

**Flora Wieler,  
Coomleagh West,  
The Mealagh Valley,  
Bantry, Co. Cork  
13/03/2026**

**To:**

An Coimisiún Pleanála  
64 Marlborough Street,  
Dublin 1,  
D01 V902

**Subject: Objection to Planning Application Ref: 245503 – Maughanaclea Renewable Energy Development**

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am writing to object to the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm (Ref. ACP 324165-26).

I am a resident on the north side of the Mealagh Valley and I have lived here most of my life, apart from a few years away in my 20s and 30s. I made a very deliberate decision to return to my childhood home, and I built my own house here, because this place matters deeply to me. I am a home owner, rooted here emotionally, financially, and socially. This is where I chose to put down permanent roots.

I want to say clearly, from the outset, that I support renewable energy and I recognise the urgency of tackling climate change. I believe strongly that we must move away from fossil fuels. My objection is not to wind energy itself, but to the scale of this project, the pressure it places on a small rural community, and the absence of any meaningful community ownership or longterm benefit.

This project asks a great deal of the people who live here, and yet offers us very little in return.

**NOISE CONCERNS**

I came back to the Mealagh Valley, and built my own home here, because I needed peace and quiet. I am a poor sleeper and very sensitive to noise. Quiet nights are not a luxury for me — they are essential to my health and wellbeing.

Large wind turbines operate day and night, producing constant sound, including low frequency noise. Even when noise is described as being “within limits”, international public health guidance recognises that environmental noise, including wind turbine noise, can adversely affect sleep and wellbeing, particularly in quiet rural areas (World Health Organization Environmental Noise Guidelines, 2018). Research and lived experience both show that continuous background noise can be especially difficult for noise-sensitive people.

I’m especially concerned that the developer has not accounted for the bowl-like shape of the glacially carved landscape in the Mealagh Valley and the way that sound travels & amplifies in this kind of complex terrain. The standard noise modelling used is known to be less reliable in complex topography. Valleys and slopes can amplify and channel turbine noise, increasing impact at distant receptors (Van Renterghem, 2016)

I’m also concerned that the only noise monitor placed in the Mealagh Valley, NML4, appears to be next to two very busy farms (both roughly 100m away) and in an area with heavy machinery use (an excavator has active all last year reseeding a nearby field). I worry that this will artificially increase the background noise readings of this monitor and result in artificially high turbine noise limits.

What concerns me most is the permanence. Once these turbines are built, there is no escape from the sound. I would be left living in a house I worked hard to build, in a place I love, but without the basic peace I moved here for in the first place.

I ask that An Coimisiún Pleanála apply the precautionary principle and ensure that noise impacts are fully and robustly assessed, further information is gathered to assess residential background noise in a complex landscape, and that any permission includes strict, enforceable noise limits and independent post-construction monitoring.

## WELL WATER

I rely entirely on a private well for my household water supply. When I built my home, I did so believing that my water was clean, secure, and protected by the land around me.

Construction of a project of this scale means deep excavation, heavy machinery, road building, and permanent disturbance to the ground. It is well recognised that wind farm construction has the potential to alter groundwater flow, water quality, and sediment movement, with risks to wells, springs, and streams, particularly in upland and high rainfall areas (Northern Ireland Environment Agency / WindWatch groundwater impact guidance).

If my well were affected, the consequences would be severe, and very likely irreversible. This is not a theoretical concern for me. It is about the safety of my home and my everyday life. I do not believe people should be asked to risk their only water supply for a project over which they have no real control and from which they may see no benefit.

I ask the the Commission require the developer to take a precautionary water sample from each and every household well and stream before, during, and after construction to ensure that if the developer causes damage, that they will be made to rectify the situation immediately.

## WILDLIFE

Another part of this proposal that weighs heavily on me is what it means for wildlife and nature in the Mealagh Valley.

This is a place where nature still feels close and present. You notice birds every day here. You hear them early in the morning, and you see them moving along the hills and across the valley. All wild birds are protected under Irish law, and their habitats are legally recognised as needing protection from disturbance (Wildlife Act 1976).

I also regularly see Irish hares in this area. They are part of the everyday life of the valley. You spot them quietly moving across the fields or resting in the grass, especially in the mornings and evenings.

The Irish hare is a legally protected species in Ireland under the Wildlife Acts and is also listed under Annex V of the EU Habitats Directive, which places obligations on the State to ensure that the species and its habitats are not deteriorated (Wildlife Act 1976; EU Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC). It is a unique native animal found only on this island and depends on open, undisturbed land like this for shelter and movement.



