Valley View House
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19 May 2026

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

Re: Objection to the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm
Planning reference ACP-324165-26 / 324165
Submission made on behalf of Valley View House, a family-run guesthouse at Droumsullivan, Bantry

Dear Secretary,

This objection is made on behalf of Valley View House, a four bedroom guesthouse at Droumsullivan, near Bantry, in the Mealagh Valley. We are a small family-run business, and the house and the livelihood it supports are one and the same thing. We make our living from visitors who come to the Mealagh Valley precisely because of what it is: a quiet, unspoiled place. The nearest of the proposed turbines would stand approximately four kilometres from our front door. We are writing to ask An Coimisiún Pleanála to refuse permission for this development, and we have set out below the reasons that matter most to us as a tourism business and as a household.

What we sell is the valley itself. It is worth being plain about how a guesthouse like ours actually earns its keep. We do not sell only a bed and a breakfast. We sell mornings that are quiet enough to hear, evenings dark enough to see stars, walks that begin at the gate, and a landscape that visitors describe in our guestbook as the reason they came and the reason they will return. Short-term lets and small guesthouses of this kind have become a real part of the West Cork economy, and the money they bring in does not stay within four walls: it is spent in Bantry and the surrounding villages, in shops, pubs, restaurants and on local producers. Our guests are drawn here by slow tourism, by the wish to be somewhere genuinely rural and calm. A 169 metre wind turbine on the ridgeline above us, and a cluster of them together, is not a backdrop that the slow-tourism visitor is looking for. The setting is not incidental to our business. It is the product, and the proposed development would damage it.

The development runs against West Cork's own tourism strategy. This is not simply our private worry. The area falls within the Fáilte Ireland West Cork Coast Destination and Experience Development Plan, a strategy built deliberately on the unspoiled landscape, the walking and the tranquillity that small operators like us depend on. A large wind energy development on a prominent ridge above the Mealagh Valley pulls directly against that strategy. The recognised walking amenity of the valley, including the Mealagh Valley Loop and St Finbarr's Pilgrimage Path, is part of what we point our guests towards, and it is part of why they choose this corner of the county over others. We would ask the Commission to weigh the tourism evidence carefully. The economic case for protecting dark and unspoiled rural settings as a visitor asset is well established in the literature, including the assessment of the economic and tourism value of dark

skies prepared for Fáilte Ireland (see source D) and the wider economic analysis of dark-sky and landscape-based tourism (see source C). For a destination whose own development plan markets calm and darkness as the attraction, importing an industrial-scale lit structure onto the skyline is a contradiction the EIAR does not adequately answer.

The night sky is one of the things guests come for. Among the most reliable compliments we receive concerns the night sky. Visitors from cities, and from abroad, are genuinely struck by it, and more than a few have told us they had not seen stars like it in years. The proposal would place aviation warning lighting on the turbines, high on the ridge and directly within the view from the house and its grounds. Steady or flashing red lights at that height do not sit quietly in a dark landscape; they draw the eye, and they degrade exactly the quality our guests remark on. The peer-reviewed assessment of how wind farm lighting affects the nocturnal landscape (see source A) sets out why this intrusion is real and measurable rather than a matter of taste. There is also a wildlife dimension. Introducing night lighting and tall lit structures into a dark rural area disturbs nocturnal species such as bats, owls and moths, and the loss of genuine darkness is itself an ecological harm, not only a scenic one. We would ask that the dark sky of the Mealagh Valley be treated as the finite and valuable resource it is.

The turbines would dominate the view we depend on. The proposed turbines would be placed on a prominent ridgeline and would be plainly visible from the house, its garden and the land around it. At 169 metres to the blade tip, a single turbine stands more than twice the height of County Hall in Cork, and the proposal is for a group of them ranged along the skyline. From a guesthouse whose entire appeal rests on an open, rural outlook, that is not a minor change to the view. It is the removal of the view's defining quality. The Cork County Development Plan contains protections for the character of this landscape, and we do not believe a development of this scale and prominence can be reconciled with them. We would also note the loss of native woodland and trees on the site itself, which is a permanent reduction in the natural character of the area that no planting condition can quickly restore.

West Cork is already carrying more than its share. There are already wind farms operating, permitted or proposed across the wider area. We support the move to renewable energy, and we say so without reservation. But West Cork is being asked to absorb a disproportionate share of onshore wind development, and each new application is assessed largely on its own terms, as though the others were not there. The combined visual and ecological effect on this part of the county, and the combined effect on the tourism economy that so many small businesses here rely on, has not been properly assessed. For a valley already living alongside wind development, the question is not whether one more project can be fitted in, but whether the place can keep its character at all once it has been.

The noise assessment does not reflect this valley. We wish to raise noise as a specific and substantive ground of objection. Our concern is not abstract. The Mealagh Valley is steep and enclosed, and sound behaves very differently in this kind of terrain than it does on open, flat ground. A turbine sited on a ridge can carry its noise down and across a valley far more efficiently than a simple distance calculation suggests, because the valley shape itself channels and focuses the sound. This is the precise situation modelled in the peer-reviewed study of sound propagation from a ridge wind turbine across a valley (see source B), which shows that complex terrain of this type can produce sound levels at valley-floor receivers materially higher than

flat-ground prediction methods would indicate. We are not satisfied that the noise assessment in the EIAR has properly accounted for the hilly terrain here. We are also concerned that background noise appears to have been measured away from the genuinely quietest locations, the very eco-retreats, guesthouses and B&Bs whose trade depends on quiet, which understates the contrast a guest would actually experience. Night-time noise, low-frequency noise and amplitude modulation are all live concerns, and best-practice guidance on the assessment of amplitude modulation from wind turbines (see source E) indicates this is a recognised problem that requires specific assessment rather than general assurances. Separately, the construction phase would involve rock-breaking, and in an enclosed valley that noise would echo and carry for the full 18 to 24 month build. For a guesthouse, a guest who cannot sleep does not return and does not recommend us. Quiet is not a luxury here. It is the working condition of the business.

