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Ardrach East
Mealagh Valley
Co. Cork
P75 W958

15 May 2026

The Secretary
An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902

**Re: Submission of Observations on the Proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm, Co. Cork.
An Coimisiún Pleanála Case Reference ACP-324165-26 / 324165**

To the Members of the Commission,

I am writing to object to the proposed Maughanaclea wind farm. I live in Ardrach East in the Mealagh Valley, within two kilometres of the nearest of the proposed turbines, and the development as planned would change every part of my daily life. I have set out below the matters that most concern me, in the order in which they weigh on me, rather than in the order of the EIAR chapters.

Why I moved here. Moving to this valley was a very deliberate decision. My health and well-being were the largest part of that decision. I live with physical disabilities and with sensory sensitivities, and finding work that could accommodate those difficulties was not easy. I was fortunate to find work locally that fits around my condition, and that work, like the home I chose, depends entirely on the quality of this place: an unspoilt landscape, uninterrupted views, and skies dark enough that we see the aurora from the house on a regular basis. The valley is not an abstract amenity to me. It is the reason I am well enough to live independently and to earn a living.

Health, sensitivity and the low-frequency hum. Of all the impacts described in the EIAR, the one that worries me most is noise, and in particular low-frequency noise and amplitude modulation at night. My sensory sensitivities mean I react to noise differently from a typical resident, and there is no real way for the developer's modelling to account for that. What is described in the EIAR as a predicted level at a façade is, for me, the difference between sleeping and not sleeping, between being able to work the next day and being unable to. The systematic review by Onakpoya and colleagues (2015) found, across pooled observational studies of more than two thousand residents, that the odds of being annoyed by wind turbine noise were significantly raised, and that the odds of sleep disturbance rose with greater exposure (see source A). I am asking the Commission to weigh that evidence against a modelled exceedance figure produced by the applicant.

Terrain, and how this valley carries sound. Anyone who has lived a winter here knows what the valley does with sound. On a still evening I can hear my neighbours across the valley in their gardens, hear a tractor two townlands away, hear a dog barking that I know is not nearby. The Mealagh is a shaped basin with steep sides and a quiet floor, and it focuses and reflects noise in ways that a flat-terrain noise

model simply does not capture. Van Renterghem's work on sound propagation from a ridge wind turbine across a valley (2017) sets out, in formal acoustic terms, why ridge-mounted turbines above a valley produce a complex sound pressure distribution at the receiver and why the simplified prediction methods that work on flat ground are not reliable in this kind of topography (see source B). If the noise assessment for Maughanaclea has been carried out using methods suited to open or rolling ground, it will under-predict what we will actually hear at Ardrah East and across the valley.

Eighteen to twenty-four months of construction. The construction phase is not a footnote. Rock-breaking on this kind of terrain echoes. Eighteen to twenty-four months of haulage, blasting and earthworks at the heads of these narrow valleys would be a sustained acoustic assault on every household within range, and on me in particular given my sensitivities. The disruption itself, never mind the operational phase that follows, is enough to make this development incompatible with the quiet residential character of Ardrah East and the surrounding townlands.

What the ridge looks like, and what it will look like. The proposed turbines sit on a prominent ridgeline that defines the upper edge of the valley as seen from my home. At a tip height of 169 metres, each turbine would be around two and a half times the height of the Croke Park floodlights, set on ground already several hundred metres above my house. They will be visible from my windows, from the garden, and from every road I drive in or out on. The Mealagh Valley landscape is exactly the kind of intact upland-and-valley character that the County Development Plan flags for protection, and the developer's own visualisations confirm an industrial transformation that no mitigation measure can soften.

