

## **Submission to An Coimisiún Pleanála**

**Re: Cooloo Windfarm Development Planning Reference- 323761**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing in my capacity as a public representative for the Bearnaderg, Cooloo and wider North-East Galway community to formally relay the serious concerns and strong opposition expressed to me by a significant number of residents over recent months regarding the proposed wind farm development at Bearnaderg-Cooloo.

This submission reflects the views of the constituents who have contacted me directly- many of whom feel their voices have not been heard through the developer's engagement process. These concerns are substantial, grounded in lived experience of the locality, and must be given their full and proper consideration in the planning process.

### **1. Threat to Local Water Sources and Public Health**

The foremost issue raised with me is the potential risk to local drinking water sources. Three separate water schemes serving the region lie within the zone that may be impacted by this development. Together, these schemes supply approximately 10,000 households.

Any interference with water quality- whether arising from construction disturbance, peat displacement, contamination, or alteration of natural drainage patterns- would have a profound and unacceptable impact on thousands of families, farms, businesses, and community facilities. Constituents have repeatedly emphasised that the safeguarding of these water sources must be treated as a matter of public health.

Given the scale of potential risk, this alone warrants the most stringent scrutiny and a precautionary approach.

### **2. Concerns Regarding Project Splitting**

Residents have also expressed considerable frustration at what they perceive as a fragmented or staged approach to the planning applications associated with this development. The proposal for nine turbines is being advanced first, while additional key infrastructure- including the substation, BESS, and grid connection- are expected to be submitted separately at a later date.

This approach appears, to local people, to constitute project splitting, contrary to the requirement that developments of this nature be assessed as a single, integrated project. All associated infrastructure is integral to the functioning of the wind farm; it is not credible to treat them as independent developments.

The community asks- and I agree- that An Coimisiún Pleanála considers this project in its entirety, not in isolated phases, in order to ensure an accurate assessment of cumulative impacts.

### **3. Inadequate Community Engagement**

A recurring and deeply felt grievance is the lack of adequate and meaningful community consultation. Numerous local groups- active, well-established community organisations- report that they were not contacted by developers at all, despite being directly affected by proposed works.

Effective engagement is fundamental to a good planning. When communities feel excluded from the process, it undermines trust and raises legitimate questions about transparency, respect, and the robustness of the information being presented.

My constituents deserve far better than the limited and selective engagement that appears to have occurred in this case.

#### **4. Impact on Roads, Transport and Traffic**

Residents are also concerned about the significant increase in heavy and general traffic that this development will generate. It has been brought to my attention that the traffic surveys were conducted in July, during the school summer holidays- a period that does not reflect normal traffic levels in the area.

This raises serious doubts about the reliability of the data used to assess road capacity and safety impacts. Local roads are narrow, heavily utilised, and not designed for sustained heavy construction traffic. Transport of turbine components, construction materials and machinery may have major consequences for road safety, road conditions, emergency access, and travel times for local residents and services.

The community is clear that a more accurate and seasonally representative traffic assessment is required.

#### **5. Impact on Local Schools, Students and Families**

Several local schools fall within the affected area, and concerns have been raised by parents, teachers and school boards.

Wind turbines generate audible noise, low-frequency infrasound, and shadow flicker. For children- especially those who are neurodivergent, including those with autism, ADHD or sensory processing differences- these stimuli can be highly disruptive, distressing and potentially harmful.

Families fear the unnecessary sensory burden this development would impose on students and staff, potentially affecting learning environments, student well-being and school operations.

This is not a peripheral issue; it is central to community welfare and must be weighed with the utmost seriousness.

#### **6. Impact on Residents and Animals Within 1.8km**

Constituents living within 1.8km of the proposed turbines are deeply concerned about the continuous noise, low-frequency noise, and shadow flicker, and the resulting effects on human health, wellbeing, sleep, mental health, and daily quality of life.

Farmers in the locality have raised concerns regarding the impact of livestock and animal behaviour, noting that disturbance of this kind can have measurable negative effects.

Residents make clear that these impacts cannot be downplayed or dismissed. They will be borne continuously and indefinitely by those living closest to the turbines.

For all the reasons outlined above- the threat to major water supplies, the concerns around project splitting, insufficient community engagement, inaccuracies in traffic analysis, the

potential impact on local schools, and the significant health and environmental impacts on residents- I respectfully submit that the concerns of this community are serious, well-founded, and require full consideration.

My role is to reflect the voice of the people I represent, and their message is unambiguous: **they do not believe this development, as proposed, is appropriate for their area.**

I urge An Coimisiún Pleanála to take these matters into account in its assessment and to ensure that the rights, health, safety and wellbeing of the community are prioritised.

Yours faithfully,

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