

Carole Neiertz
Gortnacowly, Mealagh
valley
Bantry, Co. Cork
P75 K466

Friday, 15th May 2026

SID Planning

An Coimisiún Pleanála

64 Marlborough Street

Dublin 1

D01 V902

Planning Application Reference Number: ACP-324165-26

Applicant: Maughanaclea Ltd / Enerco

Description of Development: 10 year planning permission for Maughanaclea wind farm consisting of 14 wind turbines, a 110kV substation and 110kV underground cabling connection and associated works

Location: Maughanaclea, County Cork

A Chara,

I am writing to you to object to the Maughanaclea wind farm development on the following grounds.

Firstly, the visual impact on the Mealagh valley in particular, and on the whole Bantry bay in general, will be enormous. The proposed turbines will be 169m high, which is extremely large, and they would therefore dominate the skyline and be visible from long distances. On an Enerco map about the 'theoretical visibility' of the wind turbines it becomes apparent that some of the turbines are visible from a distance of as much as 25 km away, and not just in one direction but in all directions; because Maughanaclea is at such a high altitude, but also because the planned wind turbines are so tall. Cork County Council has in the past rejected wind farm proposals due to their significant visual and landscape impacts. Some proposals have been rejected (cf. proposal outside Ballydehob) due to them 'domineering the landscape from many very vantage points and over a wide area' and would 'seriously and unnecessarily injure the high value landscape areas'. The same will be the case in this instance. These turbines would be visible along long stretches of the Sheep's head way, one of the main tourist routes in West Cork. The Mealagh valley and the surrounding areas are an area of outstanding natural beauty. In the Cork County development plan most of the Mealagh valley sits within 'landscape character area 15a: ridged and peaked uplands-designated high landscape value and high landscape sensitivity'. Pilgrim ways and scenic routes cut through the area and the turbines will be visible and audible throughout.

The 'West Cork coast destination and experience development plan' has as one of its main objectives to protect the natural heritage and special environmental character to encourage tourists to visit and local businesses that rely on tourism to thrive. There are two businesses in the Mealagh valley alone that rely on tourists to visit, namely 'Wild Hideaways' and 'Hagal farm'. Both will be adversely affected by the proposed development, not just during the erection of the turbines and the burying of underground cables (rock breaking noise for days on end for 2 years!) but also in the long term. A quiet retreat next to loud, industrial wind turbines is a contradiction in terms. Cork County council plays a key role in helping to bring about the objectives listed in 'the West Cork coast destination and experience development plan' as does an Coimisiún Pleanála. It is worth highlighting that the Mealagh valley alone has around 85 archaeological monuments ranging from Bronze age wedge tombs that are about 4000 years old to Ogham stones from the early Christian period to stone rows and

stone circles. David Myler's book 'an archaeological survey of the Mealagh valley' lists and describes them all. Needless to say these monuments bring tourists to the area and contribute to the local economy. 11 recorded archaeological sites lie within the wind farm site itself, 210 further monuments lie within 5km (this includes those in the Mealagh valley just mentioned) and 6 national monuments lie within 6km of the proposed wind turbines! Next to these monuments and heritage sites are also the cultural ones that need to be mentioned. St Finbarr's pilgrim path from Drimoleague to Gougane Barra will be 'decimated', it will be transformed into a pilgrimage along wind turbines from the proposed 'Dreenacreenig West wind farm' development (that was just granted conditional permission by Cork County Council) to the Maughanaclea wind turbines. The cumulative impact on the character of the landscape cannot be ignored nor can the cumulative noise impact and the impact on residential amenity, a point I will return to later. The cumulative noise impact caused by the addition of the Dreenacreenig wind farm has not been assessed in the EIAR. This is such a quiet rural setting where at night one can only hear wildlife. These turbines being placed on an elevated ridge will be very audible in such a quiet, rural setting.

One of the main assets of West Cork is that it is an area of incredible beauty with spectacular views over Bantry bay and the West Cork coastline, with a landscape rich in archaeological monuments and a wild rugged landscape that is spectacular with its heather, fuchsia, bracken, its patchwork of fields and wild upland areas. Fáilte Ireland does describe the Wild Atlantic way a 'calling card' to entice people to the west of Ireland'. West Cork has accommodated many windfarms over the years, and it does seem contradictory to want to invite tourists to visit the area because of its beauty and calm and to then go and erect colossal industrial turbines that would be visible all throughout Bantry bay, next to 11 archaeological sites and right on a pilgrim's way that is famous all throughout Ireland.

