

Re: Planning Reference ACP-324165-26
Maughanaclea Wind Farm / Enerco's Application to
Construct 14 Industrial Wind Turbines on Maughanaclea

21 May 2026

David Butler
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An Coimisiún Pleanála
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A chara,

I wish to object to the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm (324165).

I recognise the need to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and move towards cleaner forms of energy generation. However, I do not believe every location is suitable for industrial-scale wind energy development.

Maughanaclea and the Mealagh Valley form part of a landscape that is exceptional in terms of its natural beauty, wildlife, cultural heritage and sense of place. In my view, the proposed development would result in unacceptable impacts on these qualities and would fundamentally alter the character of this area.

Landscape & Visual Impact

The proposed turbines would stand approximately 169 metres in height, making them taller than the Great Pyramid of Giza and more than half the height of Maughanaclea itself above parts of the valley floor.

The mountains surrounding the Mealagh Valley are one of the defining features of this area. They provide a sense of scale, wildness and remoteness that is increasingly rare. The proposed turbines would dominate the ridgeline and become the most visually prominent feature of the landscape across a large part of West Cork.

I am particularly concerned about the cumulative impact of wind farm development across the wider region. Individual projects are often assessed separately, yet people experience landscapes as a whole. The gradual industrialisation of mountain ridgelines across West Cork risks permanently altering the character of a landscape that is valued by residents and visitors alike.

Ecology & Wildlife

Maughanaclea is not an empty hillside. It supports peatland habitats, woodland edges, wetlands and a wide variety of wildlife.

The area is known to support species including White-tailed Sea Eagle, Pine Marten, Red Squirrel, Irish Hare, bats and numerous bird species. Local residents have documented many of these species in and around the proposed development area.

I am particularly concerned about potential impacts on White-tailed Sea Eagles. The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage specifically highlighted the susceptibility of this species to turbine collisions during the scoping process and emphasised the need for thorough assessment of collision risk and cumulative impacts.¹

The applicant's own EIAR also acknowledges permanent significant residual effects on upland blanket bog habitat. These habitats are important not only for biodiversity but also for carbon storage and water regulation.

Dark Skies

One of the qualities that makes the Mealagh Valley so special is its exceptionally dark night sky.

The area is currently pursuing Dark Sky Community accreditation and has been described by the Chairperson of Dark Sky Ireland as possessing conditions comparable to Ireland's internationally recognised dark sky locations.

The proposed development would introduce 28 aviation warning lights across the ridgeline. These lights would be visible over a considerable distance and would permanently alter the experience of the night sky for residents and visitors.

¹ Please see Appendix 2-2 Scoping Responses, Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage dated 7 April 2025.

Dark skies are an increasingly valuable environmental and tourism resource. Once lost, they are extremely difficult to restore.

Heritage & Sense of Place

The Mealah Valley contains a remarkable concentration of archaeological and historical sites. The applicant's own Cultural Heritage assessment identifies numerous archaeological sites within the development area and many more within the surrounding landscape.

However, the value of this heritage extends beyond individual monuments. It is reflected in the historic roads, place names, folklore, archaeological remains and cultural memory that remain embedded throughout the landscape.

Projects such as the Heritage Council-supported documentary *Voices of the Valley* demonstrate the importance of preserving and celebrating this local heritage for future generations.

Noise and Residential Amenity

I am also concerned about the potential noise impacts of the proposed development.

My family and I moved from Dublin to West Cork in 2020. We were drawn here by the landscape, the wildlife, the dark skies and the sense of peace that still exists in places like the Mealah Valley. Having experienced first-hand the pressures of urban living, I have come to appreciate how valuable these qualities are, not only for my own family but for the wider community and for visitors who come to West Cork seeking the same things.

While the applicant's assessment concludes that predicted noise levels will comply with applicable guidelines, compliance with noise limits does not necessarily mean that noise will not be experienced as intrusive or disturbing by nearby residents. I am particularly concerned because the proposed development is located within a landscape of hills and valleys where sound may travel differently than it does across flat terrain. Research has shown that complex topography can influence the propagation of wind turbine noise and may increase audibility in some locations.²

² Van Renterghem, *Propagation of Noise from Wind Turbines in Complex Terrain: A Review*, Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews, 2014

I am also concerned by aspects of the applicant's noise assessment methodology. The only background noise monitor located within the Mealagh Valley was positioned in an area influenced by farming activity, livestock movement and local traffic. I therefore question whether the assessment has accurately captured the exceptionally low background noise levels that many residents experience within the valley itself.

The importance of properly assessing noise impacts is reflected in Irish case law. In the Ballyduff Wind Farm case and more recently the Gibbet Hill case, courts recognised that wind turbine noise can constitute an unreasonable interference with the enjoyment of a home, even where planning noise limits had not necessarily been exceeded in every instance.

I am not satisfied that the applicant has demonstrated with sufficient certainty that noise impacts, including cumulative impacts with other existing and proposed wind developments, will not adversely affect residential amenity within the Mealagh Valley.

Community & Cumulative Impact

I am also concerned that this proposal provides little opportunity for meaningful community ownership or participation despite the importance placed on community involvement within the Cork County Development Plan.

The transition to renewable energy should strengthen communities rather than divide them. Sustainability is not solely an environmental or economic concept; it must also be social. The scale of local concern regarding this proposal demonstrates that many people feel the environmental and social costs of the development outweigh its local benefits.

Le meas,

David Butler