



Observation on a Strategic Infrastructure Development Application

Observer's details

1. Observer's details (person making the observation)

If you are making the observation, write your full name and address.

If you are an agent completing the observation for someone else, write the observer's details:

(a) Observer's name

Click or tap here to enter text.

Evie Rhatigan

(b) Observer's postal address

Ballintaw Athlacca Co Limerick V35 XC38

Agent's details

2. Agent's details (if applicable)

If you are an agent and are acting for someone else **on this observation**, please **also** write your details below.

If you are not using an agent, please write "Not applicable" below.

(a) Agent's name

N/A

(b) Agent's postal address

N/A

Postal address for letters

3. During the process to decide the application, we will post information and items to you or to your agent. For this **current application**, who should we write to? (Please tick ✓ one box only)

You (the observer) at the postal address in Part 1

The agent at the postal address in Part 2

Details about the proposed development

4. Please provide details about the **current application** you wish to make an observation.

- (a) **An Bord Pleanála case number for the current application (if available)**
(for example: 300000)

323780

- (b) **Name or description of proposed development**

Ballinlee Green Energy Ltd

- (c) **Location of proposed development**

(for example: 1 Main Street, Baile Fearainn, Co Abhaile)

located in Ballincurra, Balingayrou, Ballinlee North & South, Ballinrea, Ballyreesode, Camas North & South, Carrigeen, Knockuregare, Ballybane and other townlands in County Limerick.
(www.ballinleegreenenergyplanning.ie)



Observation details

5. Grounds

Please describe the grounds of your observation (planning reasons and arguments). You can type or write them in the space below. There is **no word limit** as the box expands to fit what you write.

You can also insert photographs or images in this box. (See part 6 – Supporting materials for more information).

To whom it may concern, as teenagers, we're always told that renewable energy—especially wind power—is the key to building a cleaner, more sustainable future. Our schoolbooks show these sleek white turbines spinning peacefully over green hills, like they're almost magical. But when you dig into what it takes to build something like a Vestas wind turbine, it becomes clear that the story we get in class is only half the picture. It's not that renewable energy is bad, but it has environmental and ethical impacts that we're *not* taught to think about.

To start with, the materials needed for a single wind turbine are massive. And when you look closely at what those materials are, it becomes even more obvious that the process isn't as clean or harmless as we're led to believe in. A turbine is built from a long list of raw materials that come from all over the world, often at a huge environmental cost.

For example, the tower and main structural parts are mostly made from steel, which comes from iron ore mined in places like Brazil, Australia, and China. Mining iron ore tears up landscapes, destroys habitats, and releases chemical runoff into rivers. Then the ore must be smelted using coal-based coke, which releases massive amounts of CO₂. It's weird to think that something meant to fight climate change starts off by producing so much carbon.

Underneath the turbine is a giant concrete foundation—sometimes thousands of tons of it. Cement production alone is responsible for around eight percent of global carbon emissions. And getting the sand, gravel, and limestone for concrete usually means damaging rivers and natural areas even more.

Then there's copper, which is used for all the cabling and electrical parts. A lot of the world's copper comes from South America or countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mining in these places can cause acid drainage that poisons water, and in some regions, there are serious concerns about child labour and unsafe working conditions. It's hard not to feel uncomfortable knowing that some of the materials for a "green" machine might come from children, my age, working in dangerous mines.

Some of the most concerning materials are the rare earth elements used in the turbine's magnets—things like neodymium, dysprosium, and praseodymium. Most of these come from China, where the mining and processing can produce toxic, even radioactive waste. There are reports of whole farming communities losing their land or having their water polluted because of rare earth mines. Yet none of this gets mentioned when we're shown perfect diagrams of how turbines supposedly save the planet.

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The blades add another layer of contradiction. They're made from fiberglass and special resins, both of which come from fossil fuels. Even worse, fiberglass is difficult to recycle, so when turbines reach the end of their life, the blades usually get buried in giant landfills. Some companies even bury them directly on-site because it's cheaper. These materials don't break down, so they just sit there forever, which feels totally opposite to the idea of sustainability.

Petroleum-based plastics also show up everywhere—from cable insulation to blade coatings. Even carbon fiber, which some companies use to strengthen blades, comes from petrochemical processes that release lots of emissions. And let's not forget the lubricants and hydraulic oils used to keep the turbines running—they're also fossil-fuel products, which again feels contradictory when the whole point is to move away from fossil fuels.

All of this leaves me wondering why these details never make it into the curriculum. We're taught to think of wind turbines as symbols of environmental purity, but the materials behind them tell a more complicated story. We're talking about steel, concrete, copper wiring, fiberglass, and rare earth elements. All of these come from mining, which is way more polluting than most people imagine. Mining operations often destroy forests and wildlife habitats, and they release toxic chemicals into rivers and soil. For example, rare earth mineral extraction creates wastewater that can contain heavy metals and radioactive particles. None of this shows up in the cheerful diagrams in our textbooks.

The blades themselves are another issue. They're mostly made from fiberglass and hardened plastics—materials that come from petrochemicals. So even though wind turbines are supposed to help us move away from fossil fuels, we're still depending on oil and gas just to make the parts. Producing these plastics also releases pollutants like volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which contribute to air pollution and health risks for workers and communities nearby.

There's also the impact on landscapes before the turbine is even built. To construct the turbine pads and access roads, trees are often cleared and land is dug up. It's kind of ironic: we destroy parts of nature to build something meant to protect nature. When trees are removed, carbon-storing trees are lost, local ecosystems are disrupted, and erosion becomes a bigger issue. Again, this part is usually missing from the classroom version.