Secondly, the impact on residential amenity and the quality of life will be enormous. I did mention that the visual landscape will be changed forever with the proposed development. However, next to the visible aspect will be the auditory one. There is no mandatory minimum setback distance. Some of the houses are as little as 600 metres away from a turbine. The wind turbines will be audible all throughout the Mealagh valley depending on wind direction

and weather. Those living in houses that are only 600 meters from a turbine will always hear them. As noted above, no study was made of the cumulative noise impact of the Dreenacreenig wind farm and the Maughanaclea wind farm. Tourists turn up and leave and probably will never return again, but this is our home. A home I personally chose precisely because of its spectacular rural setting. The Mealagh valley is in my opinion one of the most beautiful valleys in Ireland (if you have never been, I invite you cordially to see with your own eyes). This is a quiet area where at night the only sounds you hear are those of wildlife. (Two weeks ago a long eared owl was sitting on an ash tree next to my house making hooting calls.) The night sky is breath taking with so many stars visible due to a lack of light pollution, and Northern lights therefore visible every summer. I am surrounded by nothing but fields, pastures and woods and my home is not just my little haven, but also that of my animals (donkeys, mule, pony, ducks, chicken, turkeys, dogs). Irish and EU law gives me the right to enjoy my property. Noise nuisance and overbearing visual dominance of the turbines will impede on my enjoyment of my home.

I read in Enerco's planning application that when it comes to daily shadow flicker, they suggest drawing curtains or moving into another room. Such a statement leaves me not just shocked but also angry. This is the solution they come up with, and it is now up to me and the local population to make our case why such reasoning and disregard (and disrespect frankly) is not ok. I assume they also suggest that if we do not like the wind turbines to simply look the other way. I wonder how they would feel if they had a colossal wind turbine of 169m only 600 meters next to their house.

Thirdly, the value of all local houses will depreciate as a result of the erection of the wind farm.

Fourthly, the guidelines relating to wind turbines are from 2006! Needless to say, 20 years later the turbines are of a different calibre, and the weather has become much more unpredictable. Due to climate change we have no reliable climate models. Hurricanes will become much more regular, and turbines have collapsed before. Moreover, the battery storage system at substations is hazardous and highly flammable. When they do catch fire,

the fire brigade does not extinguish them, but leaves them smoulder away and the local population will be told to either evacuate or leave windows shut for days. This is a rural farming area with plenty of livestock out in fields and barns, not to mention wildlife, both of which would suffer tremendously should a substation catch fire.

No new wind turbines should be approved until new guidelines have been published.

A fifth point to be made is that these wind farms get advertised as being green, and while the wind is renewable, nothing else about wind turbines is green. In fact the impact they have on the environment is quite shocking. The Iran war has heightened our reliance on fossil fuels and an urgency to move away from them. However, it is important to highlight that by moving onto wind energy and solar energy, we will still be relying on the harvesting of raw materials often in/from authoritarian regimes such as China. Furthermore, the mining of these raw materials destroys entire eco systems, and has horrendous consequences for local populations with water ways being polluted and biodiversity loss with repercussions on those communities for years to come.

Those are the environmental consequences further afield. However, as a sixth point, it should be noted that there are many environmental consequences where those wind farms are erected. Waterways are also being polluted here. Natural habitats are destroyed. Here in the Meallagh valley there are red squirrels, pine martins, bats, hen harriers, long eared owls, stoats (and minks) next to many different types of birds and plenty of deer. (I have seen, or heard all of the above bar the pine martin, but pine martin faeces have been found in a woodland close to Maughanaclea). All wildlife will be negatively impacted by the proposed wind farm.

The blades of the wind turbines are currently not even recyclable, and yet they need replacing after 20 years. While they are in use, they shed micro plastics that contaminate local waterways, fields and gardens and thus make it into our food chain. Many locals have surface wells that get their water from the stream running down from Maughanaclea. Those wells will be contaminated with micro plastics. Dairy cows will be ingesting grass with particles of plastics. Those particles will be in the milk they produce.

Moreover, wind power is intermittent, in other words it is unreliable. It is constrained by meteorological conditions and the geographical locations where turbines get put up. Alan Wylie of Energy Cloud made the interesting point that because wind farms are often rural, the electricity cannot be moved to where it's needed and as a result a lot of energy is 'dumped'. Last year alone €50 million worth of renewable energy was wasted.

It is energy that is far from carbon neutral as well, hence it doesn't make sense to call it 'green energy'. Nuclear energy is much greener than any energy produced by wind or solar power, and if we want to make sure to get carbon emissions in check while at the same time producing enough energy for all citizens and all data centres, we would actually move over to nuclear energy. But just like with industrial wind turbines, I would not erect them in the most scenic, touristic setting, right next to 11 archaeological monuments and into an area that is thriving with wildlife.

To summarise, Maughanaclea is an inadequate site for yet another industrial wind farm in West Cork. It is an area of outstanding natural beauty thriving with wildlife. It is adjacent to a high value landscape. The site sits among archaeological monuments that should be protected for generations to come, not damaged by diggers and rock breakers and other such machinery and the impact they have on soil and ground movement. The site is right next to pilgrim's ways and hiking routes, and the Sheep's head way. This is an area tourists are generally encouraged to visit, but an industrial wind farm will actually lead to the opposite. The environmental impact of the erection of these colossal wind turbines will also be enormous, and they will change the landscape forever and for the worse.

For these reasons I believe this development would cause unacceptable harm to the landscape, environment, residential amenity and community of the area and should be refused.

I appreciate you reading this and assessing my application, and look forward to hearing from you.

Mise le Meas,