

Submission: Maughanaclea windfarm development

Date: 22/5/26

To: SID Planning

An Coimisiún Pleanála

64 Marlborough Street

Dublin 1

D01 V902

From: John Baker, Earth Restore, Old Creamery, Dromclogh East, Mealagh valley, Bantry

Tel: 085 7298393

Earthrestore123@proton.me

Planning Application Reference Number: ACP-324165-26

Applicant: Maughanaclea Ltd aka Enerco

Description of Development: Construction of 14 Industrial Wind Turbines Maughanaclea

Location: Maughanaclea, County Cork

A chara,

Please find my objections and submissions to the above named development. Thank you for your kind attention.

Introduction

This document argues that this project is wrong for this place and that, more fundamentally, the frame of reference that drives this project as well as the 4 others in the area¹ is wrong and that Ireland's energy and climate policy as a whole is also wrong, or at least so deeply flawed as to be unfit for purpose.

This community and the landscape is being asked to make a huge sacrifice for dubious reasons with no benefit to ourselves.

My own position

- I believe climate change to be a real and pressing threat and have done for most of my life.
- I believe in renewable energy at an appropriate scale where there are measurable benefits for local communities.
- I believe that this project is too big and that the economic and political model under which it is brought in is flawed and the justifications for it are untrue.
- I challenge the underlying worldview informing these models that sees humans as separate from Nature and sees Nature as something for us to exploit. Approaching the climate crisis from this perspective will not work.

¹ This creates a cumulative impact on a relatively small area that is not considered in the developer's documentation.

- I advocate for a worldview where we are part of Nature, that Nature and other living beings including rivers and mountains have rights and agency and that this must be respected.²³
- This document should be read with this in mind.
- I have a life with commitments so I have not been able to exhaustively trawl through the documents we have been presented with by Enerco with such a short time to do so but I assert that this gives no cause to ignore the points I am making here.

My own background and work

- I run a permaculture⁴ consultancy called Earth Restore.
- I offer support to communities, families and individuals in future-proofing themselves against climate change, ecological/economic collapse or social upheaval. I support natural regeneration and the economic/social activities that align with this such as local food production, establishment of native woodlands, rain water harvesting and so on.
- At the core of my aims is helping establish resilient communities.
- Surviving and thriving at a time of change is a co-operative activity.
- As part of this I am investing my own money into retrofitting an old creamery building and surrounding land to be a demonstration model for the kinds of practices and activities that I promote.
- I aim to be part of rewilding and regenerating the hillsides around the Mealagh Valley and building an economic model that supports this
- This project has the potential to disrupt these aims.

Some history

- I have watched and participated in multiple environmental and social conflicts over the last 25 or so years where I have seen communities forced into the position of having to fight to protect their environment and sometimes their lives against flawed policies which facilitate the corporate extraction of profit. In every case this struggle has been vastly uneven with communities having to fund their efforts out of their own resources against bodies with vast financial resources to draw on.
- I am sick to my back teeth of this.
- In all this time the same pattern has played out again and again and again while nothing fundamental has changed. Successive governments give lip service to environmental and social concerns while taking no real action to change things.
- This pattern needs to end.

This submission is informed by my 30 years experience in this field.

- It also draws on many other sources, especially the concept of Bioregioning⁵ which is a methodology for looking at land use based on natural boundaries such as river basins rather than economic or political ones. I believe it provides a framework for enacting ecologically sound, socially just, economically viable ways of deciding how to use the land. I wish that planners and politicians could be educated in this.
- I would rather not have to fight against this project.

² <https://citizensassembly.ie/wp-content/uploads/bio227.pdf>

³ <https://www.garn.org/rights-of-nature/>

⁴ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permaculture>

⁵ <https://bioregion.ie/>

- I would rather be free to work on the positive solutions I will outline in this document but I am accustomed to being on the front lines in the fight against ecological and social destruction whilst simultaneously embodying a way of being that is aligned with Nature.
- I am prepared to defend, protect, preserve and enhance the land and community here that has welcomed me in and to which I belong.

