

21 May 2026

Leemore Butler
Coomleagh East
Bantry, Bantry
Co. Cork
P75 H903

Re: Planning Reference ACP-324165-26

Maughanaclea Wind Farm / Enerco's Application to Construct 14 Industrial Wind Turbines on Maughanaclea

An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1, D01 V902

A chara,

I am writing to object to the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm, # ACP-324165-26.

My family moved to the Mealagh Valley from Dublin in 2020. We made the decision to build our lives here because of the extraordinary qualities of this place: its peace, wildlife, dark skies, rich history, strong community spirit, and the feeling that nature still has space to exist largely undisturbed.

Like many people who have chosen to make West Cork their home, I care deeply about climate change and support the transition to renewable energy. However, support for renewable energy does not mean that every landscape is suitable for industrial-scale development. In my view, Maughanaclea is not an appropriate location for a wind farm of this scale.

Since moving here, I have become increasingly involved in local conservation and heritage initiatives and have developed a deep appreciation for the ecological and cultural significance of the Mealagh Valley. What concerns me most about this proposal is not one single issue but the cumulative loss of landscape, biodiversity, heritage, tranquillity and community identity that developments of this scale bring.

Health, Neurodiversity and Residential Amenity

One of my greatest concerns relates to the potential impact of this development on sleep, wellbeing, and residential amenity.

My family moved from Dublin to the Mealagh Valley in 2020 largely because of the peace, quietness, and connection to nature that this area provides. The ability to enjoy a calm home environment, free from urban or industrial noise & visual intrusion, is one of the reasons we chose

to build our lives here.

The proposed development would fundamentally alter that environment through the introduction of 14 industrial turbines approximately 169 metres in height, together with aviation warning lights, turbine movement, construction disturbance, and operational noise.

Sleep is a fundamental component of health and wellbeing. A growing body of research has found associations between living near wind turbines and increased reports of sleep disturbance, annoyance, and reduced quality of life. A systematic review by Onakpoya et al found evidence of an association between wind turbine exposure and annoyance¹, while a large Canadian Health Canada study identified a statistically significant relationship between increasing wind turbine noise exposure and high annoyance levels.² Although the evidence regarding direct health effects remains debated, sleep disturbance and annoyance are consistently reported outcomes in the literature.

I am particularly concerned because the noise assessment relies heavily on averaged sound measurements and predictive modelling. Averaging may mask short-term fluctuations, amplitude modulation, and periods of very low background noise that are especially important during night-time hours when residents are attempting to sleep.

The Irish courts have recognised that compliance with planning noise limits does not necessarily mean residents will not experience nuisance or loss of amenity. The experience of turbine noise, particularly at night, may differ significantly from what is suggested by averaged decibel measurements alone.

Residential amenity is about more than distance from a turbine. It includes the ability to sleep peacefully, enjoy one's home and garden, experience darkness at night, and maintain the sense of tranquillity that defines rural living.

In the case that my family could not tolerate the noise from the turbines, I'm concerned that it would be extremely difficult to sell our house in such close proximity to this development. A 2023 University of Galway study examining wind turbines and property prices along the west of Ireland found evidence of significant house price reductions associated with proximity to turbines, including reductions of up to 14.7% within 1km in certain cases, with the greatest impacts occurring near taller modern turbines.³

I am not satisfied that the assessment has adequately demonstrated that these aspects of residential amenity will be protected.

¹ Onakpoya IJ, O'Sullivan J, Thompson MJ, Heneghan CJ. The effect of wind turbine noise on sleep and quality of life: A systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies. *Environment International*, 82 (2015), pp. 1–9.

² Michaud DS et al. Self-reported and objectively measured outcomes in relation to wind turbine noise exposure and annoyance. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, 139(3), 2016.

³ Gillespie & McHale, Wind Turbines and House Prices Along the West of Ireland: A Hedonic Pricing Approach, CERIS Working Paper Series 2023/0

Noise Assessment Concerns

I have serious concerns regarding the adequacy & honesty of the noise assessment.

