

Address

Ballinamona, Bulgaden

Kilmallock

Co. Limerick

EirCode: V35 EW86

The Secretary,  
An Coimisiún Pleanála,  
64 Marlborough Street,  
Dublin 1,  
D01 V902

**Case reference: PAX91.323780**

**Date** 16 November 2025

**Re: 10 year planning permission for Ballinlee Wind Farm consisting of 17 no. wind turbines, a permanent 110kV substation, underground electric cabling systems between the wind farm site and connection point at existing Killonah 220/110kV substation, and ancillary development. Located in Ballincurra, Ballingayroure, Ballinlee North & South, Ballinrea, Ballyreesode, Camas North & South, Carrigeen, Knockuregare, Ballybane and other townlands in County Limerick.**

To Whom It May Concern,

I Jack O'Shea write in connection with the above listed planning application at Ballincurra, Ballingayroure, Ballinlee North & South, Ballinrea, Ballyreesode, Camas North & South, Carrigeen, Knockuregare, Ballybane and other townlands in County Limerick. Although I live 3KM from this proposed development, I echo the concerns of those in proximity to these proposed turbines which includes the place I called home for over 30 years in Dromin.

I recognise the importance of wind energy in meeting Ireland's National renewable energy targets and addressing climate change. However, this development is unsuitable for this location and fails to take proper account of the environmental, social, and rural impacts on the local area.

Approval of this wind farm would destroy the area's rural character, place residents at risk from ongoing health and amenity impacts, erode property values, and threaten the very fabric of our community. therefore appeal to the Coimisiún to reject this application in its entirety.

Some of my summarised individual observations and concerns are as follows:

## Visual Amenity

I submit that the visual and landscape effects of the Ballinlee Wind Farm cannot be assessed in isolation. They must be judged together with the other large-scale wind proposals now advancing in the same part of County Limerick — in particular the Garrane Wind Farm proposal at Garrane, Ballynagoul, Creggane and Charleville, Co. Limerick, which An Coimisiún Pleanála is also treating as Strategic Infrastructure (Case refs PC9 1.3 19 139 and later RED III files PAX9 1.3 23 635 / PAX9 1. 3 23 448) and which also consists of 9 no. turbines, a grid connection and associated works. That project sits in the same receiving landscape and will be perceived from the same road corridors, farms and dispersed dwellings as the present development.

### Sensitivity of the “Golden Vale” landscape

The proposed Ballinlee turbines and associated grid infrastructure are set within the wider Golden Vale — the lowland dairy heartland spanning Limerick, Cork and Tipperary, consistently described in geographical and local-authority sources as some of the best and most intensively farmed pastureland in Ireland, with a settled, historic rural pattern and open, rolling views. This is not a visually “robust” upland or forestry setting; it is a high scenic-value working landscape with high viewer numbers (residents, farmyards, local roads, R5 12/ R5 16) and a strong sense of place.

The EPA LVIA guidance and ABP’s own practice, published EIAR landscape chapters for other wind projects where the Coimisiún specifically required a cumulative landscape and visual impact assessment — make clear that where a receiving landscape is both high value and widely visible, the bar for accepting additional vertical structures is higher.

### Cumulative context with Garrane and other proposals

The Garrane scheme (9 turbines) sits only a short distance away, in the same Limerick lowlands. If Ballinlee is also permitted, two substantial wind farms would be read together in views from the regional roads and from scattered farm dwellings — effectively creating a **wind farm field** rather than an isolated scheme. The Scottish / NatureScot cumulative guidance, which Irish EIARs now routinely cite and which ABP inspectors have relied on in recent LVIA reports, identifies precisely ~~this risk~~: *effect on “the way the landscape is perceived” when several turbine groups become a dominant characteristic of an area rather than an exception*

In 2019 the High Court upheld An Coimisiún Pleanála’s refusal of a wind farm in Cork where the Coimisiún had cited “cumulative impact on landscape and visual amenity” as a valid planning reason. That judgment confirms that (a) cumulative visual effects can on their own justify refusal, and (b) the Coimisiún is entitled to prefer landscape/visual protection over the developer’s renewable energy arguments where the receiving landscape is already under pressure. That line of authority supports an argument that adding Ballinlee to Garrane— and to other consented/proposed turbines in north Limerick— would cross the threshold of acceptability.

