

Coomleigh West
Bantry
Co.Cork

Date: 26 April 2026

SID Planning
An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902

Planning Application Reference Number: ACP-324165-26

Applicant: Maughanaclea Ltd / Enerco

Description of Development: 10 year planning permission for Maughanaclea Wind Farm consisting of 14 no. wind turbines, a 110kV substation and 110kV underground cabling connection and associated works

Location: Maughanaclea, County Cork

A Chara,

As a member of the project affected Maelagh Valley Community I submit for consideration my strong objection to the proposed Maughanaclea Wind Farm development which would be situated approx 600m uphill from my house.

With very limited resources in terms of time, a statistically valid, random, door to door community questionnaire (277 houses) with a 46% response rate showed that 96% of respondents (113 houses) did not support the proposed development. I urge that the committee consider this number as a valid statistical representation of the level of objection in the local community.

The cost of submitting an objection is prohibitive for many people. Also, the process itself is not well understood; it is widely believed that there is no point wasting money submitting the same objection numerous times eg objection based on visual impact. If this objection process were free and more widely understood I'm sure the level of objection would be significantly higher. I urge that the committee consider this inherent bias when deciding on this project. In my opinion, due process would involve requiring Enerco to finance a full survey of level of support in the area surrounding Maughanaclea. Why does the 'burden of

proof', objection, lie with local people who have limited knowledge and financial resources at their disposal? The number of objections you will receive will be of no means representative of local opinion due to the biased nature of this objection process.

I personally object to both the general concept and the specific location of this proposed windfarm for reasons I will outline below. However, the main reason for my objection comes from a place of fear, in fact abject terror, of a 169m structure being positioned approx 600m uphill from my house. Upon first reading of the proposal my mind's eye saw a detached propeller landing on my house, breaking through the roof and killing my child while she slept. My instinctual gut maternal reaction strongly objects. I tried to dismiss this as an irrational fear but subsequent research has shown that unfortunately my fear is not altogether without precedent.

1. Objection based on Health and Safety Concerns

(i) Turbine Collapse is a real possibility and it is not acceptable to me that my child's safety should potentially be put at risk. Past examples of turbine collapse include - Screggagh Wind Farm in Northern Ireland where the turbine head became unhinged and ultimately the entire turbine fell down. It was blown over by gusts classed as medium! Or locally, the Upper Lee wind farm where two blades became detached during a fire. I trust the committee would engage in due diligence in terms of health and safety risks in this specific situational context and therefore do not list further examples here.

I trust that the committee is fully cognisant of the extremely minimal set back distance from residential dwellings which has been adopted as the norm by Cork County Council. I know in Donegal for example the local council has adopted a different method of determining appropriate setback distances, as is their prerogative as a local council and I feel strongly that Cork County Council, and by extension Enerco, is negligent in its duty to ensure adequate safety precautions by not taking local context into consideration. (4 times blade tip height is extremely little considering the topographical context and completely inadequate when compared to even the 10 times blade tip height as used in Donegal for example)

West Cork is widely known as a unique place and the weather is no different. We frequently experience extremely unpredictable windy conditions. Climate change is causing unprecedented weather extremes and especially in Bantry we have experienced extreme flooding last year which caused many mini landslide events locally. How could the proposed development possibly have accounted for future risk of landslide due to climate extremes causing extreme rain, when we are not in possession of any accurate climate prediction models? The future 30 years+ of weather is almost impossible to predict. It is plausible to assume that these increasingly extreme wind and rain conditions will continue to worsen, and the safety of these structures under such conditions cannot be guaranteed beyond doubt in their location 600m uphill from so many houses. The level of risk cannot be underplayed when human lives are potentially at stake.

If safety cannot be guaranteed beyond doubt then it is unacceptable to me as a citizen that I and my young child should be forced against our will to live with the risk - however 'minimal' context irrelevant research would suggest it is.

(ii) **Fire** is also a concern with wind turbines and there are 12 fires per year worldwide and as the West coast of Ireland is set to experience increasingly severe weather in the coming years, the risk of fire is one which cannot be ignored with such a short setback distance from houses. Batteries can and do go on fire and in this worst case scenario, the explosion of these batteries can release toxins and toxic gas over and beyond the smoke of a normal fire. The nature of the fires and the protocol for dealing with spontaneously reigniting batteries seems potentially dangerous. We had one such fire locally in 2014 at the Upper Lee wind farm when a turbine caught fire and two of its blades detached, setting trees and grass in the area ablaze. Again these turbines pose an unacceptable risk to me and my daughter when my house is just 600m from such an event.

