

Submission of Observations

An Coimisiún Pleanála

Case reference: ACP-324165-26 (324165)

Proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm, Co. Cork

From: Nina Burke

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Distance from nearest proposed turbine: approximately 6 km

Dear Members of the Commission,

My name is Nina Burke. I live with my husband Noel at Maulikeeve in the Mealagh Valley, where I also run our holiday accommodation business. I am writing this submission in my own words to ask you to refuse permission for the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm.

I want to say at the start: English is not my first language. I am from Finland. I have lived in Ireland for many years, and I love this country, but writing an official letter in English is hard for me. I have used short sentences and clear lists, because that is how I think best. I hope you will read this letter carefully even though it is not in fancy English. The point I most want to make is that these are real concerns from a real person who lives here.

There are five things I want to focus on. Landscape. Nature. Tourism. Community. And what kind of climate action this really is.

1. The landscape will be destroyed

When I first came to the Mealagh Valley, I could not believe a place like this still existed in Europe. The hills, the quiet, the small fields, the old stone walls. It is the reason we stayed here. It is the reason our guests come from all over the world to stay with us.

- The turbines will be 169 metres tall to the blade tip. That is more than twice the height of the Elysian tower in Cork city. The turbines will be in a long line on the ridge above us, where now there is only sky.
- From our house and from the road that brings our guests to us, the turbines will be visible. They cannot be hidden. They will dominate every view.
- The Cork County Development Plan recognises the landscape of West Cork as a value to be protected. The Mealagh Valley is part of this protected landscape. To put fourteen industrial turbines on this ridge is not in keeping with the Plan.
- This is not a brownfield site. It is not next to a motorway. It is one of the most beautiful and quiet places left in Ireland. It is the wrong place.

2. The nature will not recover

I am not a scientist. I am a guest in this place, like my visitors are. But I have walked these hills for years and I know what is here. The hen harrier flies above our fields. The pine marten lives in the woods. The peat under the heather is older than any building in Ireland.

- The site is peat. Peat is not soil that grows back. Once it is broken, it is gone. The Derrybrien landslide in 2003 happened because a wind farm was built on peat in a steep place, and the

European Court found Ireland in breach of EU law for it (Case C-261/18). Maughanaclea has the same kind of ground.

- Hen harrier numbers in Ireland are falling. Fernández-Bellón and colleagues showed in their 2019 paper that wind farms reduce hen harrier breeding in the surrounding area (see source A). The protections for this bird apply even outside designated SPAs.
- Ruddock 2024, published in *Irish Wildlife Manuals* number 147, sets out the risk for raptors in Ireland from wind energy (see source B). The white-tailed sea eagle has been seen in this area. The peregrine falcon nests in the cliffs.
- The construction will fragment habitat. The roads, the borrow pits, the cable trenches, the concrete bases. Months of disturbance, dust, vibration, and heavy traffic do not undo themselves when the lorries leave.

3. Our business depends on what they want to take

I run the accommodation. This is my work. Guests come to us because they have read about this place, seen photographs of the hills at sunset, and read reviews from other guests about how quiet it is, how dark the sky is at night, how they could hear the river and the birds and nothing else.

- The Meagher Valley falls within the Fáilte Ireland West Cork Coast Destination and Experience Development Plan. The whole strategy is built on the unspoiled landscape and the quiet rural character. The Fáilte Ireland Wild Atlantic Way figures for 2024 show how much of the regional economy depends on this kind of visitor experience.
- Bará and Lima (2024) quantified the visual impact of wind farm aviation lighting on the night landscape (see source C). The red flashing lights on top of the turbines will be visible across the whole valley, every night, all year. The dark sky is part of what we sell. When it is gone, it is gone.
- Galloway 2012 looked at the economic value of dark skies for tourism (see source D). The Fáilte Ireland 2019 feasibility study on dark sky tourism set out how significant this is for rural areas (see source E). For my business, dark sky is not a luxury. It is a product.
- The Meagher Valley Loop Walk and the St Finbarr's Pilgrimage Path both bring walkers to this area. Our guests come for these walks. A walker who climbs to a viewpoint and sees fourteen industrial turbines is not coming back, and is not recommending us to friends.
- I have not seen in the developer's documents any honest assessment of what this will do to small accommodation businesses like mine. The developer's papers talk about jobs during construction. Construction lasts 18 to 24 months. The damage to the tourism economy lasts forever.

