

Name: Elizabeth Scully, Aharney, Tullamore, Co. Offaly R35 AH31

Observation / Objection to Proposed Lemanaghan Wind Farm

Case Reference: PAX19.324161

Location: Lemanaghan and surrounding townlands, Co. Offaly

Proposed Development: 15 wind turbines, permanent 220kV on-site substation and associated infrastructure

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to make a formal objection to the proposed Lemanaghan Wind Farm development under case reference PAX19.324161.

This objection is not made from a position of opposition to renewable energy in principle. It is made because this particular proposal is in the wrong place, is being advanced against an unresolved planning and environmental background, and threatens an area of exceptional cultural, spiritual, historical and community value. I was born and raised in Lemanaghan and it is a very special place in my heart.

I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála refuse permission for this development.

1. Unresolved Change of Use, Peat Extraction History and Substitute Consent

The proposed wind farm is being advanced on bogland that have historically been associated with Bord na Móna peat extraction and related bog development works. Large-scale peat extraction and associated drainage works have had significant environmental consequences for bogland hydrology, habitats, carbon storage, biodiversity and landscape character. In planning terms, this cannot simply be treated as neutral background.

The Office of the Commissioner for Environmental Information records that Bord na Móna made applications for leave to apply for substitute consent in respect of six bogs in December 2019, that leave was granted in April/May 2020, that applications for substitute consent were then made in June 2020 with remedial EIS and remedial NIS documentation, and that those applications were withdrawn by Bord na Móna on 14 January 2021.

That history is highly relevant. It demonstrates that the planning status of historic peat extraction and associated bog development works has been a live and unresolved issue. It would be wrong for the current wind farm application to proceed as though the land is simply an ordinary industrial brownfield site available for further industrialisation.

The applicants should not be permitted to benefit from a degraded baseline if that degraded baseline was itself produced by unauthorised or unregularised development. Environmental assessment should not start from the assumption that the existing cutaway or altered bog condition is the lawful and correct baseline unless that has been properly established through the substitute consent process.

The Commission should not assess a major new industrial development on the basis of an environmental condition that may itself be the product of unregularised peat extraction activity.

2. Lack of Meaningful Public Consultation

I also object on the basis that the public consultation process has not been meaningful.

Meaningful consultation is not a public-relations exercise. It must be open, fair, transparent and capable of influencing the outcome. A process that appears to gather intelligence on objectors' concerns so that those concerns can be managed, diluted or pre-empted is not genuine consultation.

I was contacted by staff associated with Bord na Móna on the apparent basis that they wished to understand the concerns of objectors. However, the tone and nature of the conversation gave the impression that it was a fact-finding exercise designed to identify likely objections in advance of public meetings and to minimise or neutralise concerns when raised. I asked not to be contacted again because I felt I was being used rather than listened to.

This concern is reinforced by subsequent reporting. The Offaly Independent reported that documents lodged with An Coimisiún Pleanála as part of pre-application consultation described opposition to the wind farm as coming from a "small group", despite the existence of a vigorous local campaign and strong community support for opposition.



Link: <https://www.offalyindependent.ie/2026/03/20/lemanaghan-bog-heritage-group-hits-out-at-misleading-description/>

A later Offaly Independent report (shown above) stated that opponents described this "small opposition group" characterisation as misleading.

This matters. Where a developer minimises local opposition in formal planning engagement, the integrity of the consultation process is undermined.

Additionally, Offaly County Council recently voiced their disapproval of the wind farm proposed for Lemanaghan: <https://www.offalyindependent.ie/2026/05/22/wind-farm-plan-would-violate-a-sacred-space/>

The consultation process has failed to demonstrate genuine engagement with affected residents, heritage groups and objectors. The application should not be accepted as having met the standard of meaningful public participation expected for a development of this scale.

3. Impact on Lemanaghan Monastic Site, Pilgrim Route and Cultural Landscape

The proposed development would affect a landscape of exceptional cultural, historical and spiritual significance.

Lemanaghan is an ancient monastic landscape. The monastic ruins, associated routes, surrounding bogland, quiet roads, Mella's Cells and wider historic setting form a cultural landscape whose value depends not only on individual monuments, but also on tranquillity, atmosphere, setting, silence, isolation and continuity.

This is where the objection needs to be framed carefully. "Spiritual energy" is real to those who experience the place, but in planning terms it is stronger to describe it as intangible cultural heritage, sacred landscape value, contemplative character, setting and tranquillity.

The experience of walking from the monastery ruins to Mella's Cells is part of the heritage value of the place. The journey itself matters. The quietness matters. The absence of industrial intrusion matters.

The proposed turbines, substation, access tracks, construction traffic, lighting, grid infrastructure and movement would fundamentally alter that experience. Turbines of up to 220 metres are not background features. They would dominate the horizon, alter the scale of the landscape and introduce continuous mechanical movement into a place whose value depends heavily on stillness.

This article by Tomas O'Cleirigh demonstrates how the area was held in such esteem by a the national museum at the start of the 20 century: <https://roaringwaterjournal.com/tag/tomas-ocleirigh/>

The proposed development would cause unacceptable harm to the setting, tranquillity, spiritual character and cultural landscape of Lemanaghan monastic site

4. Industrialisation of a Sensitive Bogland Landscape

The applicants may argue that the infrastructure footprint is limited. They have stated publicly that the infrastructure footprint is expected to cover less than 5% of the development site.

That argument should be rejected as incomplete.

A wind farm's impact is not measured only by the percentage of land physically covered by concrete or tracks. The true impact includes:

turbine height and visibility;

rotating blade movement;

aviation lighting or other lighting;

noise;

shadow flicker;

access roads;

substation and grid infrastructure;

drainage alteration;

peat excavation and spoil handling;

construction traffic;

disturbance to wildlife;

cumulative landscape change;

loss of remoteness and tranquillity.

A 220 metre turbine can dominate a landscape while occupying a small physical footprint. The "less than 5%" argument is therefore misleading is used to suggest that the development would have only a minor effect.

5. Cumulative Impact

The application must be assessed cumulatively with:

historic peat extraction

bog drainage

peatland rehabilitation works

substitute consent applications

existing Bord na Móna land-use changes

grid infrastructure

other renewable energy proposals in the Midlands

road works and construction traffic

amenity proposals

biodiversity management proposals

impacts on heritage routes and monastic landscape setting.

The cumulative effect is not simply the sum of individual project parts. It is the continuing transformation of Lemanaghan Bog from a living bog and sacred historic landscape into a managed industrial energy landscape.

Conclusion

For the reasons set out above, I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála refuse permission for the proposed Lemanaghan Wind Farm.

Yours faithfully,

Elizabeth Scully

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