Contents

1. Wrong Project, Wrong Place, Wrong scale, Wrong Frame of Reference

A short and incomplete analysis of the frame of reference that shapes energy and climate policy in this country and the EU

2. A holistic frame of reference

An outline of a different frame of reference

3. Sound ecological principles informing practical, solutions based actions

An exploration of what this could look like in real terms

4. Community Capacity. A Bold Claim

This community is ideally placed and resourced to begin implementing that alternative vision

5. Enerco's project would harm this community's ability to carry out these actions

Some specific examples of how Enerco's project would negatively impact on this implementation

6. Some more reasons to refuse this project

7. A request to ACP to support the local community in its stated intentions, to consider the ideas laid out in this document and to refuse permission for this project

1. Wrong Project, Wrong Place, Wrong scale, Wrong Frame of Reference

- The public justifications for huge wind farms in Ireland are that we need these projects to meet Ireland's climate objectives and to power our economy. The emphasis here is on reducing carbon emissions at all costs with no thought given to how to make our systems more efficient, effective and integrated and thereby reduce our energy needs. Damage to biodiversity and water systems is seen as secondary to the main objective. Biodiversity areas, and water pollution mitigation measures are mere add-ons in this context when they should be given primacy.
- This is flawed.
- The system is top down, overly competitive, unbalanced, fragmented, divisive, incoherent, opaque, extractive, undemocratic and unfair. It aims for one size fits all solutions imposed from above rather than allowing solutions to emerge organically from the lived experience of people in localities.
- A proper way of looking at this would see atmosphere, community, the economy, biology, hydrology and geology as an interconnected system and make decisions based on this. Current policy is fragmented and unbalanced with a range of interests competing for

resources and attention. We focus on trying to solve one problem at a time and create new problems elsewhere.

-
- At best we are following limited and somewhat abstract objectives based around reducing carbon and at worst the system is utterly cynical and geared towards corporate profit at all costs.
- This is not renewable. This is as extractive as the fossil fuel models that precede and underlie it.
- As things stand what we are seeing is not a just, green transition but an acceleration of our existing trajectory with new technologies. We listen to rhetoric about switching to renewables while the government ploughs ahead with plans for Liquid Natural Gas terminals, allows data centres to be built that devour any energy gains⁶ (20% of Ireland's energy useage and rising).
- Something is very wrong.

2. A holistic frame of reference

- Effective climate change mitigation and adaptation depends upon a complex, interwoven web of cycles and processes of which carbon is only a part (important but not exclusive).
- Non degraded or enhanced ecosystems are essential in this.
- Life plays a central role with humans properly integrated into the system.
- The regeneration of ecosystems should be at the core of all policy because they underly everything that happens.
- River systems are fundamental to this process because of the way that water connects, shapes and is shaped by the land and the atmosphere. Geology, topography, biology and the human realm all play a part in this. As humans the health of our rivers is a key indicator as to how we are doing.
- A more effective climate change policy would work to heal water cycles⁷ and prioritise the health of our rivers instead of downgrading them as our government is trying to do.⁸ Another example that makes me take their claims of caring for the climate with a large pinch of salt.
- Missing from government discourse and action is an understanding as to how carbon cycles and other natural cycles like water and life interacts. Missing from our culture is a sense of ourselves as integrated with natural systems.
- A bioregional approach offers a way to look at all these cycles simultaneously.

⁶https://www.friendsoftheearth.ie/assets/files/pdf/data_centres_and_the_carbon_budgets_-_prof_hannah_daly_dec_2024.pdf

⁷<https://www.resilience.org/stories/2026-01-13/how-breaking-and-repairing-the-water-cycle-shapes-our-climate-future/>

⁸ <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/plan-to-write-off-hundreds-of-irish-rivers-as-no-go-areas-for-nature-angers-green-groups/a/132287359.html>

“Climate strategies focus primarily on carbon, largely ignoring the destabilized water cycle that’s amplifying disasters and accelerating climate change. Slow Water projects can reverse this trend.”⁹

*“One of the basic steps for the prevention of floods, drought and **climate** change will be the restoration of an ecosystem’s **water** basin to its natural self-sustaining state where it will be able to retain rain-**water**, permit its infiltration into the soil and thus increase the quality of the soil.”¹⁰*

3. Sound ecological principles informing practical, solutions based actions emerging from lived experience in the landscape

Our economic value system should be based on ecological health not on how much we can extract from Nature.