Flawed Noise Monitoring in the Mealagh Valley

| | | |
|---|--|---|
|  | <p>NOT ENOUGH MONITORS - Only 1 Noise monitor, NML4, was placed in the entire Mealagh Valley.</p> <p>MISLEADING DESCRIPTIONS - NML4 described as a “quiet garden” location with noted “birdsong & infrequent traffic” - The presence of local agricultural noise sources is not clearly described or contextualised - This bowl is one of the loudest areas in the Mealagh Valley detailed below - Developer provided a pixelated map that makes it hard for the Commission to identify working farms in close proximity to NML4</p> <p>OMISSION OF TOPOGRAPHY - The Mealagh Valley is a glacially carved valley with complex topography including many bowl-shaped cooms / cirques that reflect & amplify sound across the valley - Standard noise modeling was used which does not account for complex topography</p> | <p>By omitting important factors from their report, NML4 baseline noise may be elevated due to uncontextualised local noise sources, which would result in allowing higher turbine noise limits.</p> <p>Further noise monitoring in the Mealagh is needed with multiple monitors on both sides of the valley, and accurate descriptions of monitor locations.</p> |
| | |  |
| | |  |

CRONIN BARNS - largest livestock farmers in the Mealagh - busy farm, largest dairy farm in upper Mealagh Valley, multiple barns. Daily movement of cattle on the road just 100m from NML4. There is no other stretch of road in the Mealagh where cattle walk this distance on the road daily. Frequent noise in close proximity was omitted from report.

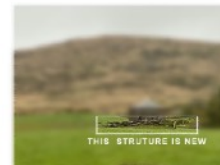


O'LEARY'S FARM - farmer hosting NML4 & one of the largest land owners in the valley. This working farm is in the field just above NML4 - roughly 20-80 metres away (Enerco's map is very pixelated and makes it difficult for the Commission and the public to see the large barns in close proximity to NML4. The map above is Enerco's map with a Google Maps overlay so that field identification is now possible in the area of question).



All aerial farm images of the maps are from Google Maps and far higher resolution than Enerco's maps.

MR O'LEARY'S HOME received a new patio area in 2025, visible from the road, made of dozens of massive 2 metre long rocks, similar to coastal erosion structures, a very loud construction process right next to NML4.



View from the main road of the new patio area. An extremely noisy job a 100m from NML4 completed in 2025.

ROCK BREAKING and reseeded has occurred in this field since early 2025, roughly 500-700m away from NML4. This has also been a loud process for the neighbourhood throughout the last year. Not clear how these sounds were treated within monitoring data.



An excavator and piles of broken rock are currently visible from the main road roughly 500m from NML4

CHAINSAWING has occurred in the Mealagh Valley woods in 2025 due to ash die back. The usually tranquil Mealagh Valley Woods visited by a locals and tourists alike for its river views, wedge tomb, etc has been noisier than usual. The main area of chainsaw activity was 500-700m from NML4. It is not clear how these irregular noise sources were treated within the monitoring data



Due to ash die back the community worked together to take down the dead ash trees in this section of the forest

Only one Noise Monitoring Location (NML4) was placed within the entire Mealagh Valley.⁴ Given the shape of the valley and its complex topography, a single monitoring location cannot adequately represent background noise conditions throughout the valley.

I'm also concerned that developer gave misleading information to the Commission when describing NML4 as a "quiet garden location" only noting "infrequent traffic & birdsong" despite being located very close to an active dairy farm, daily cattle movement, and ongoing agricultural activity.⁵ While these activities are a normal part of rural life, their presence should be transparently acknowledged and considered when characterising background noise levels. It's impossible to tell this from the description nor from the maps provided by the developer and should make us question what other issues have been glossed over.

I'm concerned that the monitoring done to date resulted in artificially high background noise levels and will allow the developer to enjoy higher turbine noise limits that will directly affect our residential amenity.