More recently, the Coolglass Windfarm Ltd v An Coimisiún Pleanála litigation shows that even where applicants point to climate and energy targets, Irish decision makers may still prioritise landscape and

amenity where the visual harm is significant or cumulative. That is directly variable here: national policy does not displace the need to protect a distinctive, high-value rural landscape.

### **How the Ballinlee EIAR should have treated this**

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Chapter 12 and the Appendix 12A viewpoint booklets uploaded for Ballinlee) already show that single turbines are visible over long distances in lowland Limerick; the zone of theoretical visibility demonstrate wide theoretical visibility. But the assessment you were given is framed mainly around the proposed development alone. It does not run a “with Garrane” scenario, even though Garrane is now on ABP’s books as Strategic Infrastructure and therefore is a foreseeable project for cumulative assessment. Under the EPA’s 2022 EIAR Guidelines and the cumulative language quoted in other ABP wind decisions, foreseeable SI projects in the same landscape must be in the cumulative table. Omitting Garrane understates visual dominance.

The correct exercise would have:

1. taken the Ballinlee zone of theoretical visibility
2. overlaid the Garrane zone of theoretical visibility (9 turbines, similar heights),
3. identified shared receptors (R512/R516, scattered farmhouses Golden Vale open lands),  
and
4. described the combined turbine skyline and the loss of rural horizontality that gives this part of Limerick its character.

Because that was not done, the public cannot see the magnitude of the change.

### **Planning / legal footing for the Coimisiún**

- Planning and Development Regulations 2001, Schedule 6 require an EIAR to describe “the cumulative effects of the proposed development with other existing and/ or approved projects.” Failing to include Garrane — which ABP has already confirmed as strategic, with a known site and turbine count — is a weakness that justifies a request for Further Information before any grant.
- ABP decisions have been upheld in the High Court where refusal was based on cumulative visual impact on landscape and visual amenity — the 2019 Cork wind farm challenge reported in Irish Legal News is the clearest example. That gives the Coimisiún comfort that a refusal on cumulative visual/ landscape grounds in a sensitive rural area is defensible.
- The landscape character evidence for the Golden Vale from local-authority studies (Tipperary 2016 LCA — which explicitly names the Golden Vale as a rich agricultural landscape of high scenic quality) can be used by analogy for adjoining Limerick lands: this is not a “sacrificial” wind-energy landscape.

### **Visual Amenity and Cumulative Visual Amenity**

The proposed Ballinlee Wind Farm will introduce a second large turbine group into the same Golden Vale landscape that is now the subject of the separate Garrane Wind Farm application (ABP refs PC91.319139 / PAX91.323635 / PAX91.323448) in the townlands of Garrane, Ballynagoul,

Creggane and Charleville. An Coimisiún Pleanála has already accepted Garrane as strategic infrastructure, so its turbines are a foreseeable element in the landscape. The EIAR for Ballinlee, however, has not assessed the combined effect of both wind farms on the settled, high-quality agricultural landscape of north County Limerick. Independent landscape sources describe this area as part of the “Golden Vale”, a nationally recognised, highly fertile and visually open pastoral landscape. Introducing two separate turbine arrays into the same viewshed will alter the rural skyline from one of open, gently rolling pasture to one characterised by industrial-scale vertical elements. That change will be experienced not just by individual houses but by entire road-user populations on the R512, R516 and local roads.

Irish planning law requires cumulative effects to be assessed (Schedule 6, Planning and Development Regulations 2001). Irish case law has already upheld ABP refusals of wind farms on the basis of cumulative impact on landscape and visual amenity. In light of that, the Coimisiún should either refuse permission or, at minimum, seek Further Information requiring a full cumulative LVA that includes the Garrane scheme and any other consented/ proposed turbines in this landscape.