One of my neighbours on the Maughanaclea side, Sioned Jones, captured this image of an Irish hare just a few hundred metres from the turbine site in the Coillte Wildlife



Sanctuary.

Sioned Jones also captured this wonderful image of a pine Martin, also within deer fencing of that Coillte erected around around the natural reserve on Maughanaclea. This indigenous mammal is precious - the pine marten has been listed as a protected

species under Irish, European and international legislation. We must protect it's habitat, which would be destroyed by this development. Maughanaclea Wind Farm / Enerco has not even properly mapped out the nature reserve in it's maps and I fear this is indicative of how this big developer will treat this precious habitat and the animals that live on Maughanaclea.

Large scale construction, access roads, drainage works, and ongoing activity fragment that habitat over time. What worries me is that this kind of impact often happens quietly. The animals do not disappear overnight, but the land they rely on becomes less usable year after year. Once that happens, the damage is very difficult to undo.

This is a wet and sensitive landscape. Disturbance to soil, peat, and drainage does not just affect one moment in time. It can change how water moves, how vegetation recovers, river quality, and how wildlife uses the area for decades.

For me, protecting nature is not separate from climate action. It is part of it. Peer reviewed research has shown that wind farm development on peatlands can lead to permanent carbon losses and longterm ecological damage, potentially undermining claimed climate benefits (Renou Wilson & Farrell; Scientific Reports, 2023).

## WIND ENERGY GUIDELINES

One of the reasons this project feels so overwhelming is the sheer scale of the turbines, and the fact that projects like this are still being assessed under planning rules that are badly out of date.

Ireland is still relying on the Wind Energy Development Guidelines from 2006 as the main national planning framework for onshore wind energy (Department of Housing). These guidelines are now almost twenty years old and were written at a time when wind turbines were far smaller and very different to the machines being proposed today.

Although draft revised guidelines were published in 2019 to address issues such as turbine height, setbacks, noise, and community participation, they were never adopted and carry no legal force (Draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines, 2019). As a result, very large modern turbines are still being assessed using rules that never contemplated developments of this scale.

## IMPACT ON OUR COMMUNITY

At the same time, understanding of noise, health, cumulative impact, and community wellbeing has moved on. Yet communities like ours are being asked to live beside industrial scale turbines while relying on guidance that belongs to a different era.

That does not feel fair, and it does not feel safe.

What troubles me most about this proposal is what it means for the longterm sustainability of our community.

The Mealagh Valley is not an empty landscape. It is a living place, made up of families, neighbours, farms, homes, heritage, and shared history. Large scale wind farm developments are widely recognised as capable of creating longterm division within rural communities, particularly where benefits accrue to a small number of parties while impacts are experienced more broadly.

The Cork County Development Plan explicitly recognises the importance of community ownership and participation in wind energy projects (Cork County Development Plan, Section 13.7.4). Yet this proposal offers no meaningful community ownership or lasting stake for those who will live with the turbines for decades.

This project feels done *to* the community, not done *with* the community.

There is no shared decision making and no real sense that local people are partners in the transition being asked of them. Instead, the noise, disruption, risk to water, and loss of peace are lived with locally, while the benefits largely flow elsewhere.

That imbalance erodes trust. It leaves people feeling ignored in their own home place. I believe deeply in the need for a just and sustainable energy transition. But sustainability is not just about carbon targets. It is also about people, place, and fairness.

Across Europe, community led and community owned renewable projects have consistently been shown to enjoy much higher levels of acceptance and longterm success, because communities share in both the decision making and the benefits (European Commission Joint Research Centre; CAN Europe). Smaller scale, carefully sited developments can strengthen communities rather than divide them.

The Maughanaclea Wind Farm does not reflect those principles.

I do not believe the choice is between climate action & rural communities. We can do both, but only if we do it thoughtfully.

Renewable projects should be located and scaled in a way that protects health, water, wildlife, and community wellbeing, and that brings real, lasting benefit to the people asked to host them. Projects designed with communities tend to work better, last longer, and cause far less harm.

I would support renewable energy projects that reflect those values. I cannot support one that clearly does not.

I returned to my childhood home and built my house in the Mealagh Valley because I believed this would remain a place of peace, safety, and quiet living. I never imagined I

would have to object to an industrial scale development simply to protect my sleep, my water supply, and the natural environment around me.

I support renewable energy. I just do not believe this project, at this scale, in this place, and without community ownership, is the right way to deliver it.

Once built, there is no going back.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask that permission for the Maughanaclea Wind Farm be refused.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my objection.

Yours sincerely,

Flora Wieler