Some examples of what this could look like in practice include:

- Community led landscape regeneration
- Creation of a new sector based on soil building, protecting water courses, increasing biodiversity and biomass, increasing appropriate tree and vegetation cover while integrating this with existing land use practices and also developing new practices and models.
- More people working in agriculture, horticulture, forestry and other land based sectors with ecological health as a primary driver.
- We must shift from a competitive economy to a cooperative one. Looking back into history to draw inspiration from the Irish cooperative movement of the late 19th and early 20th century. ¹¹Looking to the present and future to adapt this to a new and unprecedented set of demands.
- A networked business and social ecosystem modelled on a woodland ecosystem where resources, skills and knowledge are shared for the common good rather than hoarded
- Necessary human infrastructure like housing, transport, food production and processing, services like water, energy and waste should all be considered within this framework in a balanced fashion where each element supports all the others.
- These solutions will be diverse and varied and should be encouraged to emerge from the lived experience of people in areas
- Central to this approach must be the fundamental involvement of people who live in localities who are the best placed to design and run them

4. Community Capacity. A bold claim

This community and others in the region have the skills and capacity to manifest this vision. The previous section describes some of the existing work that moves us in this direction.

To do this we need to be supported and not have to spend energy on fighting off external threats like to the health of our ecosystems.

This project has been both a blessing and a curse for this community. Here are the blessings:

- It has catalysed a coming together of people from multiple backgrounds and interests to face this threat together. Growing out of this is a sense of our collective power and a shared understanding that we need new ways of doing things if we are to continue to thrive

⁹<https://www.nature.com/articles/s44221-024-00355-x>

¹⁰https://bio4climate.org/downloads/Kravicik_Global_Action_Plan.pdf

¹¹ <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/ireland-s-co-operative-revolution-building-a-rural-civilisation-1.3773382>

- We know that we are only one of many communities in Ireland and the world facing similar threats that all spring from the same source a flawed view of the world and the greed and shortsightedness that drives extractive practices.
- In the diversity of our community and communities like us are the strengths and skills sets and vision to enable us to engage with the challenges of this project while also nurturing a better way of doing things where such mega projects are recognised for the destruction they cause.

Existing practices in the locality that will play a role in this include:

- Integration of new methods with existing practices
- Water course preservation and restoration
- Native woodland establishment and management¹²
 - I wish to make particular reference to a nature reserve established by a local inhabitant of the area of at least 10 years. This is a prime example of what can be achieved by local people armed with knowledge and determination. This person will be doubtless making a detailed submission based on her own knowledge of this area. This level of intimacy can only be achieved over many years of work and intimacy with an area and must be given primacy over observations gleaned from a few visits by consultants, no matter how many credentials or letters after names they can claim. Listen to the people who live in an area.
- Fostering local biodiversity and knowledge: Nature reserves, tree nurseries, seed exchanges, foraging
- Rainwater harvesting¹³
- Design and experimentation in processes and equipment to make proper use of locally available resources
- Biochar and soil building¹⁴
- Alternative crops: Aronia,¹⁵ Blueberries,
- Mapping of ecological and social resources as an aid to decision making, planning and design
- Inclusive decision making practices and conflict resolution techniques allowing landscape scale decisions to be made within watersheds and communities.
- Seed saving and distribution networks
- Dark Sky Community Accreditation to make use of the existing lack of light pollution in the area. This should be preserved and would be damaged by this project.¹⁶

Economic activities that should be supported, expanded or implemented include:

