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An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1

Re: Submission of objection — proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm, near Kealkill, Co. Cork.

Planning reference: ACP-324165-26 / 324165

Map reference of objector's home: 51.722909° N, -9.310852° W

Distance to nearest proposed turbine: approximately 2 km, roughly due north of my home

Dear members of An Coimisiún Pleanála,

My name is Keira O'Sullivan. I am 20 years old. I live with my family at Goulanes, on the southern flank of the Mealagh Valley, about two kilometres south of where the developer proposes to put the nearest of fourteen wind turbines. I am writing this letter myself, in my own words, to ask An Coimisiún Pleanála to refuse the application for the Maughanaclea Wind Farm.

I am a third-level student. I commute up and down to college through this valley and I am home most weekends. I have grown up here. I have walked the lanes, the bog roads and the loop walk above the valley for as long as I have been able to walk at all. What follows is what I think this development would do, and why I am asking you to stop it.

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i. What I would lose, on foot.

I want to start with something simple. I love to walk in this valley. The Mealagh is a quiet, scenic, very particular place, and walking up the boreens and onto the open hill behind the house is the thing I miss most when I am away at college, and the thing I most look forward to coming home for. I have done these walks since I was small. I have done them on the days when nothing else in the world was making sense. I do not think people who have never lived in a place like this understand how much it matters to be able to walk out your back door into a landscape that has not been industrialised.

The developer is proposing fourteen turbines of 169 metres to blade tip on the ridgeline directly above this valley. To put that in perspective, the Spire on O'Connell Street in Dublin is 120 metres. These structures are taller than that, by half again, and there will be fourteen

of them on a ridge that you can see from almost every road and lane and field in our area. The developer's own Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment confirms that the Mealagh Valley sits within an area designated in the Cork County Development Plan as both High Landscape Value and High Landscape Sensitivity. The developer itself, in its Alternatives chapter, explains that it removed turbines T08, T14 and T19 from an earlier nineteen-turbine layout specifically to avoid impacts on the adjoining High Value Landscape — which is to say, the developer accepts the principle that the High Value Landscape designation should keep turbines out of certain places, while siting fourteen turbines on a ridge that is itself High Landscape Value and High Landscape Sensitivity. I cannot follow the logic of that and I do not think you should be asked to.

From the walks I love these turbines will not be in the distance. They will be over me. They will be the thing the eye is dragged to. There is no possible mitigation for that. The developer's own Chapter 14 (Cultural Heritage) admits in clear language that the visual effects on the setting of archaeological and cultural heritage in this landscape cannot be mitigated. The same is true, in my view, for the people who walk in it.

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ii. Eco-systems and animal homes.

The thing that upsets me most about this proposal is what it would do to the wildlife. The site the developer wants to build on is upland blanket bog, wet heath and dry heath. These are not waste-grounds. They are priority habitats listed under Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive — that is the highest level of protection in European law. The developer's own Chapter 6 (Biodiversity) confirms it. The site also sits in the catchments of the Owvane and Mealagh rivers, both of which are designated sensitive catchments for the Freshwater Pearl Mussel under Statutory Instrument No. 296 of 2009. The Freshwater Pearl Mussel is one of the most critically endangered species we have. It needs unpolluted, undisturbed water. Forty months of haul roads, excavations, borrow pits, peat handling and concrete pouring upstream of those catchments cannot be reconciled with that need.

I want to ask you to look at the photographs at the back of this letter. They were taken on a single camera deployment in upland heath habitat within walking distance of the proposed turbines, over a three-week window in August 2025. The camera recorded an active Pine Marten on the morning of 8 August, a Red Squirrel using a branch on 20 August, a Eurasian Jay in full flight against flowering heather on 23 August, and an Irish Hare in the same heath that same night at 23:25. Pine Marten, Red Squirrel and Irish Hare are all Annex V Habitats Directive species and all listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife Acts 1976 to 2018. The Jay is also protected under the Wildlife Acts. These four photographs, taken together, show that the habitat the developer wants to clear is in active use, day and night, by a community of protected species. The developer's ecology chapter concludes that the residual effects on these species after mitigation will be "imperceptible". I do not believe that and the photographs say otherwise.

The developer also proposes to fell sections of conifer plantation and to excavate borrow pits on what the NPWS Article 17 mapping records as priority Annex I habitat. The fact that some of that habitat has, in the meantime, been covered by plantation does not, I think, give anyone the right to dig it up now.