## Noise & Infrasound

The human environment impacts of the proposed development extend beyond turbine operation. A large array of turbines (in this case ~~seventeen~~ plus ancillary infrastructure) together with grid connection works along busy regional roads creates a significant cumulative noise burden for residents and businesses. The noise chapter of the EIAR (Chapter 13) acknowledges that some dwellings within approximately 2 km of the turbines are modelled for noise exposure, yet the assessment treats the scheme largely ~~in isolation~~ and does not adequately examine the additive effect of multiple turbines, the grid-works traffic, trenching operations, or baseline low background noise conditions at night in rural Limerick.

### Cumulative turbine noise

When multiple turbines are operating, noise emissions (including tonal components, swish/ thump blade effects, and amplitude modulation) may combine to increase overall annoyance beyond simple single-turbine modelling. The submitted EIAR does not present a scenario in which neighbouring wind farms or anticipated schemes are included in the noise modelling, and it doesn't cumulatively model the change in background noise levels for receptors in quiet rural settings.

In the Irish high-court case of *Webster & Anor v Meenacloghspar (Wind) Ltd (Wexford)* the court found that noise from two turbines “occurs commonly and for sustained periods” and constituted an “unreasonable interference” with the enjoyment of property. This precedent underscores that even sized-small schemes may breach amenity thresholds when noise operates over time in quiet contexts. The legal significance is that, although the planning permission noise limits may technically be complied with, the court held that compliance with a condition ~~does not~~ automatically preclude a finding of nuisance.

In this project, the omission of other schemes (consented or proposed) from the noise model means that the true worst-case scenario has likely been underestimated and the assessment is not conservative. Residents within the 2 km band merit particular ~~attention~~ to cumulative noise impact.

### **Infrasound and low-frequency noise (LFN)**

Although the EIAR addresses noise via dB(A) and typical sound modelling, it ~~does~~ provide specific modelling or measurement ~~of infrasound (sub 20 Hz) or low-frequency noise~~ nor its potential effect on sleep or amenity.

Scientific literature (for example, Baumgart et al., 2021) shows that while infrasound levels at several hundred metres from a turbine are typically well below hearing threshold ~~the perception of~~ infrasound or LFN can be more about annoyance, sleep disturbance and ~~deed~~ vibration rather than audibility.

Given the large number of turbines proposed and the rural ~~low~~ background setting, the absence of even a baseline LFN/infrasound monitoring programme in the EIAR is a key omission. This omission breaks the chain of assurance to residents that the quiet ~~is~~ of the day will remain protected.

### **Construction noise & grid-works traffic**

The EIAR (Chapter 13) includes construction noise assessment but focuses primarily on turbine-installation phases. It gives less attention to the extended trenching, ~~cable~~ cable-haulage, constant HGV movements, traffic management along regional roads (R516/R512) ~~and~~ their low frequency contribution, which can be persistent and intrusive.

In particular, the combination of HGV convoys, temporary surfacing, signalised working zones and quiet evenings in the rural area means that residents may experience elevated ~~and~~ annoyance outside typical working hours.

Duration, frequency and timing of construction traffic are all relevant under the "burden" test of nuisance (i.e., prolonged repeated disturbance rather than isolated events).

### **Receptor context and quiet rural setting**

Many rural homes in the project area enjoy low ambient noise levels (night  $< 35$  dB or lower). The addition of turbine hum, blade swish/thump, and HGV traffic may raise the effective noise floor significantly for those residents.

The High Court in the Wexford case noted that when "a quiet environment is at a premium" (evening/early morning) the test for nuisance is more sensitive. Residents more than 2 km away have often been treated as lower risk in older EIARs ~~but~~ the presence of cumulative noise sources means they are still credible receptors.

