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Co. Cork, P75 WP958
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15 May 2026
The Secretary
An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1, D01 V902

Re: Submission of observation, Proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm, Planning Reference
ACP-324165-26 / 324165

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am writing to object, in the strongest terms available to me, to the proposed Maughanaclea Wind

I live with my family in the Mealagh valley. We moved to the valley for very specific reasons and with clear intention of the way we wish to live our lives. This proposal erodes the very things we sought out in the valley.

We are a family committed to environmental protection and enhancement and live our lives accordingly. We greatly value the surroundings we have and take time to enjoy and nurture these. Our well being as a family and individually has greatly improved since living here and we are greatly concerned for that going forward.

In addition to our well being, I am also employed in the tourism sector in the valley at Wild Hideaways. A rare find for me to have found employment that works perfectly for my families needs and embodies so many of my personal values in environmental protection and enhancement. The potential erection of these turbines will completely destroy Wild Hideaways and the very reason we are so well frequented by people looking for an opportunity to explore and enjoy one of the few remaining untouched parts of Ireland.

I cannot begin to comprehend how our lives will be irreparably damaged if this goes ahead and we will have no opportunity to leave and reclaim the lives we have created here.

We live less than two kilometres from the nearest proposed turbine. The application as it stands is, in my view, the wrong development, in the wrong place, brought forward under a planning framework that is no longer fit for the purpose of assessing it.

The most serious flaw at the heart of this application is one that the Coimisiún cannot ignore: the planning regulations under which it falls to be assessed are manifestly out of date. The Wind Energy Development Guidelines that still govern this country were drafted for a generation of turbines a fraction of the size of those now being proposed. The Maughanaclea machines are 169 metres to blade tip. That is more than twice the height of the floodlights at Croke Park. The foundations required to anchor structures of that scale in peat-influenced upland soils, the noise they radiate across complex terrain, the aviation lighting they demand at night, the shadow flicker they cast, and the visual dominance they impose, are simply not the same phenomena that the existing guidelines were written to control. A draft revision of those guidelines has been

promised for more than a decade and has not been delivered. To grant permission for a 169-metre wind farm in a sensitive scenic valley under a rulebook drafted for 100-metre machines is to permit the developer to operate in a regulatory vacuum of their own choosing. Pending the publication and adoption of revised guidelines that honestly address the current scale of turbine technology, applications of this magnitude should not be granted. I respectfully submit that this consideration alone is sufficient to refuse the application.

There is also the deeper question of whether further onshore wind capacity in West Cork can presently be put to use at all. It is well established that wind generation across the country is already routinely curtailed and constrained off the system because the transmission network cannot accept the output, with the associated dispatch-down payments ultimately recovered from consumers. Adding further turbines on a remote ridgeline in West Cork, in advance of the grid reinforcement

needed to deliver their output, does not advance the climate transition. It generates a stream of constraint payments funded by ordinary households, while electricity demand growth (particularly from data centres) continues to outpace renewables build-out and is largely met by additional fossil

generation. Recent independent analysis from University College Cork has shown that the rapid growth in data-centre electricity demand in Ireland has more than offset the growth from wind energy over recent years, with the result that the share of renewables in the generation mix has remained stable and fossil generation has not fallen (see source A). In that context, granting permission for further onshore wind on irreplaceable upland habitat, without a parallel demonstration that the output can actually be absorbed and that it will displace fossil generation rather than supply new industrial load, is poor energy policy as well as poor planning.

I would also ask the Coimisiún to look honestly at what is being sold here. A wind farm of this size

is presented to the public as a clean, green, climate-friendly intervention. The reality on the ground

is heavy haulage on small country roads for the guts of two years, rock-breaking and blasting on peat-influenced ground, the carving of new access tracks across upland habitat, concrete bases of a

scale that no community in West Cork has previously seen, and at the end of a working life of perhaps 25 to 30 years, the question of what becomes of the composite blades, the rare-earth components of the nacelles, and the foundations sunk into the hillside. The recycling pathway for

turbine blades at end-of-life in Ireland is, at best, undeveloped. To call this development green, in the face of all that, requires a degree of optimism that the planning system should not be asked to share.

Connected to this is the question of cumulative impact. West Cork is being asked to absorb a

disproportionate share of onshore wind development in Ireland. Looking at the wind farms already operating, permitted, or proposed within reasonable range of the Mealagh and Maughanaclea ridges, the picture is one of saturation. Each scheme is brought forward on its own application and assessed in isolation, with cumulative impacts on landscape, noise, ecology and community amenity discounted to a few generic paragraphs in the EIAR. That is not cumulative assessment in any meaningful sense. The proper question is whether the valley and ridge system can absorb yet another scheme on top of what is already there or consented, and on the evidence I do not believe the EIAR adequately addresses that question.

On landscape, the proposal speaks for itself. The Mealagh Valley is one of the scenic landscapes of West Cork, valued for its enclosed character, its ridgelines, its dark skies, and the quiet rural settlement pattern that lies beneath. The Cork County Development Plan affords protection to landscapes of this character precisely because they cannot be replaced. A 169-metre turbine cluster planted across a prominent ridge does not sit lightly on such a landscape. It re-defines it. From my home and land at Ardrah East, the turbines will be unavoidable in the view. The development is, in my submission, in direct contradiction of the landscape protection objectives the Council has adopted in its current plan.