Shadow flicker would reach the rooms our guests use. The house lies within range of potential shadow flicker from the turbines. The rooms and outdoor spaces affected are not rooms we can simply avoid; they are the guest bedrooms and the spaces our visitors use daily, in the mornings and evenings when low sun behind a turning rotor produces the strobing effect. We do not place much trust in the modelled exceedance figures in the EIAR, which depend heavily on assumptions about hours of operation and cloud cover. A guest paying for a restful stay should not have to draw the curtains against a flickering shadow, and we should not have to explain to them why it is happening.

Health within our own household. Beyond the business, we are also a household, and a member of our household has a health condition that we believe could be made worse by turbine noise and flicker. Disturbed sleep, and the ongoing stress and annoyance that turbine noise is known to cause, are real concerns for us, and there is a body of research linking wind turbine exposure to reduced sleep quality and to annoyance that can aggravate existing conditions. We also have a practical worry about access to Cork hospitals if the R586 is subject to closures during the construction period, since that road is the route to medical care for this part of the valley. The wellbeing of farm animals and pets in the area during construction is a further concern we share with our neighbours.

Our water comes from a private well. Valley View House depends on a private well for its water supply, the water our guests drink, wash and cook with. As far as we are aware, no baseline testing of private wells in the area has been carried out. Without baseline data, there is no way to prove, or disprove, that construction has affected a supply, and no way to hold anyone to account if it does. Excavation, blasting and the movement of heavy plant on steep ground with sensitive soils carry a genuine risk to groundwater, both its flow and its quality. For a business serving the public, a compromised water supply is not a small inconvenience. It is an existential problem, and the absence of baseline well testing is a serious gap in the application.

The heritage of the valley is part of what we offer. The Mealagh Valley holds a remarkable concentration of archaeology, and this is something our guests actively seek out. The developer's own EIAR confirms 11 recorded archaeological sites within the wind farm site, a further 210 within five kilometres, and six National Monuments within ten kilometres. The setting of the Kealkill Stone Circle, which carries Preservation Order PO 69/1938, and the wider prehistoric monument cluster of the valley, would suffer visual intrusion from turbines on the ridge. The developer's own Cultural Heritage assessment admits visual impacts that cannot be mitigated. A monument is

experienced in its landscape; place an industrial structure on the skyline behind it and you change how it is understood. We send guests to these places. Their value, to us and to the wider visitor economy, lies in their undisturbed setting.

The construction period itself would damage trade. Even leaving the finished turbines aside, the 18 to 24 month construction period would do real harm to a guesthouse. Heavy haulage traffic on small local roads, dust, noise and the general disruption of a major build are precisely the conditions that drive away the calm-seeking visitor, and they would arrive during what should be two full seasons of trade. We are also concerned about emergency-vehicle access during any closures of the R586. A guest having to be reassured about ambulance access is a guest who books somewhere else next year.

The value of the property is the value of the business. For a family-run guesthouse, the house is both home and business asset, and its value is bound up with the very qualities this development threatens. Research on wind turbines and house prices along the west of Ireland (see source F) has found measurable reductions in property values close to wind development, with the effect strongest nearest the turbines and persisting at distance over time. For a property whose worth depends on its outlook, its quiet and its appeal to visitors, that is a direct financial loss, and it falls on a small family business that has invested everything in this place.

In conclusion. We are not opposed to renewable energy, and we would not want our objection read that way. Our point is one of siting. Renewable energy should be placed where it does the least harm, and a high, peat-covered ridge above a lived-in valley, a valley that already carries more than its share of wind development, that depends on private wells, a dark sky and a small tourism economy, is the wrong place for it. Valley View House exists because the Mealagh Valley is quiet, dark and unspoiled. Take those qualities away and you do not just alter a view; you remove the foundation a family business has been built on. We respectfully ask An Coimisiún Pleanála to refuse permission for the Maughanaclea Wind Farm. The submission fee accompanies this objection, and we would be grateful if our concerns were given full consideration before any decision is reached.

Yours faithfully,

Caroline Morgan
for and on behalf of Valley View House
Droumsullivan, Bantry, Co. Cork, P75 E289

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, 329: 109203.

Source B Van Renterghem, T. (2017). *Sound propagation from a ridge wind turbine across a valley.* Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A, 375: 20160105.

Source C Galloway, S. (2012). *The economic impact of dark sky and landscape-based tourism.* Economic assessment prepared in support of dark-sky destination designation.

Source D CHL Consulting / Fáilte Ireland (2019). *The Economic and Tourism Value of Dark Skies.* Report prepared for Fáilte Ireland.

Source E Institute of Acoustics Amplitude Modulation Working Group (2016). *A Method for Rating Amplitude Modulation in Wind Turbine Noise.* Institute of Acoustics, Final Report, August 2016.

Source F Gillespie, T. & McHale, P. (2023). *Wind Turbines and House Prices Along the West of Ireland: A Hedonic Pricing Approach.* CERIS Working Paper 2023/01, University of Galway. Available from the CERIS website, University of Galway.