Based on the uploaded documents and precedent ~~it is~~ requested that An Coimisiún Pleanála require the following as conditions of consent or further information:

- A full cumulative noise scenario including: all nearby existing and consented turbines + the proposed scheme + cable-haulage HGV traffic + trenching operations during extended hours.
- A low-frequency noise/ infrasound survey baseline (pre-commissioning) and post-installation monitoring at representative dwellings (especially 1-2 km bands).

- Binding operational noise controls (e.g., curtailment thresholds during low wind, night modes, amplitude modulation limits).
- Construction traffic noise management: HGV timing windows, speed controls, acoustically-treated temporary surfaces, monitoring of vibration/ underground transmission to adjoining homes.
- Complaint-response protocol and independent auditing: Residents should have a clear channel with measurable remedy timescales and reporting requirements to the planning authority.
- Pre- and post-work acoustic verification of predicted noise levels, including documentation of any breach of predicted values and swift remedial action obligations.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the noise and ambient environment impacts of this development are not trivial. The combination of turbine noise, multiple blades, groundworks traffic, and low rural background levels creates a context in which cumulative and frequency effects must be taken seriously. Irish case law now confirms that nuisance may arise even when planning permission limits are honoured (Webster & Anor and other High Court rulings). The submitted EIAR fails to give the robust cumulative noise modelling and infrasound baseline necessary to safeguard residential amenity. Accordingly, I submit that either permission be refused on noise/amenity grounds, or substantial further information be required to rectify these deficiencies.

## Shadow Flicker

This section sets out why shadow flicker from the proposed Ballinlee wind farm is a live, material planning issue and why, on the documents submitted, it has not been shown to be acceptably mitigated— especially when you factor in other proposed wind developments in the same visual catchment.

### What the applicant has done

The EIAR uploaded includes Chapter 45 Shadow Flicker. As is standard, it:

- identifies dwellings within the model study area (typically up to 10 rotor diameters/1-5 km of a turbine, in line with Irish guidance)
- runs a “worst case” software model assuming sunshine, no vegetation, blades always turning, and occupants present
- compares the results to the Irish benchmark of 30 hours per year or 30 minutes per day taken from the Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006.

That is all fine as far as it goes apart from the fact it is using outdated guidelines but it's only the first step. Their chapter does not fully deal with: (a) cumulative shadow flicker from other proposed/nearby turbines, (b) real world dwelling circumstances (people at home at the exact time flicker occurs), or (c) enforceability of the promised “we'll shut the turbine down” mitigation.

### What Irish policy actually says

- The 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines say shadow flicker at neighbouring houses “should not exceed 30 hours per year or 30 minutes per day” and that turbine shut down software may be used to prevent exceedances.
- The draft/ revised guidelines (2019 → discussed again 2020) go further: they say the study area should extend to 10× rotor diameter or 1.5 km, and they lean toward zero shadow flicker at occupied dwellings using automatic controls. That’s much stricter than the developer has assumed.
- An Coimisiún Pleanála, in other wind cases, has actually imposed a condition that: “Shadow flicker ... by itself or in combination with other existing or permitted wind energy development ... shall not exceed 30 hours per year or 30 minutes per day” and required monitoring to prove it. That wording is in an ABP order at ref. 245108. That shows ABP treats cumulative flicker seriously.

So, any EIAR that only models its own turbines and doesn’t layer in other foreseeable wind schemes is not yet at ABP’s own standard.

### Cumulative shadow flicker is the weak point

We already have another sizeable wind proposal in the same part of Limerick (Garrane, SID refs PAX91.323635 etc.) and a landscape of scattered 1–2 km rural houses. Each project’s EIAR will say “30 hours per year” — but two projects in the same window can both target the same houses. ABP’s own inspector in another wind appeal (ABP-309478-21) specifically criticised the failure to address “*cumulative impacts ... with reference to noise, shadow flicker and environmental impacts*” — the exact omission here.