I want to be clear about noise. I am not raising it on a precautionary footing. I am raising it because the noise assessment in the EIAR does not, in my reading, adequately account for the way sound from a ridge-mounted turbine propagates across a valley. Peer-reviewed acoustic modelling has shown that the existence of hills and valleys between a sound source and a receiver, and the wind

and temperature gradients that develop above sloped ground, can produce significant variations in received sound levels, and that these effects become especially important when turbines are placed

on a ridge overlooking a valley (see source B). The Mealagh Valley is precisely such a setting. To

rely on flat-terrain propagation assumptions, or on background noise measurements taken at locations that are not representative of the quietest dwellings, is to under-state the real noise environment that residents will experience. I am particularly concerned about night-time noise, low-frequency content, amplitude modulation, and the prolonged rock-breaking phase during

construction. Reduced sleep quality has been documented in the peer-reviewed literature as one of the most consistently reported effects of living in proximity to wind turbines (see source C). I expressly preserve my position on noise impacts and reserve my right to rely on this ground. On property, the developer's submission asserts confidently that there is no evidence of negative effect on house prices. The Irish evidence says otherwise. A hedonic pricing study of homes along the west of Ireland found a discount of approximately 14.7% on properties within one kilometre of an operating wind farm at the point of commissioning, with effects that decay over time but persist at distance (see source D). My home falls within the band where that effect has been measured. The Coimisiún should give weight to the Irish evidence on its own coast rather than to general assurances from a developer with an obvious commercial interest. Aviation lighting at this scale will end the dark skies of the Mealah Valley. The relevant peer-reviewed work on the visibility of wind-turbine obstruction lights in nocturnal landscapes finds that medium-intensity turbine lights can be brighter than Venus at distances of around four kilometres, and remain visible to the naked eye at distances of tens of kilometres (see source E). The 2025 Programme for Government commits to expanding Ireland's Dark Sky reserves. The Maughanaclea proposal is the opposite of that commitment. It will introduce a constellation of red obstruction lights on an Atlantic ridgeline that currently has none, and it will degrade a nocturnal asset that neighbouring rural tourism businesses (including dark-sky accommodation providers in this part of West Cork) already depend on. On tourism, the proposal is also inconsistent with declared strategy. West Cork is identified in the Fáilte Ireland West Cork Coast Destination and Experience Development Plan as a place whose visitor proposition rests on unspoiled landscape, walking and cultural heritage. Stamping a 169-metre wind farm across the ridges above the Mealah Valley Loop and St Finbarr's Pilgrimage Path is not consistent with that proposition. The State cannot credibly invest public money in marketing this coast as scenic and unspoiled while simultaneously consenting to its industrialisation. On a practical note, the 18 to 24 months of construction will fall on a small rural road network never designed for sustained heavy haulage. Wide loads, dust, rock-breaking, temporary closures and disruption to ordinary daily life in the valley are not minor inconveniences for those of us who live here. They are the daily texture of two years.

My household water comes from a private well. The site lies on steep peat-influenced ground above the watercourses that feed local supplies. There has been no baseline testing of private wells in the area in advance of this application. The EIAR does not adequately address the risk to private water

supplies from access-track construction, hardstanding excavation, foundation works, and the rerouting of surface drainage in steep terrain. That alone is a deficiency that should weigh against permission.

On the planning process itself, I am not satisfied that the engagement with our community has been transparent or complete. Information has shifted between iterations, the practical implications of haulage routes and construction timetables have not been clearly communicated to people whose homes lie on those routes, and the level of detail provided on aviation lighting, drainage, and decommissioning has fallen well short of what residents are entitled to expect at this stage of an application of this scale. I have real concerns about whether all statutory and procedural requirements have been complied with in this case, and I invite the Coimisiún to examine that carefully.

The developer's own Cultural Heritage assessment concedes that there are visual impacts on archaeological settings that cannot be mitigated. That, in an area with 11 recorded archaeological

sites within the wind farm site, more than 200 further sites within five kilometres, and six National

Monuments within ten kilometres, including the setting of the Kealkill Stone Circle (Preservation Order PO 69 / 1938), is a striking admission. The proper response to an admission of unmitigable

impact on heritage is not to grant permission subject to conditions. It is to refuse.

Finally, on community benefit. I want to be straightforward with the Coimisiún. The Community Benefit Fund attached to this proposal is not compensation. It is a sum of money offered to a community in exchange for the permanent industrialisation of its valley, its ridgeline, its night sky,

and its acoustic environment. The profits from this scheme will leave West Cork. The structures, the haulage, the noise, the lights and the change in the character of the valley will remain. The community has not given meaningful consent to that exchange and a discretionary fund administered by the developer does not constitute consent.

I support climate action. I do not accept that climate action requires the industrialisation of irreplaceable landscapes in West Cork under outdated planning rules and into a grid that cannot use

the output. The right answer is to update the Wind Energy Development Guidelines, prioritise offshore, brownfield and rooftop deployment, reinforce the grid so that existing onshore capacity can be used without curtailment payments, and only then consider whether any further onshore

development in scenic upland landscapes is justified. On the application as it stands, I respectfully request that the Coimisiún refuse permission.
Yours faithfully,

Natasha Estie
Ardrah East, Mealagh Valley, Co. Cork, P75 W958

Sources cited

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