It's also worth noting that the Mealagh Valley is a glacially carved landscape characterised by steep slopes, ridge lines, and bowl-shaped topography. It's incredible how sound carries through this valley, like no where else I've ever lived, it's like natural amphitheatre. The name "Mealagh" comes from the Irish word *méileach*, meaning the bleating sound a lamb makes, and if you live here you know why - you can clearly hear a lamb from across the valley. Logic follows that turbine noise will carry & amplify in much the same way.

Research supports this - a study regarding wind turbine acoustics in hilly and valley terrain has demonstrated that topography and atmospheric conditions can significantly influence how turbine noise propagates and is experienced.⁶

The developer makes absolutely no mention of the complex topography of the Mealagh or Cousane. They have clearly not accounted for our local terrain, applying only standard noise modelling.

The assessment also relies heavily on averaged noise data. Averaging can mask very quiet periods as well as short-term peaks that may be particularly noticeable and disruptive in rural environments.

I am therefore not satisfied that the assessment adequately reflects real-world noise impacts on residents and should be reassessed with locations throughout the Mealagh Valley and with accurate descriptions of monitor placement.

⁴ EIAR Chapter 12 Noise & Vibration

⁵ EIAR Chapter 12

⁶ Van Renterghem, T. et al. (2014) "Wind Turbine Noise Propagation Over Complex Terrain and Wind Conditions" Acoustical Society of America https://docs.wind-watch.org/Van-Renterghem_wind-turbine-noise-hills-valleys.pdf

Private Wells, Water Quality and Hydrology

I am also concerned about the potential impact of this development on groundwater, private water supplies, and the wider hydrological system of the area.

The proposed development involves substantial excavation works, drainage interventions, turbine foundations, access roads, hardstands, and significant disturbance of upland soils and peat. These activities have the potential to alter water movement through the landscape and increase sediment mobilisation during construction.

Like all of my neighbours in the Mealagh Valley, we rely on a private well. I am concerned that the assessment does not provide sufficient certainty that these supplies will be protected throughout the construction and operational phases of the project.

The EIAR acknowledges that the database of private wells is incomplete and appears to rely heavily on desk-based information rather than a comprehensive survey of local water supplies.⁷ The HSE also recommended the identification and consideration of private wells during the assessment process.

I am particularly concerned that no baseline testing programme appears to have been undertaken for any nearby private water supplies. Without baseline information, it would be impossible for affected households to demonstrate whether changes in water quality or supply have occurred as a result of construction activities. At a minimum, the developer should pay for testing of all private wells downhill from the development, as well as the Kealkill town water supply.

The hydrology of Maughanaclea is complex. Peatlands, springs, drains, streams, and groundwater systems are interconnected in ways that are not always fully understood. Disturbance in one location can have consequences elsewhere within the catchment.

I am also concerned that the assessment relies heavily on standard mitigation measures without adequately demonstrating how those measures will perform during extreme rainfall events. Such events are becoming increasingly common and can lead to elevated sediment runoff, erosion, and pressure on water treatment systems which could have devastating consequences for the pristine Mealagh and Ouvane rivers.

These concerns are particularly relevant given the existing vulnerability of local water infrastructure. In 2023, Uisce Éireann confirmed that the Kealkill water supply experienced significant challenges associated with turbidity following heavy rainfall events.⁸

Applying the precautionary principle, I do not believe sufficient information has been provided by

⁷ EIAR Chapter 9 Hydrology & Hydrogeology

⁸ Southern Star, Sept 2023, Maintenance works at Kealkill water treatment plant now complete <https://www.southernstar.ie/news/water-supply-in-kealkill-at-risk-as-maintenance-works-underway-4273332>

the developer to demonstrate that local groundwater systems, private wells, precious rivers, and downstream water supplies can be protected from adverse impacts throughout the lifetime of the project.

I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála require a comprehensive survey of private wells, baseline water quality testing, and a robust independent monitoring and remediation programme before any development is considered.

Dark Skies and Loss of Night Environment

One of the defining qualities of the Mealah Valley is the exceptional darkness of the night sky.

