

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

10 May 2026

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An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
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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 nearly 30 years with my family. My family values both the peace, the undisturbed nature, and the quality of life that the Mealagh Valley provides.

Please know that our family is very much for renewable energy in principle and believe it is essential that Ireland transitions away from fossil fuels. In fact, we were one of the first homes in the Mealagh Valley to cover our home in solar panels.

However, industrial wind turbines are a different matter all together and it's clear that Maughanaclea is not an appropriate location for huge a development of this scale.

Impact on Biodiversity and Local Habitat

Our home and surrounding land support a wide range of wildlife, and we regularly observe birdlife, including swallows returning each year, along with other species that rely on this quiet rural environment.

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, and a variety of birdlife - including the white tailed sea eagle. This indicates that the area functions as an active and sensitive ecological habitat.¹

¹ Please see Sioned Jone's timestamped photos of protected species in the Coillte Nature Reserve on Maughanaclea

The EIAR identifies Annex I bird species within the wider study area.² Under Article 4(1) of the EU Birds Directive³, Annex I species are required to receive special conservation measures concerning their habitats.

Given the presence of Annex I bird species identified in the EIAR, the abundance of images collected by my neighbours, and the known ecological sensitivity of upland peatland habitats, 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.

Dark Skies and Loss of Night Environment

One of the most special and unique aspects of living in the Mealagh Valley is the clarity of the night sky. This is a place with exceptionally low levels of light pollution, where stargazing is possible in a way that has become increasingly rare in Ireland and across Europe.

Brian Espey, Chairperson of Dark Sky Ireland, described the Mealagh Valley as having a “near-pristine environment, close to the conditions in Kerry Dark Sky Reserve and Mayo Dark Sky Park — Ireland’s internationally accredited dark sky areas”.⁴

A Dark Sky Community application is currently in progress for the Mealagh Valley and, if successful, it would become the first recognised Dark Sky Community in Ireland. The proposed development, with 28 mandatory red aviation warning lights across the ridgeline, would permanently undermine and likely preclude this designation.

This is not simply an aesthetic issue. Dark skies are increasingly recognised as an environmental, ecological, tourism, and wellbeing asset. Artificial lighting can affect nocturnal wildlife behaviour, habitat use, and ecological balance in otherwise undisturbed environments.

Research by Barra & Lima (2024) found that turbine aviation lighting can be visible over very long distances and may exceed the brightness of prominent stars and even Venus under certain atmospheric conditions. Their study concluded that “the visual range of wind farms at nighttime may be considerably larger than at daytime” and that this factor “should be taken into account in environmental impact assessments.”⁵

² EIAR Chapter 6 Biodiversity & Ecology

³ EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC)

⁴ Correspondence to a Mealagh community member from Brian Espey, Chairperson of Dark Sky Ireland, 25 June 2025

⁵ Barra & Lima, Quantifying the visual impact of wind farm lights on the nocturnal landscape 2024. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022407324003108>

The Programme for Government 2025 includes commitments to “promote and encourage an expansion of Dark Sky Ireland national parks and reserves.”⁶ In my view, the proposed Maughanaclea development directly contradicts those objectives and would result in a permanent and unnecessary loss of one of the defining environmental qualities of the Mealagh Valley.

Landscape and Tranquillity

The Mealagh Valley is a beautiful, quiet, unspoilt upland landscape. The proposed turbines, at approximately 169m in height, would introduce large-scale industrial structures into a highly sensitive setting. Each turbine is taller than the Great Pyramid of Giza and their scale would completely diminish the grandeur of our mountains.

The Cork County Development Plan 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.⁷

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 wind developments, the cumulative impact of these developments would significantly alter the character of the landscape and erode the sense of wildness & grand views that define the Mealagh Valley.

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.

This would negatively affect the enjoyment of our home and may also impact property values.⁸

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:

⁶ Programme for Government 2025, pages 57-58 <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/programme-for-government-securing-irelands-future.pdf>

⁷ Cork County Development Plan 2022–2028, Section 13.6)

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

- Average noise levels do not reflect real disturbance
- A wide area of homes will be affected
- The glacially carved, complex terrain and cumulative effects of multiple wind farms are likely to increase impacts⁹

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.¹⁰ 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”. 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, glacially-carved, bowl-shaped topography which can influence how sound travels and is experienced. 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 complex 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 noise impacts on residents.¹¹

Construction Impacts and Traffic Safety

The construction phase raises serious concerns regarding prolonged disruption, including noise, dust, and heavy vehicle traffic.

⁹ 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

¹⁰ EIAR Chapter 12 Noise & Vibration – only one Noise Monitoring Location (NML4) located within the Mealagh Valley.

¹¹ Environmental acoustics guidance; World Health Organization Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region, 2018

The EIAR transport assessment indicates that turbine components will require abnormal load vehicles which cannot remain within the carriageway and will overrun road edges and junctions.¹² This presents a clear safety risk to road users.

I also have particular concerns for my parents, who live with us. Reliable and safe access to Cork for medical care is essential. Any disruption to the road network, delays caused by construction traffic, or reduced road safety could have serious consequences in an emergency situation.

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 who were given inaccurate information (they suspect intentionally) by Enerco representatives at the Westlodge Open Day regarding the objection process and timelines.

We have other neighbours with thriving tourism businesses, Wild Hideaways, who were in no way consulted about how the development will impact their eco tourism business, despite the huge potential loss this would be for them and all the community members they employ locally.

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, dark skies, landscape, noise, and residential amenity are not adequately addressed.

I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála refuse permission for this development until further information is provided.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Ahles

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