

Paula
The Mealagh Valley, Bantry, Co. Cork, P75 PF80
Housekeeper, Wild Hideaways eco retreat

The Secretary
An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1, D01 V902

18 May 2026

Re: Submission of objection to the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm (Planning Reference ACP-324165-26 / 324165)

Dear Secretary,

I wish to make a submission objecting to the proposed wind farm at Maughanaclea. I am writing as a person who lives in the Mealagh Valley and who works here too. My home is in the valley at Eircode P75 PF80, and I am a housekeeper at Wild Hideaways, the eco retreat in the valley, where I have worked since the day it opened in 2023. I have included a small fee with this submission and I would be grateful if my objection were taken into account before any decision is made.

I am not a person who writes letters like this, and I want to be honest about that. I do not own land on the ridge and I do not run a business that will lose money. What I have is what I see and hear every working day, and that is the reason I am writing. The points below set out my concerns. I have kept them in plain order so they are easy to follow.

i. When Wild Hideaways first opened in 2023 it was a very small place, just a few units and a lot of hope. I have watched it grow from those humble beginnings into one of the leading eco tourism places in this part of the country. It has done that on the strength of one promise: that a person can come here and find real peace, real quiet, and a real dark sky. That is what guests are paying for. It is not a slogan. It is the actual product, and keeping it is a large part of my own job. The proposed wind farm threatens the very thing the retreat was built on, and threatens it from a distance of roughly two kilometres, because that is how far the nearest proposed turbine sits from Wild Hideaways.

ii. The dark sky is the part I feel most strongly about, because I see what it means to people. Guests come down from the units at night and stand out in the dark with their heads back, and some of them have told me they have never seen stars like it in their lives. People travel here from cities in Ireland and from much further away for exactly that. The proposed turbines would carry aviation warning lights, and those lights do not switch off. A peer-reviewed study by Bará and Lima, published in 2024, set out to measure how far the light from a turbine of this kind actually carries at night. Their finding is that a medium-intensity turbine light can

appear brighter than the planet Venus from up to about four kilometres away, brighter than the brightest star in the night sky from up to about ten kilometres, and can still be seen by the naked eye from as far as roughly thirty-eight kilometres (see source A). Wild Hideaways sits two kilometres from the nearest turbine. That places the retreat, and the valley around it, well inside the range where these lights would dominate the night sky. A dark sky that has taken millions of years to exist can be spoiled by a row of red lights, and once it is spoiled there is no putting it back.

iii. I would also ask the Commission to weigh what this means for tourism, because it is not a small thing and it is not only Wild Hideaways. Fáilte Ireland commissioned a study in 2019 on the tourism value of dark skies, and that study identifies West Cork as one of the stretches of the country with genuinely high quality dark skies, the kind that are now rare and getting rarer (see source B). The study is clear that the basic asset, real darkness, has to be protected if this kind of tourism is to survive, because once light pollution arrives it cannot be undone. West Cork has built a quiet, careful tourism on its landscape and its night sky. Wild Hideaways is one example of that done well, and there are many small B&Bs, guesthouses and activity providers across the valley relying on the same thing. A wind farm on the ridge would take that asset away from all of them at once.

iv. I must also raise the matter of noise, and I want it recorded clearly as part of my objection. The Meallagh Valley is not flat ground. It is a valley with hills on either side, and sound behaves differently in a place like this. Noise rolls along a valley and is thrown back off the slopes in a way that open ground does not do, and a turbine sitting up on a ridge sends its sound down into the valley below. A 2015 review by Onakpoya and colleagues, which gathered together a number of separate studies on people living near turbines, found that turbine noise is linked with annoyance and with disturbed sleep for residents (see source C). I am concerned about three things in particular. First, that the noise assessment for this project has not properly accounted for how sound carries and echoes in this hilly valley terrain. Second, that the background noise readings used to set the baseline were taken away from the quietest spots, the very places like eco retreats and guest accommodation where the quiet is the whole point, so the true starting point has been understated. Third, that the construction period would bring eighteen months to two years of rock breaking, and the sound of breaking rock would echo across this valley for the whole of it. Quiet is the product Wild Hideaways sells, and quiet is also what I go home to in the evening. I want this noise concern noted formally now so that it stands on the record.

v. On the size of these turbines, I think it is worth being plain. The proposed turbines would stand one hundred and sixty-nine metres tall at the tip of the blade. County Hall in Cork city is a building most people from this county have seen, and it is about sixty-seven metres high. These turbines would be two and a half times the height of County Hall, standing in a row along a quiet rural ridgeline above a working valley. There is nothing of that scale anywhere near here now, and there is a reason for that.

vi. I want to be fair and say plainly that I am not against renewable energy. I understand the country needs it and I would not stand in the way of it. My objection is to this site. Some places can take a wind farm without losing what makes them what they are. The Mealagh Valley cannot. Its whole worth, to the people who live here and to the people who come to stay, is its quiet and its darkness, and a wind farm on the ridge would take both. Renewable energy should be put where it does the least harm, and this valley is the wrong place for it.

vii. I will finish where I started, with my own situation. Wild Hideaways is my main income and has been since 2023. I have given it three years of work and I have watched it become something the whole valley can be proud of. It earned that by protecting the peace and the dark skies of this place and offering them honestly to people who badly need them. If this wind farm is built two kilometres away, the thing the retreat is built on is gone, and so is a great deal of what makes my own home a good place to live. I am asking An Coimisiún Pleanála to refuse permission for the proposed development at Maughanaclea.

Thank you for reading my submission and for considering what I have set out.

Yours faithfully,

Paula

Sources cited

Source A: Bará, S. & Lima, R. C. (2024). *Quantifying the visual impact of wind farm lights on the nocturnal landscape*. Journal of Quantitative Spectroscopy and Radiative Transfer, vol. 329, 109203.

Source B: Fáilte Ireland (2019). *Feasibility Study for Maximising the Tourism Potential of Dark Sky Assets*. Fáilte Ireland, April 2019.

Source C: Onakpoya, I. J., O'Sullivan, J., Thompson, M. J. & Heneghan, C. J. (2015). *The effect of wind turbine noise on sleep and quality of life: a systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies*. Environment International, vol. 82, pp. 1–9.