A proper cumulative assessment would have:

1. taken the Ballinlee turbine locations,
2. overlaid the other proposed turbine locations in the area (Garrane and any consented single turbines),
3. identified overlapping 4 1.5 km catchments,
4. and modelled worst case combined flicker for the same dwellings.

Because that wasn’t done, the EIAR understates shadow flicker risk because it has not assessed cumulative effects with other foreseeable wind turbines in the same viewshed, contrary to Schedule 6 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001.

### Irish litigation

Irish courts have now accepted that shadow flicker can be part of a nuisance case.

- In the Wexford windfarm nuisance case (2024 judgment, later reported again in 2025), the neighbours complained of *noise, vibration and shadow flicker*. The High Court

accepted that these combined emissions could amount to an “unreasonable interference” with the home, and the operators ultimately faced shutdown orders and damages. The reporting by William Fry and other Irish outlets confirms shadow flicker was one of the pleaded harms.

- In June 2025, the High Court ordered the total shutdown of three turbines in Co. Wexford where, again, *noise, vibration and shadow flicker* were cited as destroying residential enjoyment. That shows the courts will intervene even where planning permission existed if shadow flicker remains uncontrolled in practice.
- ABP inspectors have also noted cases where Coimisiún refused permission citing adverse shadow flicker impact on residential amenity, even when the inspector thought it could be acceptable—meaning the Coimisiún can take a stricter view than the applicant’s model.

That line of authority supports this argument: *compliance with a planning model or guideline (30 hours/year) does not guarantee freedom from legal challenge if people still experience flicker.*

### What’s missing from the Ballinlee documents

From Chapter 15- Shadow Flicker and the related viewpoint material:

1. No receptor-by-receptor mitigation table—we are not shown which houses will need turbine shutdown, on which days, and at what times.
2. No monitoring/enforcement plan— there is no proposal for residents to request actual flicker logs from the SCADA/shadow module to prove mitigation is working.
3. No cumulative pass/fail list— we don’t see how many houses would exceed 30 h/yr if a neighbouring scheme was granted.
4. No allowance for sensitive individuals— current drafts of Irish policy recognise that some occupants are more vulnerable; your own uploads of public observations to ABP on other wind cases show people reporting visually induced vertigo and migraine flicker. ABP has seen this before.

Those are all grounds to say the shadow flicker assessment is incomplete.

### Conclusion:

The applicant’s shadow flicker chapter relies on the 2006 Wind Energy Development Guidelines threshold of 30 hours per year / 30 minutes per day and assumes that software-based turbine shut down will prevent exceedances. However, the assessment does not provide a receptor-by-receptor mitigation schedule, does not offer any resident-accessible monitoring regime, and does not assess cumulative shadow flicker with other foreseeable wind developments in this part of Co. Limerick, notably the Garrane wind farm SID (ABP refs PAX91.323635 etc.). Under Schedule 6 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, cumulative effects with existing and approved projects must be described.

Irish practice and case law now recognise that shadow flicker, particularly when combined with noise and vibration, can amount to an unreasonable interference with residential amenity (see the Wexford wind-farm nuisance litigation where shadow flicker was one of the pleaded harms, and where shut-down of turbines was ultimately ordered). In addition, An Coimisiún Pleanála has in other wind cases imposed a condition that shadow flicker “by itself or in combination with other existing or permitted wind energy development” shall not exceed 30 h/yr or 30 min/day. That wording is absent here.

In light of the high number of receptors modelled elsewhere in this EIAR (519 noise-sensitive locations within c. 2 km) and the close spacing of rural dwellings in the Golden Vale, there is a real risk that more than one wind-farm scheme will target the same houses for shadow-flicker mitigation. The Coimisiún should therefore require (a) a full cumulative shadow-flicker assessment including Garrane and any consented turbines in the area; (b) a receptor-specific shut-down schedule; and (c) an enforceable condition requiring zero shadow flicker at occupied dwellings backed by SCADA logs available to residents.

