

AN COIMISIÚN PLEANÁLA	
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Christina Keawwantha
Millbig, Coomhola,
Bantry, Co. Cork
12th May 2026

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála

Re: Objection to Proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm

SID Application Ref: ACP-324165-26 / 324165

Applicant: Maughanaclea Ltd / Enerco

Description of Development: 10 year planning permission for Maughanaclea Wind Farm consisting of 14 no. wind turbines, a 110kV substation and 110kV underground cabling connection and associated works.

Location: Maughanaclea, County Cork

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to formally object to the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm development under SID Application Ref. ACP-324165-26.

I am a resident of the Bantry area and, although I do not live close enough to the proposed development to be directly affected by turbine noise or shadow flicker, I believe the wider **environmental, social, economic and cumulative impacts upon the landscape and communities of West Cork are sufficiently serious** that I feel compelled to object to this proposal.

I am deeply concerned by the manner in which this application has been constituted as Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID). While the project is being promoted as nationally significant infrastructure intended to assist Ireland's energy transition, the **principal direct beneficiaries appear to be private commercial interests**, namely the developer Enerco and the large-scale electricity demand sectors that increasingly drive national energy policy.

The proposal is framed as part of Ireland's transition away from fossil fuels. However, independent national data demonstrates that **Ireland's overall energy demand and electricity consumption continue to increase substantially, driven in significant part by commercial and data-centre demand**. According to the Central Statistics Office (CSO), Ireland's electricity demand has increased every year for the last decade, with data centres accounting for over one-fifth of all electricity consumption in 2024. The CSO further reported that data-centre electricity consumption increased by 531% between 2015 and 2024 and now accounts for approximately 22% of all metered electricity consumption nationally.

The Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) has also reported that **Ireland's overall fossil fuel use continued to increase in 2024 despite continued renewable energy expansion**, with fossil fuels still accounting for over 80% of Ireland's total energy supply.

This demonstrates that renewable developments are not necessarily replacing fossil fuel usage at the pace implied in public discourse, but are instead increasingly servicing

expanding national energy demand. **The local communities expected to absorb the visual, environmental and infrastructural burden of this development will not directly benefit from the electricity generated.** There is no meaningful guarantee that local residents will receive reduced energy costs, enhanced energy security, or proportional economic benefit from the project.

I am also concerned that **this proposal fundamentally disregards the principle of a “Just Transition.”** Rural communities and landscapes in West Cork are effectively being sacrificed in order to satisfy the growing and arguably unsustainable energy demands of data centres, tech-dependent industry, and expanding urban consumption. **The support of such developments against the wishes of many local residents and communities is deeply troubling.**

The proposed turbines, at 169m, are among the largest structures ever introduced into this landscape. Their siting on elevated ridge lines means they would be visible across a wide area, **fundamentally altering the character of the countryside.** The R585 is designated as a scenic route, and the presence of turbines of this scale would directly undermine this designation. **When considered alongside existing and proposed wind farms in the wider region, the cumulative impact would result in landscape saturation and irreversible visual harm.**

The proposed development raises a number of related and serious concerns in relation to:

- Hydrology, water quality and flood risk, including potential impacts upon upland catchments and downstream water systems: Upland construction and peat excavation such as this development will demand, significantly alters natural drainage patterns, **increasing the risk of downstream flooding resulting in increasing sediment and pollutants entering local streams, rivers and private wells,** especially during periods of heavy rainfall which are increasing in frequency.
- Peat stability and carbon loss associated with excavation and construction within sensitive upland environments: Ireland’s peatlands are an important carbon sink but are inherently unstable when disturbed. The excavation and necessary drainage required for the planned development will almost certainly result in **major environmental damage and carbon loss.** Previous peat failures in Ireland demonstrate that these risks are not theoretical.
- Ecological impacts upon habitats, birds and bat populations, especially the Hen Harrier: The site and surrounding area support many important bird and bat species, which are put under increasing threat due to industrial development within their habitats. Of particular, but not isolated, concern is the Hen Harrier. **The upland habitats of West Cork form part of an ecologically sensitive landscape supporting protected bird species, including the Hen Harrier (Circus cyaneus), an Annex I protected species under the EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC).** Nearby Special Protection Areas such as the Mullaghanish to Musheramore Mountains SPA have been designated specifically for the conservation of this species. Wind energy developments have previously been refused permission in Ireland due to risks posed to Hen Harrier breeding, foraging habitat and cumulative disturbance impacts. I am concerned that **the cumulative industrialisation of upland habitats in West Cork risks further habitat fragmentation and disturbance to**

protected bird populations contrary to the objectives of the Birds and Habitats Directives and the Natura 2000 network. It is reprehensible to assume that turbines of this scale and in this location will not also disrupt habitats and movement patterns of other bird species, bats and other wildlife.