(iii) **Blade Erosion and Negative Health Impacts of Micro/Nanoplastics** - it is reliably estimated that the mass of eroded plastic is 30-540g per year per blade. This figure is much higher in harsher weather conditions - it is reasonable to assume that coastal areas such as West Cork experience somewhat harsher weather conditions than inland Denmark for example. (Mishnaevsky et al., 2024. Energies. 17(24) 6260). Rain is the main cause of blade erosion. As mentioned before the amount of rain and the intensity in the rainfall locally has increased significantly due to climate change. There are no relevant studies to pinpoint the exact amount of nano/microplastic that will be shed from this windfarm but some research indicates it will be in the vicinity of 65kg per year per turbine of microplastics. A conservative estimate based on current research (mostly inland) would suggest a figure of 910kgs for the Maelagh Valley area per year, not including the cumulative effect of wind blown micro/nanoparticles from nearby projects such as Dereenacreig near Castledonavan. One must note that the difficulty in measurement of nanoplastics makes exact estimation of total plastic shedding impossible and nanoplastics although less in terms of weight are more worrying in terms of negative health impacts in the sense that they are even more capable of breaching the blood brain barrier and of absorption into all organs where they cause site specific inflammation as well as cellular damage due to release of toxins.

Enerco and other windfarm developers downplay this pollution citing Danish research which is of no relevance to our local rural West Cork context. The micro/nanoplastic pollution is often dismissed as less than that which is emitted from tyres or road markings. It is extremely important to note that in our rural context we have negligible pollution from these sources. I would estimate an average of one car per hour passing on my road with perhaps 5 or 6 cars per hour during school run times or in the evening! This proposed windfarm will be introducing a deviant dangerous pollutant to our community.

In the Maelagh Valley most of the houses situated just under the proposed development **do not have their own wells but rather take water from the streams running down from the mountain where the proposed development would be situated. This development would without doubt pollute our water supply with nano/microplastics.** We are

currently living in a rural location which does not experience traffic or any other type of microplastic pollution*. This project would **remove our ability to access clean water** - this would be an **immeasurable loss of personal amenity** associated with our properties and is to me unacceptable from a human rights perspective. The microplastic pollution will also affect our gardens as it will fall and be blown by the wind and will be soaked up by the vegetables growing there. This pollution will remove our ability to cultivate organic vegetables and fruit. The plastic particles will be eaten by our animals and be secreted into the milk products and be present in the meat. {*Studies into groundwater water quality in various topographical contexts and areas in Ireland have been undertaken by University of Galway. From these results one could plausibly conclude that there is currently no plastic pollution in the water source coming down from Maughanlea}

It is now a well established fact in the research that nanoplastics pose significant health risks and mounting evidence is linking them, correlatively and causatively, to chronic inflammation, oxidative stress, cellular damage and reproductive issues. These particles accumulate in the blood and indeed can cross the blood brain barrier. Research also indicates correlations between plastic particle accumulation and heart attacks and strokes due to the damage caused to tissue and toxins released internally. (EG:Ali et al. 2025. The Lancet. Vol9, Issue 12.;Microplastics and our Health - Stanford University Medicine online etc etc).

The negative health impacts of nano/microplastics are well documented scientifically and continue to be expounded in greater detail with the improvements in nanoplastic measurement capabilities. ***A windfarm which would forcibly and significantly impact the dangerous accumulation of nano/microplastics in our bodies is not acceptable in this rural residential area where so many take their water from streams and grow vegetables or raise fowl/ livestock.***

(iv) Noise - It is extremely important to note that we have close to no “community noise” in our area during the day (no traffic, no construction works, no airport traffic noise etc) and there is absolutely no noise whatsoever during the night time. Research describes wind turbine noise as being no worse than “ambient urban noise”. **Forcible introduction of “ambient urban noise” to a rural West Cork community is ludicrous and justifiably objectionable on the basis of the severe loss of personal and reactional amenity. The causal link to sleep disturbances and annoyance and the subsequent impacts on mental and physical health, as well as the effects of low frequency noise on heart rate variability cannot be dismissed as subjective disapproval, particularly at this setback distance.**

As an example of one recent metanalysis of, scant, research findings an expert panel analysis conducted by the Council of Canadian Academics on behalf of the Canadian Government concluded that there is sufficient evidence to establish a causal relationship between exposure to wind turbine noise and annoyance. Low frequency components and periodic amplitude modulation have been investigated as most likely candidates which contribute to long term chronic annoyance. In addition, there is evidence to suggest a causal

relationship between exposure to wind turbine noise and sleep disturbance. Of course more localised research is required but one can only assume that these effects would be magnified in our extremely quiet rural area which experiences extreme and very gusty winds. Evidence also indicates that annoyance can be a contributing factor or precursor to adverse health effects such as sleep disturbance, stress and cardiovascular disease.