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iii. Construction traffic — the R586 and the road to college.

I travel up and down to college through this valley most weeks of the academic year. The R586 is the road I use. I have read the developer's traffic chapter and I understand that there will be road works and intermittent closures on the R586 during the 18 to 24 month construction phase. The detail of what those closures will actually look like has not been clearly communicated to anybody I know in the community. For a student on a fixed timetable, with placements and exams, intermittent delays on the only practical route home are not a small thing. Day after day, week after week, for nearly two years, sitting in traffic on a road that should be a half-hour journey will wear a person down.

And it is worse than that. The R586 is also the primary access route between this part of West Cork and the hospitals in Cork city — Cork University Hospital and the Mercy. People in this valley already plan their lives around how long an ambulance will take. Two years of intermittent road works and possible closures on the only realistic route to those hospitals is not a small matter, and the developer's traffic management plan does not, in my reading, take it seriously.

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iv. Noise. Construction noise, operational noise, and the year my sister is sitting her Leaving Cert.

I am raising noise as a ground of objection in this submission. The developer's Chapter 12 (Noise) confirms that construction will run for 18 to 24 months and that the borrow pits on the ridge are to be excavated using either blasting or two rock-breakers operating simultaneously during daytime hours. The Mealagh Valley is a steep, glacially carved bowl. Anybody who has spent any time here knows that sound carries across it in a way that it does not on flat ground. The notion that two rock-breakers can operate on the ridge above us for nearly two years without echoing across the valley to our home is, in plain English, not credible. The chapter itself never uses the words "valley", "hill" or "terrain" in its propagation assessment. It is written as if the site sat on a flat plain.

On top of all that, the developer's baseline noise was measured at only six locations across an area containing 79 noise-sensitive receptors. Whole pockets of the valley — including the quieter side roads where the eco-retreats and B&Bs are — were never measured at all. The background data the operational predictions are built on does not represent the place I live in.

My sister is sitting her Leaving Cert during the construction period. She will be studying at home, in a room overlooking the same ridgeline the rock-breaking will be on. The Leaving Cert is the most important set of exams of a young person's life. The idea that for the better part of two years she would be trying to study through intermittent blasting and rock-breaking, with no real prospect of getting away from it, is, honestly, a thing I find very hard to think about calmly.

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v. Dark skies, and what they mean for tourism in West Cork.

The Mealagh Valley has some of the darkest skies on the island. Dark Sky Ireland's independent expert has described conditions here as comparable to Kerry Dark Sky Reserve and Mayo Dark Sky Park. A Dark Sky Community application is being prepared for this very valley. People come here specifically to see those skies — Wild Hideaways, in the next townland over, runs its entire business on the dark-skies offer.

Every one of the proposed fourteen turbines will carry a mandatory red, medium-intensity aviation warning light at 169 metres up — twenty-eight red lights blinking together every night, for the next thirty-five years, visible from the entire valley and well beyond. The developer's assessment of this consists of a single paragraph in Chapter 5 stating that the lighting "will have no significant effect on human health" and is "not intended to be overbearing or dominant". There is no obtrusive-light assessment. There is no night-time baseline. There is no engagement with the Programme for Government 2025 commitment to expand Dark Sky Ireland's reserves. The developer's position is, in effect, that you should take its word for the visual impact of twenty-eight red lights on a near-pristine ridgeline at night, without any actual assessment of what those lights will look like.

For tourism in this part of rural West Cork — small operators, B&Bs, family-run accommodation — dark skies are not an extra. They are part of the product. To extinguish that asset in service of a project from which none of the houses in our valley will draw a single watt of electricity is hard to defend, and harder still to accept.

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vi. Scale, ownership, and who actually benefits.

I support the transition away from fossil fuels. I am 20 years old; I will be living with the consequences of that transition for longer than most of the people deciding it. But I want to be clear that supporting climate action is not the same as supporting every proposal that arrives with a renewable-energy label attached. Putting fourteen 169-metre turbines on Annex I peat habitat, in a Freshwater Pearl Mussel catchment, on the threshold of a near-pristine dark sky, in a valley designated High Landscape Value, is not the way to do climate action. It is the way to do climate action badly.