Dark skies, aviation lighting and the aurora. One of the unexpected gifts of moving here has been the sky. We see the aurora regularly from home. We see the Milky Way. We see meteor showers without driving anywhere. Aviation warning lighting on turbines of this height is not a small consideration: Bará and Lima (2024) have shown that medium-intensity turbine obstruction lights can appear brighter than Venus at distances up to around four kilometres, brighter than Sirius at around ten kilometres, and remain visible to the naked eye out to nearly forty kilometres (see source C). At less than two kilometres from the nearest turbine, my home would sit inside the very brightest band of that visual impact. The Programme for Government 2025 commits the State to expanding Dark Sky reserves; permitting a lit industrial array directly over a valley that currently delivers Bortle-class dark skies pulls in the opposite direction.

The work I do and the visitors who come for what is here. My work in the valley depends on visitors choosing to come here precisely because it is unspoilt, quiet, and dark at night. The Fáilte Ireland feasibility study on dark sky tourism along the Wild Atlantic Way (CHL Fáilte, 2019) is explicit that this is now a recognised, growing niche, with the international comparator at Galloway Forest Park returning around £1.93 in tourism spend for every £1 invested in protecting the night sky, generating an estimated £500,000 a year in astronomy-related tourism after ten years (see source D). West Cork is positioned, under the Fáilte Ireland West Cork Coast Destination and Experience Development Plan, to compete for exactly that visitor. A flashing red industrial skyline visible across most of the upper valley will remove that competitive position for businesses like the one I work for, and with it the small, hard-won category of employment that people with my health profile can actually hold down.

One more wind farm on top of all the others. West Cork is being asked to absorb a disproportionate share of onshore wind development. The cumulative effect on landscape, on noise, on aviation lighting at night, and on local communities is not a separate planning issue; it is the planning issue. The EIAR's

cumulative assessment treats each new array as an addition to be tolerated rather than as part of a regional saturation that is already past the point where it can be properly mitigated.

The animals and habitats we share this valley with. The development site and its access corridors sit on peat and bog habitat that, once disturbed, does not come back in any human timescale. Construction on this kind of substrate fragments habitat for protected species: pine marten, red squirrel, Irish hare, and the freshwater pearl mussel populations in the watercourses below the ridge. The footprint of the turbine bases, the borrow pits, the haul roads and the grid connection trenches is not, in habitat terms, recoverable through replanting or reseedling. I support climate action; I do not accept it as a justification for industrialising one of the last sections of intact upland in this part of the county.

What I am asking. I am asking the Commission to refuse permission for the proposed Maughanaclea wind farm. The site is the wrong site: ridge-mounted turbines above a closed valley, on peat, in a designated dark-sky-quality landscape that already supports tourism employment and that provides homes to people, like me, who chose this place specifically because of what it is. There are better-sited alternatives, including offshore wind, brownfield redevelopment, and rooftop solar, that do not ask a small community to surrender the conditions of its own health and livelihood.

I would be grateful if the Commission would record this submission as formally raising concerns under, among other matters, noise (including low-frequency noise, amplitude modulation and the inadequacy of flat-terrain prediction methods in valley topography), construction-phase impacts, landscape and visual impact, aviation lighting and dark skies, residential amenity, tourism, habitat loss and cumulative effect.

Yours sincerely,

Jocelyn Estie

Ardrah East, Mealagh Valley, P75 W958

Sources cited

Source A. Onakpoya, I. J., O’Sullivan, J., Thompson, M. J. & Heneghan, C. J. (2015). *The effect of wind turbine noise on sleep and quality of life: A systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies.* Environment International, 82, 1–9.

Source B. Van Renterghem, T. (2017). *Sound propagation from a ridge wind turbine across a valley.* Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A, 375: 20160105.

Source C. Bará, S. & Lima, R. C. (2024). *Quantifying the visual impact of wind farm lights on the nocturnal landscape.* Journal of Quantitative Spectroscopy and Radiative Transfer, 329: 109203.

Source D. CHL Consulting for Fáilte Ireland (2019). *Feasibility Study for Maximising the Tourism Potential of Dark Sky Assets on the Wild Atlantic Way.* Fáilte Ireland, Dublin.