
RE: MAUGHANACLEA WIND FARM / ENERCO'S APPLICATION TO BUILD 14 INDUSTRIAL WIND FARMS, REF ACP-324165-26

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An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1, D01 V902

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to object to the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm, Ref: ACP-324165-26.

I have lived in the Mealagh Valley for over 25 years and value both the natural environment and the rich quality of life that this area provides. I support renewable energy in principle and have invested in covering our home & outbuilding in solar panels - I do not believe Maughanaclea is an appropriate location for an industrial wind development of this scale.

Impact on Biodiversity and Local Habitat

Over the past two decades, we have actively maintained our land to support biodiversity. Our home and surrounding environment regularly attract a wide range of wildlife, including swallows which return each summer, along with other bird species and fauna.





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There is also clear evidence from within the wider area, including local observation and wildlife monitoring, that the valley supports species such as pine marten, Irish hare, red squirrel, and a variety of birdlife. The photos I've included here were captured on Maughanaclea in the enclosed Nature Reserve maintained by Coillte and Sioned Jones¹ and show pine martin, hare, and red squirrel in the nature reserve on Maughanaclea. This is proof that these protected animals and their habitat will be directly impacted by this proposed development.

¹ Please see Sioned Jones' full submission to the Commission including photos & maps

Given the presence of Annex I bird species identified in the EIAR², and the ecological sensitivity of upland peatland habitats³, I am not satisfied that the Environmental Impact Assessment has fully captured the extent of biodiversity or adequately assessed the potential for disturbance, displacement, and collision risk. In line with EU law, I ask that the Commission use the precautionary principle to protect these animals.⁴

Landscape and Tranquillity

The Mealagh Valley is a quiet, unspoilt upland landscape. The proposed turbines, at approximately 169m in height, would introduce large-scale industrial structures into a highly sensitive setting.

The Cork County Development Plan (CCDP), Section 13.6 and related landscape policies, emphasises the need to protect skylines, ridgelines, and views of unspoilt upland landscapes, particularly in areas of High Landscape Value and Sensitivity. The Plan also highlights the importance of considering cumulative impact.⁵

There's also is insufficient clarity regarding long-term environmental effects, including decommissioning and site restoration. The EIAR indicates that infrastructure such as roads and hardstands may remain in situ, raising concerns about permanent landscape alteration.⁶

In my view, the scale and siting of this development is not consistent with these objectives and would result in a significant and permanent alteration of the landscape character of the area. Taken together with the Gortloughra, Curraglass, and Dereenacreenig developments - the cumulative impact would devastate our beautiful landscape beyond recovery.

Residential Amenity and Visual Impact

The scale, visibility, and noise from the turbines would have a significant impact on residential amenity. The development would introduce dominant structures into the landscape, altering views and the character of the area, directly contradicting the Cork County Development Plan's Wind Energy Development policies.⁷

This would negatively affect the enjoyment of our home and may also impact property values⁸.

² EIAR Chapter 6 Biodiversity and Ecology – Annex I bird species identified within the study area.

³ EIAR Chapter 6 Biodiversity and Ecology, Table 6-24 – “Permanent, significant residual effect” on upland blanket bog habitat.

⁴ Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the conservation of wild birds (EU Birds Directive), Article 4(1).

⁵ Cork County Development Plan 2022–2028, Section 13.6.3 – requirement to consider cumulative impacts of existing and proposed wind energy developments.

⁶ EIAR Chapter 11 Climate, Section 11.4.2 and EIAR Chapter 13 Landscape & Visual Impact Assessment, Section 13.7.4 – references to roads, hardstands, and infrastructure remaining in situ following decommissioning.

⁷ Cork County Development Plan 2022–2028, Section 13.6 – Wind Energy Development policies relating to skylines, ridgelines, landscape sensitivity, and cumulative impact.

⁸ (Gillespie & McHale, Wind Turbines and House Prices Along the West of Ireland: A Hedonic Pricing Approach, CERIS Working Paper Series 2023)

I am not satisfied that the likely impact of visual impact & construction noise on residential amenity has been fully or accurately assessed. I request that the Commission recognise that:

- Average noise levels do not reflect real disturbance
- A wide area of homes may be affected
- Terrain and cumulative effects may increase impacts

I ask that appropriate consideration be given to the potential loss of residential amenity.

Noise Assessment – NML4 and Representativeness

I have serious concerns regarding the noise assessment, particularly the reliance on a limited number of monitoring locations.

Only one Noise Monitoring Location (NML4) is located within the Mealagh Valley.⁹ Given the size of the study area and the complex topography of the valley, this is not sufficient to represent the variation in background noise conditions across the area, particularly during quiet night-time periods.

NML4 is described in the EIAR (Chapter 12, Noise and Vibration) as a “quiet garden location” with “birdsong and infrequent traffic”.¹⁰ However, this location is situated in close proximity to an active dairy farm, regular cattle movement along the road, and other agricultural activity. These contextual factors are not clearly described or accounted for in the assessment.

The valley itself is characterised by complex, bowl-shaped topography which can influence how sound travels and is experienced. Research has shown that valleys and hilly terrain can affect how wind turbine noise propagates and may increase sound levels at certain locations due to reflection, shielding, and atmospheric effects.¹¹

Ask anyone who lives here how loud a lamb across the valley sounds. Our complex topography is not meaningfully addressed in the noise modelling, which relies on standard approaches that may not be appropriate for such terrain.

In addition, the assessment relies on averaged noise data. Averaging can mask short-term peaks and very low background noise conditions, which are particularly important in quiet rural areas. Given that increases of 5 dB are perceptible and increases of 10 dB are experienced as a doubling of noise, I am not satisfied that the assessment adequately reflects real-world impacts on residents.

Construction Impacts and Traffic Safety

The construction phase raises serious concerns regarding noise, duration of works, and heavy vehicle traffic.

The EIAR transport assessment indicates that turbine components will require abnormal load

⁹ EIAR Chapter 12 Noise & Vibration – only one Noise Monitoring Location (NML4) located within the Mealagh Valley.

¹⁰ EIAR Chapter 12 Noise & Vibration, Section 12.4.2 – NML4 described as a “quiet garden location” with “birdsong and infrequent traffic”.

¹¹ Van Renterghem, T. et al. (2014) “Wind Turbine Noise Propagation Over Complex Terrain and Wind Conditions” Acoustical Society of America / Wind-Watch archive. Available at: https://docs.wind-watch.org/Van-Renterghem_wind-turbine-noise-hills-valleys.pdf

vehicles which cannot remain within the carriageway and will overrun road edges and junctions.¹² This presents a clear safety risk to other road users.

The local road network is narrow and rural in character and is not designed to accommodate this level of traffic. There is a significant risk of road damage, disruption, and safety impacts over an extended construction period.

My elderly in-laws live with us and are at a higher risk of requiring hospital care in Cork. In addition to general safety concerns, I worry how the construction period will affect our ability to get them to the city safely in an emergency.

Consultation and Process

I do not believe that the level of community consultation has been adequate. Many local residents feel that they have not been meaningfully engaged.

We have neighbours that have been lied to by Enerco's representatives at the Westlodge Open Day. We have other neighbours with thriving tourism businesses who were in now way consulted about how the development will impact their eco tourism business.

Conclusion

While I support renewable energy, I do not believe this development is appropriate for this location. The scale, siting, and potential impacts on biodiversity, landscape, noise, and residential amenity are not adequately addressed.

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

Yours sincerely,

Christian Ahles

¹² EIA Traffic and Transport Assessment – abnormal load vehicles overrunning carriageways and junctions during turbine delivery.