¹² <https://www.woodlandleague.org/report-on-sustainability-and-biodiversity-sioned-jones/>

¹³ <https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2025/0328/1440204-rainwater-harvesting-collection-water-conservation-floods-droughts/>

¹⁴ https://youtu.be/eW5rOpivFow?si=HIDC2Uy_0UpLf379

¹⁵ <https://derryduff.ie/aronia-berries/>

¹⁶ The Mealagh Valley community is actively pursuing Dark Sky Community accreditation from DarkSky International — which would be the first in Ireland. A formal committee has been established and the application is at an advanced stage. Amber Harrison, Dark Sky Places Programme Manager at DarkSky International, has been in direct correspondence with The Mealagh Valley Dark Skies Committee since October 2025, and Georgia MacMillan of Mayo Dark Sky Park (Ireland's first dark sky designation) has offered practical guidance on the accreditation process. Cork County Council's Roads Management division held an active meeting with The Mealagh Valley Dark Skies Committee on the lighting policy, with follow-up correspondence dated 8 May 2026 — just 17 days before the deadline for observations on this planning application. Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan TD, Minister of State for Nature, Heritage and Biodiversity, engaged personally with the project and subsequently provided a formal written Letter of Support describing the Committee's approach as "innovative and forward-thinking" and stating that Dark Sky Park accreditation would be "a very positive addition to the region"

- Community scale energy projects including:
 - Micro hydro
 - Solar
 - Wind
 - Biodigesters running on kitchen scraps¹⁷, manure, green waste
- Creation of appropriate scale infrastructure to make use of locally available natural resources.
 - Sheeps wool¹⁸ for insulation, fertiliser, clothing etc
 - Hemp growing and processing^{19,20}
 - Biochar made from green and brown waste^{21,22}

5. Enerco's project would harm this community and reduce the capacity of the land to mitigate climate change

- If this project were to go ahead it would deeply harm the economic, social and ecological future of the area and region.
- It is exasperating to have to spell this out in such simple terms when we have so many other things that we need to be doing.
- It is infuriating to have to engage with a system that uses a language and frame of reference divorced from the realities of clean air, water, good food and living in peace.
- When reading through the developer's documentation I am struck by how devoid of feeling it is, how soulless it is and how grieved it makes me to see the wonders of our landscape reduced to cold facts and figures as a preliminary to exploiting it.
- We who live here have an intimacy and relationship with this land that, in a sane society would be at the basis of how to work with it. This intimacy is what gives us the strength and courage to do what is necessary to protect this landscape.

Impacts on local community and economy

This project has already had a massive impact on us.

- It has caused people stress, extra work and money and has forced people to divert energy from their own livings towards facing an external threat.
- Unlike Enerco's consultants and work force we have to fund this out of our own pockets while continuing to run our households and businesses and do our jobs.
- This has had a huge impact on collective mental health.
- It has taught us a harsh lesson in the failures and flaws of our planning and political systems and reduced faith in them.

Harm to local businesses

- There are a number of businesses in the area that depend on the peace and quiet and lack of light pollution of the local area for their income including [Wild Hideaways](#), [Hagal Farm](#), [Gouladoo Retreat](#) and my own ecological consultancy Earth Restore. All businesses of this

¹⁷ <https://amugreen.com/>

¹⁸ <https://fibreshedireland.ie/>

¹⁹ <https://teagasc.ie/rural-economy/rural-development/diversification/industrial-hemp-production/>

²⁰ <https://teagasc.ie/wp-content/uploads/media/website/publications/2022/The-role-of-the-Hemp-Cooperative.pdf>

²¹ <https://www.farmersjournal.ie/more/climate-and-environment/biochar-a-growing-sector-in-ireland-760936>

²² <https://westerndevelopment.ie/2026/02/26/biochar-project-launches-to-turn-climate-innovation-into-real-world-solutions-for-rural-communities-and-industry/>

nature have a vested interest in protecting and enhancing the ecology of the area. They would be harmed by the imposition of these intrusive wind turbines on the landscape and this could result in less people empowered to protect the area. The efforts of these business should be supported not hindered.

