

24 May 2026

An Coimisiún Pleanála  
64 Marlborough Street  
Dublin 1, D01 V902

Ella Barkans  
Coomleagh East  
Bantry  
Cork  
P75 XK00

Dear Sir or Madam,

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

At the beginning of this year we made the move over from England, having purchased a property here for ourselves and our children. We were not strangers to the valley, however, having visited my mother here many times as well as living here for a short time around 6 years ago.

We knew that the Mealagh Valley in particular was somewhere we wanted to raise our children. We wanted them to grow up immersed in nature and hoped that exploring and enjoying the outdoors, in such an undisturbed location, would be the overriding theme of their childhood.

We were so excited to be able to gift them with this freedom, and our experience of living here thus far has certainly lived up to those expectations in terms of connection with nature. We spend all of the daylight hours outside, as a family, enjoying the tranquility of our surroundings.

One of my most treasured memories thus far has been on one of our first nights spent in our new home, everybody outside late, looking up at the night sky and marvelling at the stars which we were not used to seeing, having come from a heavily light polluted area in England.

The proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm would fundamentally alter so many of the qualities that made this place special to us and which continues to draw so many others to the area.

We are not opposed to renewable energy. We recognise the need to reduce our dependence on fossil fuels and transition towards cleaner forms of energy generation. However, supporting renewable energy does not mean that every landscape or every ecosystem is suitable for industrial-scale development.

Our concerns relate to the impact of this proposal on landscape, wildlife, dark skies, residential amenity, tourism and community wellbeing.

We are particularly concerned about the cumulative effect of developments such as this on the character of West Cork and on the qualities that attract families, visitors and businesses to this area in the first place.

For us, this objection is not simply about turbines. It is about protecting a place that we chose to call home and preserving the natural environment that we hope our children will inherit.

# THE SOUND OF THE VALLEY

One of the things we noticed when we first spent time in the Mealagh Valley was the quiet.

Not silence in the literal sense, but the living sounds of a rural landscape. Wind moving through trees. Birds calling from hedgerows. Rain approaching across the hills. Frogs in wet places after dark. The occasional tractor, a dog barking in the distance, cattle moving through a field.

Sounds that belong to the landscape rather than dominate it.

The proposed development has made us think carefully about what that experience might become.

As newcomers to the area, we cannot claim to know exactly how turbine noise would be experienced in the valley. What concerns us is that neither can the applicant. The landscape here is shaped by steep hills, ridgelines and valleys. Sound does not travel across such terrain in simple or predictable ways.

We are not convinced that modelling alone can fully capture what it will feel like to live beneath turbines of this scale for decades to come.

As parents of young children, we find ourselves asking simple questions: Will the valley still feel peaceful? Will we sleep with our windows open on summer nights? Will the mountains still feel like a refuge, or will they feel industrialised? Will the sounds our children grow up hearing be birds and streams, or machinery and warning systems?

These may not be questions that can be answered entirely by technical reports, but they matter deeply to those who live here. It's hard to imagine the technical reports can be remotely accurate, when only one noise monitor was placed in the whole of the Mealagh Valley.

In addition, as a neurodiverse family, certain members of our household are highly sensitive to visual and auditory stimuli, which can easily lead to overwhelm, fatigue and stress. We are extremely concerned that the cumulative effect of the warning lights, flicker and hum of the turbines will cause great discomfort to us as a family, and that this could cause a significant reduction in quality of life for us here.

## WILDLIFE

Not only are we concerned for ourselves, but we are deeply worried about how the effect that construction and maintenance could have on the animals who make their homes here. In such an undisturbed area, it's no wonder that there is such a vast variety of wildlife here. In the short time we have been here we have already seen bats and common lizards on our property, not to mention the many birds we see and hear daily. We teach our children about the devastating effects that habitat destruction can have on an ecosystem, and yet that is exactly what is being proposed in the surroundings of their home. We strongly believe that we should be making efforts to protect our wildlife, not to put it in danger, and this proposal risks exactly that.

# WHO BEARS THE COST

We are also conscious that buying a home is the largest investment most families ever make. We chose this place because of its landscape, tranquillity, wildlife and natural beauty. Those qualities formed part of the value of what we were investing in—not simply financially, but emotionally and as a place to build a future.

The concern is not only what may happen to property values, but what may happen to the character of the place itself. If the qualities that drew people here are diminished, something important is lost regardless of what any market valuation may ultimately conclude.

Our concerns extend beyond our own household. Hagal Farm, owned and operated by my mum & her partner, welcomes guests seeking exactly what attracted us here in the first place: peace, quiet, nature and escape from the pressures of everyday life.

Visitors do not travel to rural West Cork to experience industrial infrastructure. They come to walk, rest, reconnect with nature and spend time in landscapes that feel fundamentally different from the places they have left behind.

The success of businesses such as Hagal Farm & Wild Hideaways depends upon qualities that are difficult to quantify but easy to recognise: tranquillity, natural beauty, wildlife, dark skies and a sense of remoteness.

We are concerned that the cumulative industrialisation of the surrounding ridgelines risks gradually eroding those qualities and undermining the very reasons many people choose to visit, live and invest in this area.

In addition there is the risk to community member's property directly. We have just spent our savings on having a well drilled, for example. The fact that construction of the wind turbines could potentially alter our supply and degrade our water seems completely unjust, and leads us to question whether the members of this community would truly be supported should issues arise in the future. We fear that there could be a whole host of unforeseen effects that individuals would bear the brunt of.

Ultimately, our concern is not simply about noise levels, visual impact assessments or planning policy. It is about the future character of a place we love. We chose this valley because it felt alive, peaceful and connected to nature. We worry that once those qualities are diminished, they may be far harder to recover than we realise.

When we chose to make our home in the Mealagh Valley, we believed we were investing in more than a house. We were investing in a landscape. In a way of life. In a place where our children could grow up surrounded by nature, dark skies, wildlife and the quiet beauty that makes this corner of West Cork so special.

We understand that Ireland must continue its transition towards renewable energy, and we support that goal. However, we do not believe that every landscape is suitable for industrial-scale development, nor that all places are equally capable of absorbing such profound change.

The concerns we have outlined in this submission relate to landscape, wildlife, noise, residential amenity, tourism and community wellbeing. Taken together, they leave us unconvinced that the long-term impacts of this proposal have been adequately justified or that sufficient weight has been given to the qualities that make this area unique.

Places like the Mealah Valley are becoming increasingly rare. Their value lies not only in what they produce, but in what they provide: peace, beauty, connection to nature, a sense of belonging and an opportunity for future generations to experience something increasingly difficult to find elsewhere.

We do not believe these qualities should be surrendered lightly.

For these reasons, we respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála refuse permission for the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm development.

Sincerely,  
Ella Barkans & James Newton