

Alan and Elva O'Sullivan  
Glencreagh  
Bantry  
Co. Cork  
P75 YA72

20 May 2026

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

**Re:** Submission in respect of the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm, case reference ACP-324165-26 / 324165

**Submitted by:** Alan and Elva O'Sullivan, Glencreagh, Bantry, Co. Cork P75 YA72

**Distance to nearest proposed turbine:** approximately 3 km, on a north-easterly bearing

A Chara,

We are writing jointly, as a married couple living together at the above address, to lodge our objection to the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm. Our home stands at Glencreagh, on the southern side of the Mealagh Valley, roughly 3 km from the nearest of the proposed turbines as the crow flies. We have read what the developer has put forward and we have walked the ridge ourselves over the years; what is described in the application bears very little resemblance to the place we know. We set out our concerns below under separate headings for the sake of clarity, but we would ask the Commission to read what follows as a single statement from one household, not a list of unrelated complaints.

#### **i. The landscape we live in**

The Mealagh Valley is a quiet, scenic, predominantly agricultural landscape framed by steep hills on either side. The proposed turbines, at 169 metres to blade tip, would stand taller than the Great Pyramid of Giza, sited on a ridge that already forms one of the most prominent features in our daily view. From our home, our garden, and the lane that runs past our gate, the turbines will be unavoidable. They will dominate the views we walk towards each morning and they will dominate the views our neighbours look out on from their own kitchens. The Cork County Development Plan recognises this valley as a landscape worth protecting, and we do not believe the developer has shown how a structure of this scale, in this place, can be reconciled with that protection. The proposal does not adapt to the landscape; it imposes itself on it.

## **ii. Cumulative burden on West Cork**

West Cork is not a blank canvas. Several wind farms are already operating, permitted, or proposed within a relatively short radius of the Mealagh Valley, and yet the cumulative assessment in the developer's submission treats each scheme as if it sits in isolation. It does not. From a single vantage point on the higher ground above our home, several existing schemes can already be picked out on a clear day. Adding the Maughanaclea cluster to that picture is not an incremental change, it is a tipping point. We accept that wind energy must be built somewhere; we do not accept that our part of the country must absorb a share that bears no proportion to the population it serves or the grid demand it generates.

## **iii. Our home and our peace of mind**

What drew us to this place, and what has kept us here, is the quiet of it. The wind in the trees, the stream below the house, birdsong in the morning, an occasional tractor passing on the lane: that is the soundscape of Glencreagh, and it is the soundscape we built our family life around. The development the Commission is being asked to permit would replace that with the sound of construction for eighteen to twenty-four months, followed by the indefinite presence of operating turbines on the ridge above us. The construction phase alone, with its rock-breaking, heavy haulage, and round-the-clock traffic, is something we will not be able to escape by closing a window. We are deeply concerned about what daily life here will become.

## **iv. Health and sleep in this household**

We do not raise this point lightly. There are members of our household with conditions for which uninterrupted sleep is essential, and for whom additional stress, noise, and night-time disturbance are known to cause real and measurable harm. Peer-reviewed evidence is now reasonably consistent on this question. A systematic review and meta-analysis by Onakpoya and colleagues found a significant association between wind turbine noise exposure and sleep disturbance, with the odds of reporting disturbed sleep nearly three times higher in exposed populations (see source A). Schmidt and Klokke reached similar conclusions in their review of the literature on health effects (see source B). The World Health Organisation's 2018 environmental noise guidelines for the European region took the unusual step of issuing a conditional recommendation against night-time wind turbine noise exposure above 45 dB Lden, citing the evidence on sleep and annoyance (see source C). For a household whose ability to function depends on a good night's sleep, this is not an abstract concern. It is the central reason we are writing.

## **v. Why we do not accept the noise modelling**

The Maughanaclea site is not flat ground. It is a steep ridge sitting above a valley, and our home lies on the opposite side of that valley. Standard wind turbine noise

modelling, which is what the developer's assessment relies on, was developed for flat or gently rolling terrain. It does not handle the propagation behaviour that arises when a noise source is elevated above a valley and a receptor sits on a facing slope. Van Renterghem's numerical work on ridge-to-valley propagation demonstrates exactly this point: in complex terrain of the kind we live in, sound can carry across the valley in ways that standard predictive methods fail to capture, with downwind amplification and reflection effects from the opposite slope (see source D). We have a particular concern about night-time noise, low-frequency components, and amplitude modulation, all of which are recognised in the literature as the most intrusive aspects of turbine noise. The background sound levels relied on in the developer's assessment were taken from locations that, in our view, are not representative of the quietest receptors in the valley.

#### **vi. Shadow flicker**

Our home lies within the modelled range of shadow flicker from at least one of the proposed turbines. The rooms we use most heavily during daylight hours, including the sitting room and our bedroom, face directly toward the ridge on which the turbines are to be placed. We do not regard the developer's modelled exceedance figures as trustworthy: they rely on assumptions about cloud cover, blade orientation, and curtailment that we are not in a position to verify, and the practical effect of even occasional flicker on a household that already includes a member with health vulnerabilities is not adequately addressed.

#### **vii. Our water supply**

Our water comes from a shallow gravity well. Wells of this type are recognised as among the most vulnerable to disturbance during the kind of heavy civil construction this development entails, particularly where blasting, rock-breaking, and access track excavation are involved on hillside terrain above the water source. To the best of our knowledge, no baseline monitoring of private wells in the surrounding townlands has been carried out by the developer. Without baseline data, any future contamination or yield reduction will be all but impossible to attribute. We ask the Commission to note that the absence of such baseline work is itself a failure of impact assessment, not a neutral fact.