Then there's the stuff we *never* hear about—how wind turbines are decommissioned. A turbine's life span is usually around 20–25 years. After that, many components can be recycled, like the steel tower. But the blades? Not so much. Fiberglass is extremely hard to recycle, so the common solution is to bury the blades in giant landfills. And they don't biodegrade. At all. That means future generations end up inheriting fields full of buried turbine blades that will sit there basically forever. It's weird that something built to protect the environment can leave behind such a long-lasting waste problem.

Some companies even bury turbine components directly on-site to avoid the costs of transportation and disposal. That might be cheaper, but it also means more long-term soil contamination and lost land use. If we talked about this honestly, maybe we'd have more

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realistic conversations about sustainability instead of pretending every green technology is automatically perfect.

Then, there's the ethical side. The mining needed for copper and rare earth elements is often done in places with weak labour protections. That means reports of child labour, unsafe working conditions, and even forced labour show up in supply chains. It's unsettling to think that the same wind turbines we celebrate for being "clean energy" might be connected to human rights issues. This is one of the biggest contradictions between what we're taught (that renewable energy is ethical and fair) and what's actually happening.

And of course, everything about building a turbine—mining, manufacturing, transporting materials, and installing the turbine—requires fossil fuels. Huge diesel-powered trucks haul heavy components, cargo ships burn fuel to move parts across oceans, and construction equipment relies on gas or diesel. So even though the product creates green energy, the journey to get there is still carbon-intensive.

Another contradiction that really bothers me is how wind farms are often placed in rural, biodiverse areas—like parts of Ireland where the landscape is full of hedgerows, woodlands, wetlands, and wildlife that have been there for generations. To build these turbines, the developer will have to clear large areas of land, removing trees and ripping out hedgerows. This isn't just random pieces of land; they're habitats that support everything from insects to protected mammals like badgers and otters. When construction digs up the ground, they can destroy badger setts and otter holts, even though these animals are supposed to be protected under conservation laws.

And even after construction, the turbines themselves pose risks. It's widely known that birds and bats are killed by turbine blades, the developer writes this in their application. Right now, the fields where the turbines are proposed to be built are flooded and lots of birds have come to feed in the area. We learn that biodiversity is something we should protect at all costs, so it feels really uncomfortable to see a project that's supposed to help the environment end up harming wildlife in such direct ways. It doesn't line up with the conservation principles we're constantly taught—like preserving habitats and protecting endangered species. Instead, it feels like we're being told one thing in the classroom and shown something completely different in the real world.

On top of that, I really don't think this is a suitable place for turbines at all, especially considering how close the site is to the Morning Star River. The river supports a whole network of wildlife—fish, amphibians, insects, birds, otters, and other species that rely on access to water and undisturbed habitat. Putting turbines so close to such an important ecosystem feels irresponsible. Construction runoff, soil disturbance, noise, and habitat fragmentation can all affect the river and the animals that depend on it. It's frustrating because we're taught that rivers are delicate ecosystems that need to be protected, yet here in this development the river is being treated like it's not important.

I'm not saying wind energy is completely bad or that we shouldn't use it. But if sustainability is supposed to be about honesty and long-term thinking, then we should be taught the *full* picture. A more realistic curriculum would talk about the benefits of wind energy while also talking about the pollution from plastics and fiberglass, the land

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disruption from clearing trees, the fossil fuels burned throughout the process, and the massive waste problems that come when turbines are decommissioned.

If we want a greener future, we can't just hide the inconvenient parts. We have to face them and do better. And we must protect and conserve the existing environment around us and if you were to visit the Corcass today and see the birds foraging in the flooded fields and the whooper swans who have flown every year all the way from Iceland, you would realise why the swans go to the trouble to travel so far. It is a beautiful, natural place. If climate change is about future generations and protecting the environment for them, I represent the future generation and I'm respectfully asking that this place is recognised as a special place, it's our home, it's the home for many species and it shouldn't be destroyed for some energy company to make profits. Thank you for reading,
Evie Rhatigan Aged 15 years

Supporting materials

6. If you wish, you can include supporting materials with your observation.

Supporting materials include:

- photographs,
- plans,
- surveys,
- drawings,
- digital videos or DVDs,
- technical guidance, or
- other supporting materials.

You can insert photographs and similar items in your observation details: grounds (part 5 of this form).

If your supporting materials are physical objects, you must send them together with your observation by post or deliver it in person to our office.

You cannot use the online uploader facility.

Fee

7. You **must** make sure that the correct fee is included with your observation.

Observers (except prescribed bodies)

- strategic infrastructure observation is €50.
- there is no fee for an oral hearing request

Oral hearing request

8. If you wish to [request the Board to hold an oral hearing](#), please tick the “Yes, I wish to request an oral hearing” box below.

You can find information on how to make this request on [our website](#) or by contacting us.

If you do not wish to request an oral hearing, please tick the “No, I do not wish to request an oral hearing” box.

Yes, I wish to request an oral hearing

No, I do not wish to request an oral hearing

Final steps before you send us your observations

9. If you are sending us your observation using **the online uploader facility**, remember to save this document as a Microsoft word or PDF and title it with:

- the case number and your name, or
- the name and location of the development and your name.

This also applies to prescribed bodies sending an observation by email.

If you are sending your observation to us by post or delivering in person, remember to print off all the pages of this document and send it to us.

For Office Use Only

FEM – Received		SIDS – Processed	
Initials		Initials	
Date		Date	

Notes