In written correspondence to one of our neighbours dated 25 June 2025, Brian Espey, Chairperson of Dark Sky Ireland, described the Mealah 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.”

A Dark Sky Community application is currently being explored for the valley and, if successful, would be the first of its kind in Ireland. It’s something that our family, and many families in the Mealah are very supportive of.

Deputy Christopher O'Sullivan TD, Minister of State for Nature, Heritage and Biodiversity, engaged personally the Mealah Valley Dark Skies 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".



Stars over the Mealah Valley at Wild Hideaways

The proposed development on Maughanaclea would introduce 28 aviation warning lights across the ridgeline. Research has found that turbine aviation lighting may exceed the brightness of prominent stars and even Venus under certain atmospheric conditions.⁹

We love to sit out in the summer and star gaze, but the loss of dark skies is not simply an aesthetic

⁹ Barra & Lima, Quantifying the visual impact of wind farm lights on the nocturnal landscape 2024. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0022407324003108>

issue, or a residential issue. Artificial lighting also affects wildlife behaviour, reduces opportunities for nature-based tourism, and permanently alters the character of rural landscapes.

The Programme for Government 2025 includes commitments to “promote and encourage an expansion of Dark Sky Ireland national parks and reserves.”¹⁰ This proposal directly undermines those objectives and should be refused as it would forever rob us of our pristine night sky.

Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

As an active member of the Mealagh Valley Heritage Keepers, I’m also concerned by the impact this development would have on the cultural landscape of Maughanaclea and the wider Mealagh Valley.

The developer's own Cultural Heritage Assessment identifies 11 archaeological sites within the development site and more than 200 archaeological sites within 5km.¹¹ The area surrounding Maughanaclea contains one of the richest concentrations of prehistoric monuments in Ireland.

We are privileged to have the Mealagh Valley’s only recorded Ogham Stone on our land — one of approximately 400 surviving examples in Ireland.

For centuries this Ogham Stone has stood quietly within the landscape, witnessing generations of people who have lived and worked in the valley. It has been documented in An Archaeological Survey of the Mealagh Valley¹², featured in the documentary *Voices of the Valley: The Oral History of the Mealagh Valley*, and has recently been accepted as a point of interest on the Heritage Council-supported Mealagh Valley Hidden Heritage Trail.



The Ogham Stone on our land featured here in the Heritage Council funded documentary *Voices of the Valley* trailer & feature.

Its significance lies not only in the stone itself, but in its relationship to the surrounding landscape and the wider network of archaeological sites that make this valley so remarkable. Once the setting of such places is fundamentally altered, part of their meaning and cultural value is lost forever.

It’s also worth noting the Kealkill Stone Circle complex, protected under Preservation Order PO

¹⁰ The Programme for Government 2025, Dark Skies, pg 57

¹¹ EIAR Chapter 14 Cultural Heritage

¹² Myler, 1998, *An Archaeological Survey of the Mealagh Valley*

69/1938, forms part of a remarkable archaeological landscape whose significance extends far beyond individual monuments.

The Dúchas Schools Collection records butter roads, burial places, ringforts, standing stones, and other sites throughout Maughanaclea, demonstrating that this is not an empty upland landscape but a place deeply connected to local history, folklore, and community identity.¹³

I am concerned that impacts on setting, landscape context, and cultural experience are being grossly underestimated by the developer.

Furthermore, the EIAR acknowledges that residual effects on the setting of archaeological and cultural heritage sites will remain because certain impacts “cannot be mitigated”¹⁴, while simultaneously concluding that no significant operational effects will occur¹⁵. I find this contradiction difficult to reconcile. If approved, the impact this development would have on our cultural heritage would be permanent.