## Biodiversity

### Whooper Swans

The proposed Ballinlee wind farm sits in a part of Limerick that is used in winter by migratory whooper swans coming from Iceland. Irish sensitivity mapping for wind energy, including the BirdWatch Ireland / Irish Environmental Network pilot work on whooper swan sensitivity, flags this species because it is large bodied, relatively slow to manoeuvre, flies at turbine blade height in low light, and often moves between feeding fields and roost sites at dawn and dusk. Collision, displacement and “barrier” effects are the three recognised risks for this species around turbines.

The ornithology/biodiversity appendices and the whooper swan management references bundled with the main EIAR) says that recorded use of the site by whooper swan was “low” and that, using high avoidance rates (typically 99.5% as per NatureScot guidance) predicted collision risk is not significant. That approach mirrors other Irish wind EIARs, but it has two shortcomings:

1. **Flight corridors between known wintering sites** Irish planning files for other wind farms (see ABP inspector review in 2024 on whooper swans in Donegal) note that where a wind farm “forms a gap between other wind farms” on the line between feeding and roosting areas, there is *“a degree of uncertainty ... regarding possible movements of large numbers of whooper swan”* and that the applicant’s conclusion of no significant effect is therefore optimistic. That is exactly the kind of uncertainty that exists because Ballinlee is not the only wind proposal in this wider landscape and the suggested mitigation that people were told during the 1 to 1 consultation was that there were initially 19 turbines planned for this area but 2 were removed to accommodate the whooper swans. It is illogical to think that whooper swans can be corralled like this into a path.

2. **Cumulative infrastructure** Eirgrid/Natura's own pressure lists for wintering waterbirds note that swans and geese are highly susceptible to collision with powerlines as well as turbines.

Because whooper swans are protected winter visitors, Article 6 requirements (and the Irish implementation of the Birds and Habitats Directives) expect the competent authority to remove reasonable doubt. Where the ornithology chapter relies on a single season of low records and on very high avoidance rates, I would ask An Coimisiún Pleanála to seek Further Information for multi-season vantage-point surveys, dawn/ dusk flight-line mapping.

## Red Squirrel

The Red Squirrel, a native and protected mammal under the Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended), has been repeatedly recorded within the proposed development area, particularly along the woodland belts and mature hedgerow corridors between Rathcannon, Holycross, Dromin and Athlacca. These linear habitat structures function as essential arboreal movement routes, supporting feeding, shelter and breeding. The EIAR's biodiversity assessment (Chapter 6 and Appendix 6B) acknowledges woodland and hedgerow loss during turbine access road formation and grid-route trenching, but significantly underestimates the ecological importance of these features for species that depend on continuous canopy connectivity. Red Squirrels are highly sensitive to habitat fragmentation and disturbance; severing or degrading hedgerow corridors forces ground movement, where individuals face greatly increased predation risk and road mortality. Research by the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) has highlighted that in regions where habitat fragmentation has occurred, Red Squirrel populations decline sharply, especially where ground disturbance and construction noise coincide with the breeding season (February– September). The linear nature of the 110 kV grid route, combined with heavy-machinery traffic, trenching works and vegetation removal, poses a serious risk to the continued viability of Red Squirrel populations in this ecosystem. Given its conservation status and local cultural importance as an indicator of woodland health, approval of this project without a comprehensive squirrel-habitat protection plan would contravene the precautionary principle under Irish environmental law and EU biodiversity obligations.