#### **viii. Aviation lighting and the night sky**

The Maughanaclea ridge stands above a part of West Cork that, on a clear night, is genuinely dark. From our garden we can see the Milky Way without the aid of any equipment, and that is not something many people in Ireland can say from their own back door. Each of the proposed turbines will carry aviation lighting that must, under international standards, be visible at considerable range. Bará and Lima's recent work on the visual impact of wind farm lighting in the nocturnal landscape demonstrates that turbine aviation lamps remain visually detectable against the natural night sky at distances of several tens of kilometres, and produce ground illuminance comparable to a moonless starry sky out to several hundred metres from the base of the turbine (see source E). The result is that a

development of this scale does not just light its own site; it changes the night sky for an entire valley. This contradicts the commitment in the Programme for Government 2025 to expand dark sky designations in Ireland, and it imposes a real and lasting loss on every household and small tourism business in the area that depends on darkness, including those marketing themselves to visitors specifically on that basis.

#### **ix. Walks, heritage and tourism**

The Mealah Valley Loop Walk and St Finbarr's Pilgrimage Path are among the quiet attractions that bring walkers, pilgrims, and visitors into this part of West Cork. They are not high-volume tourist destinations and they do not need to be: their value lies precisely in their tranquillity and in the openness of the landscape through which they pass. Fáilte Ireland's 2024 review of the Wild Atlantic Way identifies unspoilt scenery, dark skies, and quiet rural character as the core experiences the region offers visitors (see source F). The developer's own Cultural Heritage assessment admits visual impacts on this network of walks that cannot be mitigated. We do not understand how the Commission can be asked to weigh that admission against the West Cork tourism strategy and find in favour of the development.

#### **x. Construction traffic, R586 closures, and emergency access**

The R586 is not designed for the scale of haulage this development requires. It is a winding, narrow regional road serving a string of rural communities, and it carries our route to Cork city and the hospitals there. Members of our household, and elderly relatives nearby, rely on that road for hospital appointments. Eighteen to twenty-four months of construction traffic, with the road closures and convoy escorts that necessarily accompany abnormal loads of this kind, will not just be an inconvenience. It will be a sustained barrier to medical care and to emergency-vehicle access for anyone living west of the works. We were not given clear information at the consultation stage about the scale and duration of those closures, nor about the practical arrangements for residents who need to travel through them.

#### **xi. Fire risk and the loss of trees**

Wind turbines sited on peat-dominated terrain in remote upland locations are difficult to access in the event of a nacelle fire, and once such a fire takes hold there is effectively no means of extinguishing it. The site is forested in part, and the access track and crane hardstandings will require the felling of mature trees and the disturbance of sensitive ecosystems both during and after construction. These are not abstract risks: they are foreseeable, and the developer's response to them in the EIAR is, to put it plainly, thin.

#### **xii. How this development has been brought forward**

We attended what was offered by way of community consultation and we came away with the clear impression that we were being informed of decisions, not consulted about them. The information made available to us about the size of the turbines, the road works required to bring them to site, and the duration of the construction phase was incomplete and, in some respects, contradicted what we have since read in the planning documents themselves. We do not believe this development has been brought forward transparently, and the so-called Community Benefit Fund attached to the proposal is, in our view, not an offer of partnership but a payment offered in lieu of the consent the developer was unable to secure. Our community has not given meaningful consent to this scheme.

### **xiii. On climate and the right place for wind energy**

We are not opposed to renewable energy. We accept the scale of the climate challenge and we accept that Ireland needs to decarbonise its electricity supply. What we do not accept is that the answer lies in placing 169-metre turbines on a sensitive upland ridge above a populated rural valley, when better-sited alternatives exist offshore, on industrial brownfield sites, and on the rooftops of every warehouse and public building in the country. Climate action that destroys the places it claims to protect is not climate action; it is something else, dressed in the language of climate action. We ask the Commission to recognise the difference.

### **xiv. For these reasons**

For the reasons set out above, we respectfully ask An Coimisiún Pleanála to refuse permission for the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm. We are not asking for a smaller scheme, a relocated scheme, or a delayed scheme. We are asking for refusal, on the grounds that this site, in this valley, at this scale, is not capable of accommodating what the developer proposes without unacceptable harm to the residents who live below the ridge and to the landscape they depend on.

Is sinne, le meas,

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Alan O'Sullivan

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Elva O'Sullivan

Glencreagh, Bantry, Co. Cork, P75 YA72

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### **Sources cited**

**Source A.** Onakpoya, I. J., O'Sullivan, J., Thompson, M. J. & Heneghan, C. J. (2015). *The effect of wind turbine noise on sleep and quality of life: a systematic*

*review and meta-analysis of observational studies*. *Environment International*, 82, 1-9.

**Source B.** Schmidt, J. H. & Klokke, M. (2014). *Health effects related to wind turbine noise exposure: a systematic review*. *PLOS ONE*, 9 (12), e114183.

**Source C.** World Health Organisation Regional Office for Europe (2018). *Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region*. WHO, Copenhagen.

**Source D.** Van Renterghem, T. (2017). *Sound propagation from a ridge wind turbine across a valley*. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A*, 375, 20160105.

**Source E.** Bará, S. & Lima, R. C. (2024). *Quantifying the visual impact of wind farm lights on the nocturnal landscape*. *Journal of Quantitative Spectroscopy and Radiative Transfer*, 329, 109203.

**Source F.** Fáilte Ireland (2024). *Wild Atlantic Way: Regional Tourism Development Strategy review*. Fáilte Ireland, Dublin.