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Approximately 2 km from nearest proposed turbine

An Coimisiún Pleanála  
64 Marlborough Street  
Dublin 1

May 2026

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to object to the proposed Maughanaclea wind farm at Maughanaclea, near Kealkill, Co. Cork — planning reference ACP-324165-26. I live in Goulanes, on the southern side of the Mealagh Valley, approximately 2 km from the nearest of the proposed turbines on a bearing roughly due north of my home.

I am 19. I am a nursing student in Waterford and I drive home most weekends. My family has lived in this valley for as long as I can remember. I am writing about what this development would do to the place I come home to, and what it would do to me and my family directly.

The first and most pressing of my concerns is noise. I am noise-sensitive and I get headaches that are made worse by sustained background sound — the kind that you cannot get away from and that you cannot block out. The developer's noise chapter, Chapter 12 of their EIAR, confirms that construction is expected to last 18 to 24 months and that the borrow pits on the ridge will be worked using either blasting or two rock-breakers operating simultaneously. The Mealagh Valley is a steep, glacially-carved bowl. Anyone who has spent time here knows that sound carries across it in a way it does not on flat ground. The notion that two rock-breakers will operate on the ridge for the better part of two years without echoing across the valley to our home is not credible. I raise noise here as a substantive ground of my objection. Chapter 12 is silent on the words "valley", "hill" and "terrain" — it treats the site as if it were on flat ground. The Royal Society work of Van Renterghem (2017) on sound propagation from a ridge wind turbine across a valley is directly on point for this site, and it was not referenced. The developer's baseline noise was measured at only six locations across an area with 79 noise-sensitive receptors. As a student nurse I have read enough to know what the Oxford systematic review by Onakpoya et al. (2015) concluded about wind turbine noise: an odds ratio of 2.94 for sleep disturbance and 4.08 for annoyance, both statistically significant. I do not want to live with that for the next 35 years.

The second thing I want to raise is the R585 and what happens to it during construction. I drive between Waterford and Bantry every weekend, term-time, and the R585 is the road I rely on at the Bantry end of that journey. I have read that the developer proposes works and possible closures on this road during the 18 to 24 month construction phase, and the detail of what those closures will look like has not been made clear in any community communication I have seen. For a student on a tight timetable, with shift placements and assignments, that uncertainty matters. But the bigger point is that the R585 is a primary access route in this part of West Cork, and an emergency-vehicle route to the hospitals in Cork city. Ambulance times in this valley already depend on it. I am training to be a nurse. I think about how long it takes an ambulance to get to a patient. Two years of intermittent road works on a road this important is not a small matter, and the developer's traffic assessment does not appear to take it seriously.

From our home and from the surrounding land we look out at a working rural landscape — fields, ridgelines, sky. The developer proposes up to fourteen turbines at 169 metres to tip height on the ridgeline north of us. That is taller than any structure in this valley by an order of magnitude. They will dominate views from our home, our garden, and the lane I take down to the road every morning. I do not want to spend my twenties looking at them and I do not want to bring my own children back here one day to a home that looks out on a ridgeline of industrial machines. I should also note that shadow flicker is identified in the developer's own modelling as a real risk: thirty-one of seventy-nine dwellings in the study area are predicted to experience it, eight are predicted to exceed the 30-hour-per-year statutory threshold even after the sunshine correction, and the worst-affected dwelling shows 98 hours of predicted exceedance per year. The mitigation depends entirely on the developer's control software shutting the turbines down at the correct times of day for the next 35 years, with no independent monitoring mechanism specified. Shadow flicker would affect rooms and outdoor spaces that we use daily, and on top of headaches and the noise that is the combination I find genuinely frightening.

My fourth concern is what this development would do to the wildlife of the site and its surrounds. The land on which the developer wishes to place turbines is upland habitat that includes wet heath, dry heath and blanket bog — priority habitats under Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive, as the developer's own ecology chapter (Chapter 6) confirms. The site sits within the catchments of the Owvane and Mealagh rivers, both of which are sensitive catchments for Freshwater Pearl Mussel under S.I. No. 296/2009 — one of Ireland's most threatened protected species. I would also like to draw attention specifically to the common lizard, *Zootoca vivipara*, which is Ireland's only native reptile, protected under the Wildlife Acts, and which uses precisely the kind of upland