None of the houses around the Mealagh Valley will benefit from the electricity these turbines generate. The grid connection runs east toward Macroom, not into the valley. The project is

not community-owned and the profits will not stay here. A Community Benefit Fund is offered, but it is not a substitute for the consent of the people who will live with the consequences, and the community in this valley has not given that consent. The right place for utility-scale wind generation is offshore, on brownfield sites, on the roofs of the data centres that are absorbing the lion's share of new demand on the grid. The right place is not the ridge above a Mealagh Valley home.

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I am twenty. I should not have to write this letter. I should be able to assume that the protections in the Cork County Development Plan for High Landscape Value areas, in the Habitats Directive for Annex I bog, in the Wildlife Acts for the species in the appended photographs, and in S.I. 296 of 2009 for the Freshwater Pearl Mussel, would do the work the State wrote them to do. I am asking An Coimisiún Pleanála to do that work now, and to refuse this application.

I feel very upset by this proposal. I have tried to set out my reasons honestly. Thank you for reading them.

Yours sincerely,

Keira O'Sullivan

Goulanes, Bantry, Co. Cork

Appendix — Photographs of protected species in the local habitat

The four photographs below were captured on a passive infrared trail camera deployed in upland heath habitat in the Mealagh Valley area, within walking distance of the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm site, over a three-week period in August 2025. Dates and times shown are as recorded by the camera at the moment of capture; the original image files retain the camera's EXIF metadata. The photographs are submitted as documentary evidence that the habitat the developer wishes to disturb is in active use by protected species, contrary to the developer's ecology chapter conclusion of "imperceptible" residual effects.

1. Pine Marten (*Martes martes*)

Date: 8 August 2025, 08:07. Habitat: upland scrub / wet heath at conifer plantation edge. Statutory protection: Annex V, EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC); Schedule 5, Wildlife Acts 1976–2018.



Pine Marten using a moss-covered fallen log as a runway, Mealagh Valley area, 8 August 2025.

2. Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*)

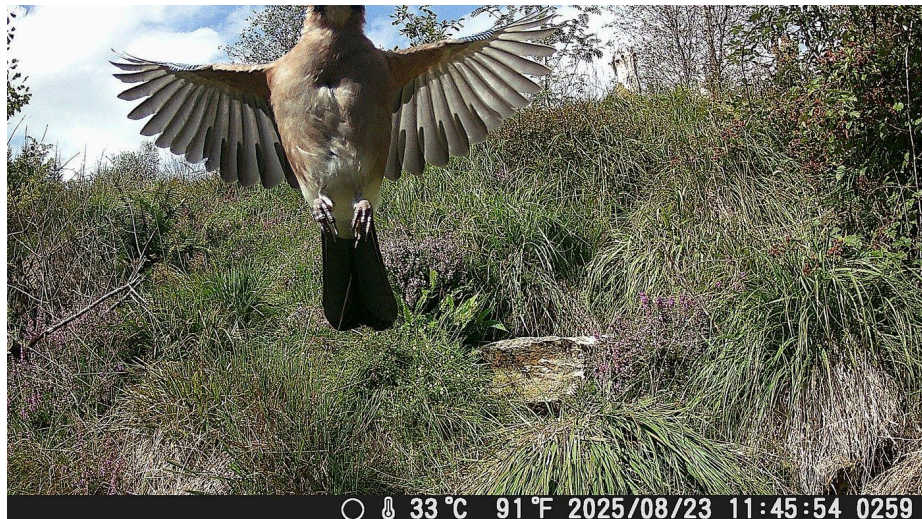
Date: 20 August 2025, 11:57. Habitat: heath / scrub edge with flowering heather. Statutory protection: Annex V, EU Habitats Directive; Schedule 5, Wildlife Acts 1976–2018.



Red Squirrel on a branch in active upland scrub edge habitat, 20 August 2025.

3. Eurasian Jay (*Garrulus glandarius*)

Date: 23 August 2025, 11:45. Habitat: open wet heath with flowering *Calluna vulgaris* (heather) in bloom. Statutory protection: Wildlife Acts 1976–2018.



Eurasian Jay in flight against flowering upland heath, 23 August 2025.

4. Irish Hare (*Lepus timidus hibernicus*)

Date: 23 August 2025, 23:25 (infrared night exposure). Habitat: tussock grass / wet heath. Statutory protection: Annex V, EU Habitats Directive; Schedule 5, Wildlife Acts 1976–2018. The Irish Hare is an endemic Irish sub-species, identified by NPWS as a species of conservation concern.



Irish Hare in upland wet heath, 23 August 2025, 23:25.