- As already stated, to adapt and mitigate climate change we need more people living on and working on the land not less.²³²⁴ Less people means bigger machines involved in farming and forestry, less time, less sensitivity, little space for innovation or observation and leads to a degradation of the landscape.

Could giant wind farms contribute to rural depopulation? A depopulated environment is a vulnerable one, open to further exploitation.

- Giant wind farms are not inviting to walk through. My neighbours will be stressing the impacts on human health during the construction and operation of this site such as caused by visual disturbance, light flicker and infrasound. I support their claims and wish to add that this may contribute to people staying away from the wind farms themselves and possibly having to sell up and move if their proximity proves too harmful. The people of this area are its best protection. When populations decline in rural areas it leaves the land vulnerable to further extractive practices such as mining and quarrying. I would argue that the monoculture plantations of Coillte were already a step in this direction and this latest development takes us yet further along this trajectory.

THE LAND

Such a massive project would have a colossal impact on the area on every level from the geology on up to the atmosphere.

Construction of this project could include:

- Massive soil movement
- Rock breaking and quarrying
- Biodiversity loss²⁵
- Water: flooding, drinking, water and carbon
- Pollution from machinery and materials

WATER

- Water connects people and land. It flows through our veins and the veins of the land.
- All this work would take place in the upper reaches of two river systems. The Mealagh and the Ouwvane.
- I have already outlined the importance of healthy river systems in stabilising climate and protecting ecology. It is worth thinking about the way that the fractal shape of river systems are mirrored by the patterns made by the arteries and veins in our bodies and the shape of our lungs. Rivers play exactly the same role in ecosystems as the same structures do in our bodies. We know all about the diseases caused by veins furred by cholesterol or lungs damaged by particulates. We must take the same care over our rivers?

Drinking water

²³ <https://www.wri.org/insights/indigenous-and-local-community-land-rights-protect-biodiversity>

²⁴ <https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/support-local-people-to-protect-worlds-nature-new-report-urges-as-deadline-for-global-conservation>

²⁵ I have not gone into detail on this because of time constraints but I urge the planners to consider points raised by my neighbours.

- Below is a map of the turbines in relation to the river systems and also drinking water infrastructure for Kealkill serving a population of at least 588 people. This supply already has a tendency to turbidity during high rainfall²⁶. It is hard to see how further sedimentation could be avoided given the massive amounts of earth moving this project would involve. I would urge ACP to look very closely indeed at Enerco's claims in this area.



Flooding

Construction of this project would involve replacing large areas of upland bog that currently acts as a water store with large areas of impermeable concrete. This would reduce the water holding capacity of these upland areas and would therefore increase the likelihood of downstream flooding in both river valleys.

The lower Mealagh Valley falls within the Bantry Flood Relief Scheme²⁷.

- Has this been considered by the developers?
- Did Enerco's consultants talk with Cork County Council's Flood relief consultants?
- Are the Flood Relief Consultants aware of Enerco's project?
- Water use and energy are important. If two groups working on these issues are not talking to each other it indicates further flaws in approach.

Is the system leading to a backlash against renewables and a rise in climate change denial?

Another factor that needs to be considered is the way that large renewable energy projects being brought in is driving a backlash against renewable energy and contributing to climate change denial. Factors that this community and other cite as driving resistance include:

- The lack of transparency,
- The complex, opaque and questionable arrangements financing such projects²⁸
- Energy generation infrastructure ends up owned outside the country²⁹ thus reducing our resilience
- Lack of or unequal benefit for local community. Only landowners benefit

²⁶ <https://www.southernstar.ie/news/water-supply-in-kealkill-at-risk-as-maintenance-works-underway-4273332>

²⁷ <https://bantryfrs.ie/media/d3oi3bqw/emerging-options-ppd-presentation-mealagh.pdf>

²⁸ If this project is given permission more digging will be done into this.

