

Letter of the Objection to Cooloo Windfarm Planning Application
An Bord Pleanála Case Reference : PAX07.323761

Name: Padraic Meehan

Address: Loughill Moylough Ballinasloe Co.Galway H53YX64

I live 2 kilometres southeast of the proposed Turbine 8, and one of my pastimes is to go for a walk to clear my head and to enjoy the peace and quiet and to be at one with nature.

My grounds for objection are as follows:

1. Communications
2. Historical and cultural effects
3. Wind farm energy production overstated
4. Bats
5. Incomplete survey of houses
6. Listening to nature and whooper swans
7. Diving communities
8. Mitigation guarantee

1. Communications

In our locality our phone network and broadband are of third-world standard. Once you place these giant turbines, how are we guaranteed to have a stable communication network to contact emergency services when required? With an ageing population, our neighbours depend on personal alarms to call for help. How are they going to contact services in times of need? From reading the application we can see already that Turbine 7 may have to be microsited, and the ESB network may have to move their mast in Glenamaddy and Castlerea to pick up its signal from the Knockroe mast. The other proposed wind farm in Clonberne stated they have to move these masts in a different direction. Does this mean the mast will be moved around on wheels to get a signal? We are supposed to be upgrading the network and making it more efficient in our area; instead, we are going in the opposite direction.

2. Historical and cultural effects

Two of my hobbies come together in the Cooloo bog. I love going for walks, and I love studying history and trying to imagine how our ancestors walked and lived on this land over the years. On a walk through the bog in October 2025 we discovered an old roadway through the bog from the direction of Turbine 9 straight across the bog. Based on the earliest map dated 1837, there was no record of this road, so we assume it predates this date. As we know, before the famine in Ireland, the population was over 8 million. So people lived around the edge of the bog and used to store cheese and many other artefacts. Only a few kilometres from this location, 2 rough out canoes were found and are now stored by the National Museum of Ireland.

As per the archaeological report completed for MKO by Faith Bailey and John Small they state, "It remains possible that previously unknown archaeological sites and features may survive below the current ground level across the area, particularly in areas of pasture that have not been previously disturbed. Ground disturbance associated with the proposed windfarm such as the construction of access roads and excavation for turbine bases, compounds and substations, has the potential to result in direct, negative (permanent) effects on any such remains that may be present."

How can I be confident that these historical remains will be protected and recorded once construction commences?

3. Wind farm energy generation overstated.

This wind farm, like all other wind farms, is not viable on its own; it is the government subsidies for the lifetime of the wind farm that make it viable. This thing that wind energy is cheap is false advertising. As per the planning application, the wind farm will generate 64 MW of power; this is based on what the turbine brochure states for an ideal environment. The reality is due to the wind we receive in Cooloo and the lack of upgrades to our nation's power grid, this wind farm will only be generating about 30 MW. The only reason the higher figure of 64 MW is submitted is to avoid looking for planning approval from Galway County Council. Also the windfarm company Neoen will claim from the government the shortfall in energy generated, which in this instance will be the difference between 64 MW and 30 MW, so there is actually an incentive for windfarms to get locations that will not achieve full potential, as more money is to be made from the government by not generating electricity. Sounds like a scam!

4. Bats

Around the windfarm there are 4 types of bat species nesting and feeding, they are the common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared and lister bats. The main nesting place for pipistrelles is an old house called Elmhill House, which is 180 metres east of Turbine 8. The ultrasound from the turbine is going to interfere with the bats' navigation, as bats emit a high-frequency sound pulse and listen for the return echo. Also bats will be flying through the Turbine 8 location to get to their feeding area in existing plantations, hedgerows and rivers west of Turbine 8.

For mitigation for bats, it proposes to remove hedgerows in a 50-metre buffer zone, but bats can travel a few kilometres, and bats' preferred feeding ground is over rivers and streams, which are situated in the middle of the wind farm, so it will be hard to avoid bats' collision with turbine blades.

5. Incomplete survey of houses

Not all houses are included in the survey for light flicker; the house with Eircode H53FF64 which is 500 metres from turbine 4, is not included on the maps. How can we be satisfied with the due diligence taken by MKO when completing their surveys? How many other errors have they made in their application?

6. Listening to nature/whooper Swans

From October to early spring I love watching the whooper swans fly past my property every evening and, on calm nights, listening to them honking in Turlough Quin which is 1.5 km from Turbine 8, these swans also rest in Horseleap Lake and Lavelly Lake, so it means they fly directly through the wind farms as they fly along the lower land and valleys, which are corridors through the bog. How will they avoid collision with turbines?

7. Dividing a community

The wind farm is dividing communities and families. Communication with the community was nonexistent; apart from the people that were approached and bribed to sign up and keep quiet, nobody outside of these few knew anything until it was too late.

If windfarm companies were out for the good of the environment, they would get a community together and offer the community/people within a 10 km radius of the windfarm free electricity for the 35-year lifetime of the windfarm. But instead of this, it offers 2000 euro to a few people to sign up and keep quiet, with an additional 1500 every year until planning approval. These people didn't know what they signed up for, as it was all secret. I know of one family that signed up, and when he wanted to pull out, the wind farm company (Neoen) turned up with an army of solicitors and threatened the farmer that he would lose everything. This is not a real business dealing but more like the way drug gangs conduct business. How can this carry on and give me encouragement to appreciate this wind farm when it is more like a mafia business?

8. Mitigation guarantees

In the event of the wind farm getting planning permission and entering the construction phase, how am I, as a concerned citizen, going to be guaranteed that all of the mitigation that is proposed by MKO in the planning documents will be complied with, such as a full-time archaeologist being on site to check the peat soil being dug out for signs of prehistoric life and artefacts? From my experience of other wind farms under construction, such as on the Bord na Mona bogs in Offaly, there is security on site keeping out members of the public. They seem to be hiding the destruction of the bog; is it that once they get the go-ahead, they don't follow the guidelines set out in the approved planning?

Conclusion

The world you build now is the world your kids will have to live in. Granting permission to this wind farm is going to further burden your kids with higher energy costs in the future. It also destroys the chance for them to enjoy the peace and quiet of these natural habitats that are unique to Ireland. The raised living bogs and turloughs are mainly found in this part of West Ireland, and to pass them on to the next generation.

This project should be refused planning, as the area is a unique habitat not found in the rest of Europe and which we the general public and farmers, are encouraged to protect by wetting the bogland, not digging it up and destroying it