Biodiversity and Wildlife

The Mealagh Valley, Cousane, and surrounding uplands on Maughanaclea support a rich variety of wildlife. We often observe red squirrel, swallows, birds of prey, hares, bats, frogs, newts, even lizards at our home in the Mealagh Valley. Please find images above from Sioned Jones who

¹³ Dúchas Schools Collection, Maughanaclea <https://www.duchas.ie/en/cbes/4811628?HighlightText=maughanaclea&Route=schools&SearchLanguage=ga>

¹⁴ EIAR Chapter 14, Section 14.4.5

¹⁵ EIAR Chapter 14, Section 14.7

actively maintains fenced in nature preserve on Maughanaclea on Coillte's land vibrant in biodiversity. She's managed to capture pine martin and red squirrels on camera inside the nature reserve. The nature reserve is also home to amphibians, birds and many different animals that the developer failed to capture in their report - including white tailed sea eagles.¹⁶

The Commission should specifically request the NPWS provide flight data of Glengarriff white-tailed sea eagles for definitive scientific proof that these protected birds frequent this area. Members of the community have requested FOIs and were unsuccessful in obtaining this crucial information.

While white tailed sea eagles were not seen during the bird surveys, the developer does acknowledge that Annex I bird species are also identified within the wider study area.¹⁷ Under Article 4(1) of the EU Birds Directive¹⁸, Annex I species are required to receive special conservation measures concerning their habitats.

I am not satisfied that the cumulative impacts of habitat disturbance, forestry clearance, drainage alteration, operational noise, aviation lighting, and collision risk have been adequately assessed.

Cumulative Impact

My concerns cannot be viewed in isolation from other developments proposed or operating across West Cork. The Cork County Development Plan specifically requires consideration of cumulative impacts associated with existing and proposed wind energy developments.¹⁹

Taken together with Curraglass, Gortloughra, Dereenacreenig and other developments, I believe the cumulative visual, ecological, noise, and landscape impacts are becoming unacceptable. The cumulative burden placed upon West Cork rural communities, landscapes, and ecosystems must be halted.

Community Benefit and Ownership

I am also disappointed by the absence of meaningful community ownership within the proposal. The Cork County Development Plan recognises the importance of community ownership of renewable energy projects.²⁰

In countries such as Denmark and Germany, local communities frequently retain ownership stakes and decision-making influence in renewable energy developments. In contrast, this proposal follows a model whereby environmental and visual impacts are borne locally while ownership and long-term economic benefits leave the community and prop up AI data centres for multinational companies.

¹⁶ Please see the submissions of Annabel Seymour and Sean Worboys

¹⁷ EIAR Chapter 6 Biodiversity & Ecology

¹⁸ EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC),

¹⁹ CCDP 2022–2028, Section 13.6.3

²⁰ CCDP 2022–2028, Section 13.7.4

Sustainability that steamrolls communities is not sustainable. This development does not have community support and does not represent a genuinely sustainable approach to rural development.

Curtailment and Energy Demand

Finally, I am concerned that increasingly sensitive landscapes are being industrialised to satisfy continually expanding electricity demand without sufficient scrutiny of that demand. Ireland already dedicates over a fifth of national electricity consumption to data centres.²¹

At the same time, significant quantities of renewable electricity are already curtailed due to grid constraints.²²

The environmental costs of this development have not been adequately justified in light of these existing constraints. This is neither the time nor the place for a wind development of this scale.

Conclusion

I support renewable energy and recognise the need for climate action. However, I do not believe climate action should come at the expense of biodiversity, archaeological heritage, dark skies, residential amenity, community wellbeing, and the environmental qualities that make West Cork unique.

Once landscapes such as Maughanaclea are industrialised, the ecological, cultural, and visual loss is effectively permanent.

For these many reasons, I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála refuse permission for the proposed development.

Le meas,

Leemore Butler

Irish Times 10 June 2025 "Data Centres Accounted For More Than Fifth of Ireland's Electricity Usage"
<https://www.irishtimes.com/environment/2025/06/10/data-centres-accounted-for-more-than-fifth-of-irelands-electricity-usage-last-year/>

²² EirGrid Operational Constraints and Curtailment Reports
<https://cms.eirgrid.ie/sites/default/files/publications/Annual-Renewable-Constraint-and-Curtailment-Report-2024-V1.0.pdf>