²⁹ <https://eirigi.org/power-to-the-people>

- Despite Cork county Council’s stated objectives³⁰ “Furthermore, the Council recognises the importance of community ownership of wind energy projects...” the project does not allow for any kind of community ownership, a stated priority in the Cork County Development Plan. Unlike developments in Denmark, Germany, or Scandinavia - Enerco’s proposed development is exploitative and extractive on both the environment and the community.
- Wind farm developments can inflame divides within communities
- Current lack of trust or faith in government

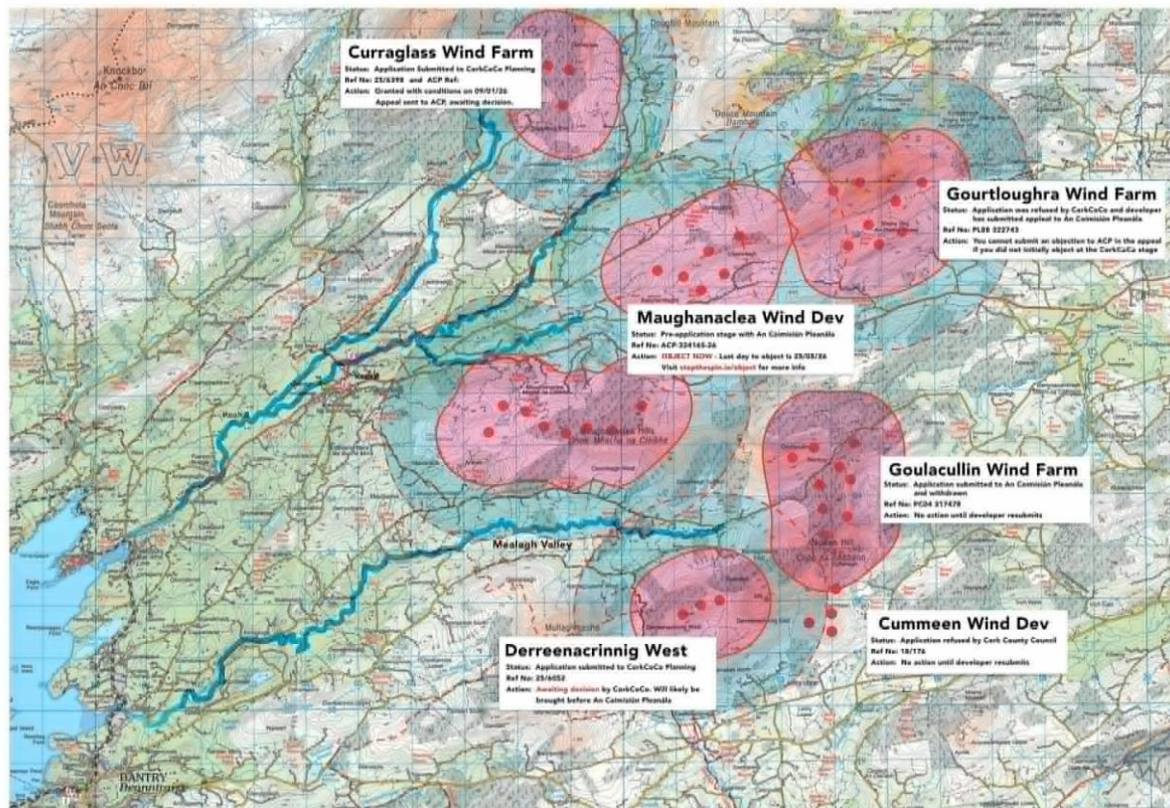
An example of why communities resist wind farms

To conclude I argue that this project will harm the local community’s ability to respond organically to climate change and that rather than forcing this project upon us the state’s energy would be better spent supporting us.

6. Some more reasons to refuse this project

- **Cumulative impact of multiple wind farm projects**
This project is the largest one of 5 applied for by different entities in the immediate area of the Mealagh Valley. If all of these projects were to go ahead it would have a huge negative impact on the area for the same reasons and more outlined elsewhere in this document. I have not been able to engage in a comprehensive trawl of all of Enerco’s material because I have a life with other commitments but I have not found any reference to these other projects in their literature. I ask the ACP to consider this in their deliberations.