## Herring Gull

The Herring Gull, regularly observed in the Ballinlee study area and along the lowland agricultural corridor between Bruff, Athlacca, Holycross and Kilmallock, is listed as an **At-Risk** species on the Birds of Conservation Concern in Ireland (BOCCI) **Red** List, reflecting serious national population decline. This species relies heavily on lowland pasture and open farmland for feeding and foraging, particularly during winter months, and frequently travels along predictable flight pathways between **its** feeding grounds and river or lake roosts. The EIAR (Chapter 6 and Appendix 7B) does not adequately assess turbine collision risk or displacement effects for Herring Gulls, despite international research showing that **large** gull species demonstrate higher vulnerability to collision due to **their** flight height, broad wingspan, and tendency to fly in strong crosswinds where visibility and control can be reduced. The cumulative obstacle environment created by multiple 60m turbines, overhead crane **activity** during construction, and the addition of lighting at turbine nacelles and substations increases collision risk and potential disorientation, particularly during poor light conditions and fog events that are common in this region's **valley** valleys. The EIAR also fails to consider the interaction between turbine infrastructure and increased attraction to construction or agricultural disturbance, which can draw gulls into turbine operational zones. No species-specific mitigation or monitoring measures **have** been proposed, nor has the EIAR acknowledged obligations under the EU Birds Directive, which requires protection for species in decline. As a result, the current assessment does not meet the standard required to ensure the protection of Herring Gull populations or compliance with ecological precaution.

## Conclusion

The Whooper swan is a large, protected winter visitor to this part of Limerick and is identified in Irish bird-sensitivity mapping as a **high** risk species for wind energy development because of collision and barrier effects in **low** flight flights between feeding and roosting grounds. The EIAR's conclusion of 'no significant effect' rests on limited survey effort and very high avoidance assumptions, and it does not consider cumulative aerial obstacles from other permitted/proposed wind farms. In line with Schedule 6 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 and having regard to recent High Court nuisance cases where **real** world turbine effects were underestimated at application stage, request that the Coimisiún seek Further Information on **season** whooper swan usage

## Air Ambulance and Health (Grid Route Land Access; Turbines Airspace)

A core public health question in this project is: will the construction of a **30**km underground 110 kV cable along the R516, R512, L1412 and L1470 at the same time as very tall turbines are erected in the same catchment **make** it harder or slower for emergency medical services to reach people

on the ground or from the air? On the evidence filed, the answer is “yes, it could,” and the EIAR has not shown otherwise.

### **Ground access: road-based ambulances during grid-connection works**

The National Ambulance Service (NAS) and HIQA have both said that delays on approach roads translate directly into clinical risk. Ireland already struggles to hit target response times in rural areas. Any extra minutes caused by roadworks, ~~single~~ traffic management or diversions are a real health impact, not an abstract one.

Appendix 2D— Grid Connection Route Report shows long, continuous trenching on regional and local roads—exactly the roads an ambulance would use to get from Limerick direction to the townlands around Ballinlee. If a call comes in while:

- the road is at stop/go,
- the surface is open-cut and reduced in width, or
- plant is occupying the lane,

then the ambulance has to slow, detour or wait. The NAS severe-weather/ emergency management plan even tells controllers to warn callers of possible delays where roads are restricted — so road restriction is explicitly recognised as a health-service risk.

Because the applicant has not provided a stage-gated traffic-management plan that guarantees a 3.5–4.0 m clear running width for emergency vehicles along the R516/ R512 at all times, there is a credible risk of delayed ambulance response for cardiac, stroke or trauma patients. Given current national concerns about ambulance delays, that is a material health impact which must be addressed before permission is granted.

### **Air access: helicopters operating near turbines**

Ireland’s emergency aeromedical service (EAS/ MEDEVAC 112, based at Athlone) and the Garda Air Support Unit both follow obstacle-avoidance guidance; the Irish Air Corps’ own “Wind Farm / Tall Structures Position Paper” (2014, repeatedly cited in aviation review statements for other wind farms) maps areas where turbines/ tall structures can interfere with safe operations. That material shows two important things:

1. tall obstacles must be charted and lit; and
2. increased obstacle density in a rural area reduces safe forced-landing options and complicates night or marginal-weather ops.