- Residential amenity, including visual impact: Residential amenity extends beyond minimum separation distances. The scale, movement, and dominance of these turbines would create **an overbearing presence for nearby homes.** Visual intrusion, noise, and loss of tranquillity would materially affect quality of life, wellbeing and the enjoyment of homes in what is currently a quiet rural environment.
- Noise and Low Frequency Sound: Rural background noise levels are particularly low, especially at night. Even noise levels that comply with limits can be disturbing in such environments. Low frequency noise travels further than higher frequency noise and penetrates buildings more easily. **Amplitude modulation (the rhythmic “swish thump” sound) is a well recognised source of complaint but it is all too often unaccountably underestimated in assessments.**
- Shadow Flicker: Given the turbine height and blade diameter, shadow flicker has the potential to affect properties at significant distances. Real world conditions such as cloud cover, topography, and sun angle often differ from modelled predictions, meaning **actual impacts are impossible to predict with any certainty and may be more widespread and severe.**
- Roads, traffic and construction impacts on already constrained rural infrastructure; Construction would involve prolonged periods of heavy and abnormal vehicle movements on narrow rural roads that are not designed for such traffic. This raises **serious safety concerns and the risk of long-term damage to road infrastructure, bridges, drainage systems, and boundary features.**
- Community cohesion and wider social impacts upon local residents; Large wind farm developments often create long-term divisions within rural communities. Financial benefits accrue to a limited number of landowners, while negative impacts are experienced by neighbours and the wider community. **The result is fragmentation and deterioration of rural communities, culture and heritage.**
- Archaeology and cultural heritage impacts within a historically and culturally significant landscape; West Cork has one of the highest densities of archaeological monuments in Ireland. Upland peatland areas often contain unrecorded archaeology, which may be destroyed during construction. The visual setting of known monuments would also be severely degraded.
- Tourism and local businesses, particularly given West Cork’s reputation for scenic landscape, heritage and environmental quality: The local tourism economy depends on landscape quality, tranquillity, and scenic value. **Industrial-scale wind turbines risk undermining these assets,** particularly where they are visible from key tourist routes such as the Wild Atlantic Way.

I am particularly concerned about the cumulative impact of multiple existing and proposed wind energy developments across the wider region. **The cumulative industrialisation of the West Cork landscape has not, in my view, been adequately assessed in terms of**

visual impact, biodiversity loss, tourism implications, infrastructure strain, or long-term social consequences.

I also object to the continued reliance upon outdated wind-energy planning guidelines and separation distances which fail to adequately reflect current scientific understanding regarding turbine scale, cumulative effects, residential amenity, low-frequency noise, and modern community expectations. Planning policy has not kept pace with the scale and intensity of contemporary industrial wind developments.

Furthermore, I believe **this proposal falls short of the participatory principles and community protections which are supposed to underpin EU environmental and transition policy.** In particular:

- a) Local residents and stakeholders were not meaningfully engaged during the formative pre-planning stages;
- b) The proposal lacks any genuinely fair or proportional benefit-sharing mechanism whereby local residents benefit equitably alongside the developer;
- c) Insufficient consideration has been given to alternative models such as collectively owned, community-led or community-managed renewable energy projects which could deliver local benefit and democratic participation.

Taken individually and cumulatively, the impacts of the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm would be unacceptable. The development would result in lasting harm to the environment, residential amenity, and community and should therefore be refused.

Finally, I wish to raise **concern regarding the €50 fee** required to lodge an observation or objection in this process. While statutory, this fee nonetheless **creates a financial barrier to participation for many local residents and undermines equitable public engagement in planning matters of significant local consequence.** With regard to this, my husband, Mr Ongart Keawwantha of the same above address, has expressed his wish to also sign this letter of submission and it is expected that it will be noted that although this is a single submission in terms of financial receipt, it is a double submission in terms of submitting the concerns and views of local residents.

For all of the above reasons, I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála refuse permission for the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm development.

Yours faithfully,

Christina Keawwantha and Ongart Keawwantha