heath habitat that the southern turbines T7 to T14 would sit on. The common lizard depends on intact, sun-exposed heath and bog-edge habitat for basking. Stripping vegetation at scale, trenching for cables, putting in hardstanding and access roads — these are exactly the activities that destroy the microhabitat this species needs. The developer’s ecology chapter does not, as far as I can see, give reptiles any meaningful dedicated attention. Beyond the lizard, the site has confirmed presence of Hen Harrier (Chapter 7 records nineteen observations during vantage point surveys, with a male performing skydance — a territorial breeding display — on the site in January 2024), Peregrine Falcon (twenty-eight observations), and falls within the foraging range of the White-tailed Sea Eagle, recently re-introduced to West Cork. The NPWS specifically warned the developer in scoping that ridges above valleys are exactly where eagles use orographic lift to gain altitude. The developer’s response, in effect, was to say that because no eagles were recorded at potential collision height during their finite survey window, no collision risk assessment was needed. That argument does not stand up. The absence of a sighting in a survey period is not the same as the absence of risk over a 35-year operational lifespan. EU case law (Commission v Ireland, C-418/04) confirms that protections for Annex I bird species apply outside designated SPAs as well as within them.

There is already a substantial amount of wind energy in this corner of Cork. Several wind farms are already operating or consented around Bantry, Kealkill and the Mealagh Valley, with around thirty further turbines proposed in the ten miles between Derreenacrinnig and Curraglass. Cork and Kerry together produce more wind energy than the remaining twenty-four counties of Ireland combined; seven counties produce none at all. To stack a further fourteen turbines on top of what is already here, while half the country contributes nothing, is not a fair share — it is overload, and the cumulative effect on noise, on the night sky, on roads and on the species in this valley has not been honestly assessed by the developer. On the dark sky point in particular: a 2024 paper by Bará and Lima quantified medium-intensity turbine aviation warning lights as brighter than Venus up to about four kilometres from the turbine, and brighter than Sirius up to about ten kilometres. The Mealagh Valley is at present a near-pristine night-sky environment. Putting flashing red aviation lights along this ridgeline foreseeably destroys that, and it cuts directly against the Programme for Government 2025 commitment to expanding dark sky reserves.

On the heritage of this place: the developer’s own EIAR confirms eleven recorded archaeological sites within the wind farm site, two hundred and ten further sites within five kilometres, and six National Monuments within ten kilometres — including the Kealkill Stone Circle, which is under Preservation Order PO 69/1938. The same chapter, Chapter 14, contains the admission, in plain words, that the effects on the setting of these sites “cannot be mitigated”.

That is the developer themselves saying that the visual intrusion of fourteen industrial turbines on the setting of these monuments cannot be undone. I think that sentence, written by the developer's own consultants, should be enough on its own.

Finally, I want to say a word about how this has been put to the community. The developer's public information event for this proposal was held in the Westlodge Hotel in Bantry — 9.5 km from the site — and direct household contact reportedly extended only to a 2 km buffer, even though the LVIA study area extends out to 5 to 15 km and the shadow flicker study area to 1.33 km. The consultation area was a fraction of the impact area. No tourism business in the valley appears to have been consulted, despite the developer's own Tourism Impact Assessment listing one registered eco-retreat and eleven Airbnb premises within five kilometres of the site. None of this gives me any confidence that the developer is engaging in good faith with the people whose lives this would affect for the next thirty-five years.

I am not opposed to renewable energy. I am the same age as a lot of people who are leaving rural Cork because there isn't enough work, enough housing, or enough reason to stay. I am training in a profession I hope to bring back here. The reasons people want to come back to West Cork — the quiet, the dark sky, the upland habitat, the standing stones, the views from your own kitchen window — are the same reasons being put at risk by this proposal. Fourteen industrial turbines, each taller than the Spire on O'Connell Street, on the ridgeline above a community that does not want them, in a county that already produces more wind energy than two dozen other counties combined — it is, plainly, infuriating. Renewable energy belongs where it does the least harm. This is not the right place.

I am asking An Coimisiún Pleanála to refuse this application.

Yours faithfully,

Christina O'Sullivan

Goulanes, Bantry, P75 XN61

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#### *Sources cited*

Van Renterghem, T. (2017). *Sound propagation from a ridge wind turbine across a valley*. Royal Society Open Science, 4(11): 170730.

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