Other Irish wind EIARs (e.g. Shanclon, Derryadd) have had to commission a specific Aviation Review Statement to confirm that turbine heights, lighting and locations would not compromise IAC / EAS flight paths. Ballinlee will need the same level of reassurance, because:

- you are adding very tall, lit structures in a hinterland that currently offers open fields for precautionary landings; and

- you are at the same time digging up the roads the ground ambulance would otherwise use. So the risk is compounded: if a patient can't be moved quickly by road because the R512 is under traffic lights for cable works, the default back-up is helicopter — but helicopter pilots will now be dealing with an area of new 150-200 m obstacles, possible crane operations, and possibly unlit plant.

The concurrent presence of large turbines and linear road excavations removes flexibility from the emergency-response system: it makes the ground route slower and the air route more constrained. That is a health and safety impact which has not been assessed in Chapter 16 (Traffic) nor in the aviation appendix.”

As in the Wexford turbine-nuisance litigation, where the court was willing to go beyond the developer's predictive modelling once real-world harm emerged, An Coimisiún Pleanála should now take a precautionary approach and require the applicant to demonstrate — with input from the National Ambulance Service and Air Corps/ EAS — that critical routes will remain open at all times and that turbine siting and crane work will not compromise helicopter operations.

### Conclusion

The 110 kV grid route is proposed along regional and local roads (R516, R512, L1412, L1170) which are also the primary access routes for ambulances serving this rural area. Continuous trenching, single-lane traffic management and temporary road closures on these roads will inevitably slow emergency response times, at a time when national reviews (HIQA 2014; HSE/NAS updates 2023-2024) already point to ambulance delays as a patient safety risk. At the same time, the erection of multiple tall, lit wind turbines reduces the availability of safe approach and landing options for the Emergency Aeromedical Service and Garda Air Support Unit, as shown in Irish Air Corps and aviation position papers referenced in other ABP wind applications. The combined effect is a material public health risk: ground access is constrained by the cable works, and air access is made more complex by the turbine array. In light of recent High Court wind cases where real-world impacts (noise, vibration, shadow flicker) led to shutdown orders, the Coimisiún should apply the precautionary principle here and require full consultation with the NAS and Irish Air Corps, a guaranteed unobstructed emergency vehicle corridor during all grid works, and confirmation that turbine heights and crane operations will not compromise emergency helicopter operations.

### Fire Risk

The EIAR contains no detailed emergency response plan for:

- Substation fire or explosion,
- Battery or transformer failure,
- Turbine nacelle or blade fires,
- Control and training protocols for local emergency services.

There is no mention of:

- High-access firefighting equipment capable of reaching 160m turbine nacelles,
- Fire suppression system design,
- Hazardous materials handling,

- Emergency access routing requirements for the substation compound.

Turbine fires are typically allowed to burn out, dropping burning debris over hundreds of metres. This represents unacceptable risk in a rural agricultural setting with livestock, hay storage sheds, machinery sheds, and forestry.

## Drone-Based Environmental Record and Flooding Evidence

In recent days, I have captured drone imagery along the R512 and L1414 roads through key sections of the proposed underground grid connection route. These images, which I will append to this submission, show extensive flooding across the carriageway and ~~road~~ fields, confirming that:

- Local drainage infrastructure is already at or beyond capacity.
- Surface runoff from rainfall events is increasing in frequency and extent.
- Any trenching, cable installation, or road narrowing along these routes would exacerbate flood conditions and render roads impassable to emergency or agricultural vehicles.

These observations are consistent with the Flood Risk Assessment (Appendix 9B) submitted by the developer, which admits that sections of the route fall within moderate to high ~~risk~~ zones. However, that assessment relies primarily on static mapping ~~and~~ modelling, not realworld, time stamped visual evidence.

The flooding now documented demonstrates that the EIAR's assumption of "negligible residual flood impact" is materially inaccurate. Drone footage provides an objective, ~~clear~~ stamped record that can inform the Coimisiún's evaluation far more accurately than desktop hydrological projections.



L1414 Road



Corcass (L1414)



**R516 Road**

We strongly urge that this development be rejected for the reasons outlined above.

Thank you for considering this submission.

Kind Regards,

Jack & Samantha O'Shea