Sara Ramsden-Hallett
Maulakieve
Bantry
Co. Cork
P75 ET71

20 May 2026

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

Re: Objection to the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm (Case Reference ACP-324165-26)

I write as a resident of the Mealagh Valley, living at Maulakieve, Bantry (Eircode P75 ET71), approximately four kilometres from the nearest proposed turbine. I moved to this valley around ten years ago, as a smallholder, and I have come to know its weather, its quiet, and its night sky in a way that only someone who has chosen a place can. It is from that knowledge, and not from any abstract opposition to renewable energy, that I write to oppose this application.

What follows is not a list of grievances. It is an account of what this proposal would actually do, in this particular valley, to particular people and a particular landscape, and why I believe An Coimisiún Pleanála should refuse it.

An assault on the Mealagh Valley

This proposed development represents an assault on the Mealagh Valley and on the community that lives in it. I understand that wind turbines are part of the move to a low-carbon economy. I am not opposed to that. But the turbines proposed in this application are far too close to people and to the small businesses that depend on this landscape, and their visual impact is simply overwhelming.

Many wind developments have what I think of as a "now you see it, now you don’t" quality. You catch sight of them as you drive past, and a hill or a bend in the road takes them away again. The visual impact is momentary. That is not what is being proposed here. These turbines are placed on the ridges at the head of the valley, on the hills overlooking Bantry and valuable visitor places like the Beara Peninsula. This community will face them, head on, every day. The siting offers no escape and no relief from what will effectively be a power station overhead. At a tip height of 169 metres, each turbine stands over fifty storeys high. A ridgeline crowded with structures of that scale is not a landscape feature; it is a piece of heavy industry installed on a skyline that the Cork County Development Plan repeatedly treats as a sensitive amenity.

Volume 5 of the County Development Plan describes Bantry as set within a designated High Value Landscape, and notes that considerable care will be needed to locate large-scale developments here without their becoming unduly obtrusive. The plan goes further: it explicitly discourages further extensive upland development, particularly beyond the 80-metre contour line. The proposal in front of the Commission places turbines of 169 metres on upland ridges that loom above that contour line, in direct contradiction of the plan’s stated policy. If "considerable care" means anything, it cannot mean

this.

The night sky, and the red lights

What I find hardest to accept is the aviation lighting. It is proposed that the turbines carry red warning lights, and so our night sky will be pockmarked with red lights. Even at night, we will not be able to forget that they are there. The night sky in this valley is one of the reasons people come here, and one of the reasons I stayed.

This is not a sentimental point. The aviation lighting on turbines of this height is a regulatory requirement, not a design choice that can be quietly removed. NatureScot's guidance on aviation lighting impact assessment (see source A) explains that the lights are seen as conspicuous points of red, particularly against a dark sky or a dark landmass, and that they can produce a flashing or flickering effect as the rotating blades intermittently screen them. In upland locations the lights appear uncharacteristically elevated, compared with the ordinary experience of artificial light at valley floor level, and are perceived as incongruous. That is precisely the view we will be left with: red points, high on the ridge, blinking and partially veiled by blades, where now there is only sky.

Bará and Lima (see source B) have shown that wind farm aviation lights operate as light pollution sources in their own right, comparable in apparent brightness to bright stars of the night sky, and that conventional shielding techniques used for streetlights cannot be applied to them because the lights are designed to be seen from a great distance and from many angles. In other words, this is light pollution that cannot be mitigated away. Once it is installed, it stays.

The Fáilte Ireland feasibility study on dark sky tourism (see source C) identifies West Cork as one of the corridors of the Wild Atlantic Way with high quality dark skies, and treats those skies as an asset that needs to be actively protected, not as a backdrop that can absorb new lighting infrastructure. The Programme for Government commits to the expansion of dark sky areas in Ireland. Approving a wind farm whose lights will, by the developer's own admission, be visible across a wide zone of the valley and beyond, is incompatible with that commitment.

One valley, one community, one share too many

West Cork already carries several wind farms, operating, permitted, or proposed. The cumulative visual, acoustic and ecological burden of those projects has not, in my view, been honestly assessed in this application. Each new development is treated as if it arrived on a blank canvas. It does not. West Cork is being asked to absorb a disproportionate share of onshore wind development for the country as a whole, and the people who live here are the ones who carry the cost of that decision in their daily lives. Adding the Maughanaclea turbines on top of what is already here, and on top of what is already permitted, is excessive on its face.

Noise across the valley

I want to record specific concerns about noise. The Mealagh is a complex hilly valley, and the proposed turbines are sited on ridges above it. Van Renterghem's modelling work on sound propagation from ridge-mounted turbines across adjacent valleys (see source D) demonstrates that valleys can amplify, channel and otherwise distort wind turbine sound in ways that flat-terrain noise predictions simply do not capture. The standard assessments used in Irish wind farm applications were not designed for terrain like this, and the EIAR for Maughanaclea has not, so far as I can see, properly accounted for the way sound will travel across this particular landscape.

Onakpoya and colleagues, in a peer-reviewed systematic review (see source E), found a consistent association between wind turbine noise exposure and annoyance, and a weaker but real association with sleep disturbance. Annoyance, in this literature, is not a description of personal taste; it is a recognised public health endpoint. Add to this the eighteen to twenty-four month construction phase, with blasting and rock-breaking echoing across the valley, and the noise implications of this proposal extend years into the future, well before any turbine ever begins to turn.

The economy of the valley

Bantry sits on the Wild Atlantic Way, with easy access to Bantry Bay, the Beara Peninsula and the Sheep's Head. People come here for the scenery, the quiet and the night sky. Small accommodation providers, hospitality businesses, walking guides and craft producers depend on what visitors find when they arrive. If what they find is a ridge of 169-metre turbines and a sky stained with red warning lights, the proposition that brought them here is materially diminished. Galloway's economic study of the impact of large wind farms on rural tourism (see source F) found measurable adverse effects on visitor intentions and spend in areas where turbines dominated previously unspoiled scenic landscapes. The West Cork tourism strategy is built on protecting precisely those qualities. This proposal works against it.

Sustainability, honestly considered

In the rush for sustainable power, the need for peace, beauty and tranquillity must not be forgotten, nor must our landscapes, for they represent the true meaning of patriotism and love of Cork. These concerns are not incompatible. Sustainable power and landscape beauty can live alongside one another, but only in a climate of care, consideration and honesty for Ireland and its people. This proposed development is not, in my judgement, about sustainability. It is about the very large sums of money that can be made in the present gold rush in onshore wind, at the long-term cost of the very essence of County Cork.

I support climate action. I support a serious and properly planned transition to renewable energy. I do not accept that the way to achieve those goals is to consent to the wrong project in the wrong place. Better-sited alternatives exist: offshore wind, brownfield sites, rooftop solar at scale. They should be prioritised. This site should not.

What I am asking of the Commission

I respectfully ask An Coimisiún Pleanála to refuse permission for the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm. The application is in direct tension with the Cork County Development Plan's policies on High Value Landscape and on further extensive upland development. Its aviation lighting will produce permanent, unmitigable light pollution in an area whose dark skies are a tourism asset and a public good. Its acoustic impact, in this valley terrain, has not been adequately modelled. And it adds a disproportionate further burden to a part of Ireland that has already accepted more than its share of onshore wind.

I would be grateful if my submission, and those of my neighbours, could be considered in full.

Yours faithfully,

Sara Ramsden-Hallett
Maulakieve, Bantry, Co. Cork, P75 ET71

Sources cited

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