PROPOSED WIND DEVELOPMENTS - BANTRY & KEALKILL



³⁰“Cork County Development Plan [13.7.4](#) Page 300,

- **Incomplete list of tourist attractions**

In the population and human health section of EIAR 5.3.2.2 under the heading “Tourist attractions” there is an incomplete list of local tourist attractions that as local residents we would add to.

Also there is no mention anywhere that I have found of the emotional connection of local residents to a locality and the mental health damage that could occur when these are disrupted or damaged. Why are tourists more important than the people who live in an area? I ask the Coimisiun to consider the mental health of local people when making their deliberations.

- **Inadequate community consultation**

In the developers community engagement report section 4 t*conclusion) they claim:

"Active engagement and consultation with the local community has taken place from an early stage... the consultation process has been an extremely valuable exercise and has provided a detailed, and enhanced understanding of the key issues and concerns of the local community, which have ultimately shaped the final project proposal."

From a personal perspective this is false. From where I live my view of the skyline to the north north east of my dwelling would be radically changed by these turbines towering above the ridge yet I was not consulted or informed of this development and only know about it from the good efforts of my neighbours. It looks to me that the developers have done the bare minimum of consultation to comply with regulations. In fact they state that their consultation was restricted to “*all householders within a c.2km radius of the area of the site.*” Community Engagement Report, Section 2.1 (Notification of the Local Community).

This is not what comprehensive means. I am also informed by those impacted that no tourism businesses were included in this consultation. Please consider the inadequacy of this process.

- **Insulting and distancing language in EIAR**

In section 13 of MKO consultants EIAR report section 13 Landscape and Visual the term “receptors” is consistently used. At first reading it is hard to know what is meant by this

“The proposed turbines are located within an area surrounded by large landforms and defined ridgelines which provide visual containment, obscuring open views of the proposed turbines from a vast proportion of the LVIA Study Area (see Section 13.2.1 below for definition), avoiding landscape and visual effects from a large number of sensitive receptors and large population centres;”

“The proposed turbines are sited within the uplands of the Maughanaclea Valley to ensure acceptable separation from local receptors”

“Effects on landscape and visual receptors that have minimal or no theoretical visibility (as predicted by the ZTV) and/or very distant visibility, and are therefore unlikely to be subject to significant effects; “

After some thought I have concluded that “receptors” means “people”, “human beings”, “children”, men,” “women” etc. I take exception to being referred to as a “receptor” and I assert that using a strange term like this is a means for the developers to create emotional distance from the actual impact of this project on living eyes, bodies and brains. This manner of emotional distancing can be found throughout Enerco’s documents and I think shows a link back to the flawed and dangerous world view that tends to inform projects of this nature where people are viewed as receptors and the land is viewed as something dead to be exploited and imposed upon. I reject this worldview. I ask the planners to consider the land and the animals and people who live in the vicinity of this proposed project as living beings with feelings and a right to peace and quiet who will suffer if this goes ahead.

- **The Nature Restoration Law and Water Framework Directive**

These are progressive, pro-nature pieces of EU legislation that should be given central consideration in planning. I have now run out of time to spend on this but I am mentioning them here because I reserve the right to refer to these laws if, as is likely from previous experience, we as a community have to take this up a level in future.

7. Refuse permission for this project. Consider the flaws of the planning system and the underlying worldview that informs it. Work to create a better system aligned with Nature.

- I wish to thank the people who read this submission.
- I have tried to make it interesting, relevant and on point.
- I apologise for any errors it contains. They are my responsibility
- I call on ACP to look outside of the terms of reference of Enerco’s submission,
 - To consider the points and themes raised in this submission,
 - To consider the actual physical, social and economic impacts of this project
- To reject this project.
- It will save us all a lot of energy and money better used for restoring ecosystems.

Go raibh maith agat
John Baker



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>