surrounding land where crops are grown and animals graze. We are already seeing serious concerns with regard to the amount of micro-plastics in fish. Are we now to have the same concerns about out vegetables, grain, milk and meat?

Turbine blades are constructed from fibre glass reinforced with epoxy resins containing a significant amount of BPA.

BPA (Bisphenol A)

- **Definition:** A chemical used in the production of certain hard plastics and resins.
- **Composition:** A chemical building block, not a plastic particle itself.
- **Examples:** Found in polycarbonate plastics and epoxy resins, which are used in many everyday items.

BPA is highly toxic and even small concentrations affect the fertility of humans and animals and all living organisms, this toxic chemical is increasingly used in the construction of turbine blades. Needless to say as the blades/rotors become ever larger so does the amount of BPA being released onto our farms due to rotor spinning at speed and weathering and erosion cause by wind and rain. Consider if you will those plastic drinks bottles that you purchase as the kids return to school; have you ever wondered why some of the more reputable brands state that they are BPA free? Do you want to live with the risk of it being present in the food you eat, the water you drink?

Biodiversity

With regard to the species they find on the sites they minimise by saying they aren't there in significant numbers and that they will "mitigate" the damage done. My contention is that in these times of environmental crisis there is no such thing as an insignificant number of any species and that this "minimisation – mitigation" combination is a deliberate tactic employed by developers as a means to an end.

There is no "mitigation" to stop the pervasive destruction of environments, ecology and habitats that will occur during the construction of these turbines. It is ironic in the extreme that we the people of rural Ireland are told to preserve bogland while these developers are given "carte blanche" to destroy them. How many tonnes of carbon will be released into the atmosphere by the excavation necessary to construct gigantic bases for these turbines and the machinery necessary to erect them? Furthermore what becomes of the unstable excavated peat? It will be stored in large heaps, exposed to the rain, with the not inconsiderable risk of bog slides and yet more environmental damage.

Similarly biodiversity is the current "buzz word" and we are told how important it is for the health of our ecosystems and the planet as a whole. We already have that biodiversity and to our joy are seeing many species such as curlews and birds of prey making a return or increasing in numbers, yet once again it seems that developers are getting to destroy this and raze of the very habitats these species depend upon. These developers would have you believe they've employed Dr. Doolittle to persuade these wild birds, animals and butterflies to go quietly to a designated area. If birds or other animals have a set flight path or routine do you think they are just going to move to an area designated by the developer? Again this is smoke and mirrors to distract from the real cost of turbines in terms of diversity.

Karst

East Galway consists of lowland karst which is even more complex than the upland karst of the burren, Co. Clare and the Cavan burren. It is also the least studied and understood according to the Geological Survey of Ireland. Within the site of this windfarm are the sources for the Brierfield Group Water Scheme, Barnaderg Group Water Scheme and Mid Galway Public Water Scheme which supplies up to 10,000 households in an area stretching from Horseleap Cross to Tuam, Ballyglunin, Kiltullagh, Athenry and back to Abbeyknockmoy.

The risk to this water supply is not to be underestimated; karst systems are highly vulnerable and fragile ecosystems. The risk of silt and chemical pollutants washing into the system cannot be stressed highly enough. Karst landscapes cover approximately10-13% of the Earth's land surface, and about a quarter of the world's population depends on them for their water supply. Despite their relatively small global footprint, karst aquifers are a crucial source of freshwater for a large percentage of the world's population.

This is especially true for the West of Ireland and East Galway in particular. MKO propose a range of measures to deal with the inconvenience of karst beneath the soil. These include "choking" the throat of sinkholes by infilling them repeatedly in layers and compacting each layer. Blocking sinkholes will without doubt cause flooding as the water will resurface elsewhere. Grouting of the karst is also proposed by high pressure injection of sealants into holes drilled in the karst. The ingredients used in this procedure include cements, bentonite, clay, sand, additives i.e. chemicals. Polyurethane foam grouting or grouting with asphalt or hot bitumen are other methods that are used. These chemicals are then going to spread throughout the entire karstic system contaminating out drinking water. Would you the reader be happy to drink the water from your kitchen tap knowing that these chemical were likely present? MKO propose the drainage of the system which will irrevocably alter the water flow and damage the water table. A healthy karst ecosystem is vital in flood prevention and never more so than in current times with increase rainfall. Instead of its wholesale destruction karst systems need to be protected as they are vital in the fight against climate change.

Clean safe drinking water is considered a human right, formally recognized by the United Nations in 2010. The UN General Assembly resolved that access to safe, clean drinking water is essential for the full enjoyment of life and all human rights. It is seen as a precondition for other rights, such as the right to life, health, and human dignity. Allowing this windfarm to proceed and knowing the risks it poses to our drinking water denies this most basic of human rights to the people of East Galway.

New Technology

Wind turbines are a technology that will in the near future be obsolete and this country will be faced with an enormous bill to remove these eyesores from the landscape.

Norway is actively testing and developing airborne wind energy technology using large kites to generate electricity. This technology aims to capture more consistent and powerful winds at higher altitudes, offering an alternative to traditional turbines. "Futureville" the RTE programme for Science Week also showed this technology is beings developed here. In Japan scientists have built a device that generates electricity from the microscopic water molecules in the air around us. Also in Japan is Asia's first Osmotic Power Plant which runs 24 hour per day on fresh water and seawater. It is the second such plant in the world,

Denmark opened one in 2023. Living on an island in the Atlantic one would think that this should be a viable option for our energy needs.

In conclusion I thank the reader for their time and attention and ask them to give serious consideration to my concerns. The people in this area are not cranks we are have genuine issues and concerns with what we see happening in our communities. These developers are relying on the fact that you are more like as not unfamiliar with our area. Therefore they paint a picture of a bleak, barren, isolated, sparsely populated location suitable for nothing but turbines. I wish once again to remind you that nothing could be further from the truth.