4. The community was not asked

This is the part that has made me most upset.

- This development is huge. Fourteen turbines. Two years of construction. Permanent change to the landscape of a whole valley. And yet the people who live here were not properly consulted. There was no real conversation with everyone affected. There were a few meetings, a few documents put online, and then thousands of pages of application material. That is not consultation. That is paperwork.
- The project is not community-owned. The profits will not stay in West Cork. They will flow to private investors, many of them not even in Ireland. The "Community Benefit Fund" the developer offers is small compared to what is being taken. It is not consent. It is compensation for damage that should not happen in the first place.

- The community in the Mealagh Valley has been divided by this. Neighbours who shared the valley for decades now do not speak to each other. Some people signed up to host turbines on their land because they were offered money. Others, like me and my husband, will lose the value of our home and our business. The developer created this division.
- Real climate action needs the people to be with it. A wind farm that is forced on a community against their will is not a model for the energy transition Ireland needs.

5. This is the wrong kind of climate action

I want to say very clearly: I support climate action. I am from a country where we take climate change seriously. I have worked all my life in ways that try to be gentle on the land.

- But climate action that destroys peat bogs is not climate action. Peat in West Cork stores enormous amounts of carbon. To break it up to build turbines on top is to release the carbon you are trying to save.
- Climate action that destroys habitat for protected species is not climate action. Biodiversity loss is part of the climate crisis, not separate from it.
- Climate action that destroys the local economy of rural communities is not climate action. It makes people angry and pushes them away from the changes we all need to make.
- Better solutions exist. Offshore wind on the right sites. Solar on rooftops, car parks, brownfield land. Demand reduction. Better grid management. Data centres in Ireland consume around 21% of national electricity (Daly 2024). If we want more renewable energy, we should first look at where the energy is being used, not where the next ridge is to be sacrificed.

6. Noise

I include this section because every objector should. The complex hilly terrain of the Mealagh Valley has not, in my view, been properly accounted for in the developer's noise assessment. Sound bounces and travels differently in a valley than in flat country. Night-time noise, low-frequency noise, and amplitude modulation are all real concerns for residents living within a few kilometres of large turbines. Onakpoya and colleagues (2015) reviewed the health effects of wind turbine noise and found associations with sleep disturbance and annoyance (see source F). The WHO 2018 Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region recommend wind turbine noise levels well below what is likely to be experienced here (see source G). The construction phase will involve rock breaking, which in a valley of this shape will echo for 18 to 24 months. I ask the Commission to require a full re-assessment of noise propagation using methods that are appropriate for hilly terrain, and to require baseline measurements taken at the quietest properties, including small tourism businesses like our own, not at the convenient roadside locations.

7. Property value

Our home is also our business. Gillespie and McHale (2023) studied house prices along the western Irish seaboard and found measurable reductions within one kilometre of operational wind farms, with effects persisting beyond that distance (see source H). For a household whose income depends partly on the value of the property we host guests in, this is not an abstract worry. It is a direct private loss caused by a private commercial development, with no realistic compensation.

Conclusion

I am asking you to refuse this application.

Not because I am against wind energy. Not because I am against change. Not because I do not understand what climate change is.

I am asking because this project, in this place, at this scale, was decided without us. It will destroy something that cannot be put back. It will harm the businesses and the homes and the wildlife of a quiet valley, and the profits will go somewhere else.

Please, please look at the people who live here, not only at the megawatts.

Thank you for reading my letter.

Yours sincerely,

Nina Burke

Maulikeeve, Bantry, Co. Cork, P75 EV12

20 May 2026

Sources cited

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