A recent study published by an extremely distinguished scientific journal stated **unequivocally that the low frequency noise generated by the wind turbines poses a health risk to nearby residents due to its effects on heart rate variability in healthy individuals, with effects being amplified in the night time.** (500m setback in this study). (Chiu et al., 2021. ScientificReports, 11:17817)

Thus it can be concluded that the negative impacts of noise are not merely subjective and cannot be disregarded.

2. Objection based on the Acute Loss of Personal Amenity

This proposed windfarm will affect my use and enjoyment of my home and land which will, undoubtedly, lead to a marked decrease in my quality of life and my mental health.

(i) Loss of Peace and Solitude

The joy I feel in my property, the amenity, is strongly tied to the sense of remoteness, the remarkable quiet and the sense of solitude. In fact, I purchased my house in this area precisely for this reason. The most precious aspect of my home to me is the silence, particularly in the night time when you can quite literally hear a pin drop! Certain research suggests that the noise of the turbines, under constant wind conditions, would be no more than that of a humming refrigerator. That is an extremely loud, annoying and unacceptable level of noise to someone who has chosen to live in a place of total silence. The loss of this specific aspect of peace would be soul destroying to me personally. The potential health impacts on heart rate, sleep and mental health are also extremely concerning to me.

(ii) Inability to Enjoy my Property - Perception of Harm

I dismissed my fear of harm from the turbines as irrational at first but I now know that this fear is actually very rational. There is the fear of physical harm from a detached blade, or fire, or flash flooding causing turbine collapse and landslide onto my land; but there is also the fear of the impact of the microplastic shedding on my water supply and garden and subsequently on my daughter's health. There is the fear of not being able to sleep and the fear of the consequences of disrupted sleep patterns on my daughter's cognitive and social developmental trajectory.

I fear greatly that we will be unable to continue living at the property due to the effects on our sleep, the annoyance and the constant low level, or sometimes, acute anxiety I will feel because of all these issues. I fear that I will have no other choice but to sell the property but the amount of money I will get will not enable me to buy in Ireland in the current economic climate so I will be left with no choice but to move abroad. Property prices in this instance will undoubtedly be affected as people who chose to live here value the natural beauty, peace and solitude above all else - the area has been deemed as "too far out" by many prospective buyers in the past. Now it will be far out and overshadowed by giant turbines.

Mostly I fear that my daughter will not get to experience the rural West Cork childhood which I had envisioned for her as we will be forced to leave. I fear we will lose our connection to this land and, most likely, even this country due to this development.

(iii) Loss of quality of life

My area, Maelagh Valley, is a very rural and quiet area characterised by its natural beauty, peacefulness and slow pace of life. There are numerous ancient archeological monuments (some of which are less than 30m setback distance from turbines) and beautiful walks in the area. The proposed turbines would fundamentally change the character of the landscape, dominating views that have remained largely unchanged for generations and may be heard on some of these walkways also I imagine. The project would remove my and my community's ability to enjoy the benefits of experience of undisturbed nature. The turbines will overshadow my property and make it a very unpleasant place to live for various reasons, not least the loss of visual amenity.

3. Objection based on Negative Visual Impact.

(i) Cumulative Visual Effects

In the recent past, planning boards as well as the Cork County Development Plan have noted that the number of wind turbines were noticeable but the visual impact was not major. They clearly state however that an accumulation of more windfarms could have a more intolerable visual impact in the future. At this time Deereenacreg Wind Farm has been given conditional approval thus adding further to the number of wind farms in this small area of West Cork. This is the future, and the approval of 14 more 169m turbines on the top of Maughanlea will undoubtedly prove to be completely "intolerable" from a visual perspective.

I refer the committee to the visual impact map provided by the developers. It is clear to see that the turbines will be visible from Banty Bay and indeed over in Glengarriff and on the Sheep's Head Way among other areas of course. I mention the visual impact from Banty Bay as there are currently plans afoot to attract luxury yachts to the Bay. At present the cruise ships stop there and are an important part of the tourism economy. The untouched remote beauty of the West of Ireland is what these tourists want to see - their experience of the natural beauty will of course be negatively impacted upon viewing industrial development on top of the local hills.

(ii) Loss of Nature Experience

I strongly feel that An Coimisiún Pleanála has a responsibility to seriously consider the concept of 'nature experience' in the context of a modern and rapidly developing Ireland. Crucial planning decisions severely impact on our citizens' ability to experience unique wild landscape. Decision makers must act to preserve and enhance opportunities for such nature experience. A wind farm adjacent to a defined high value landscape causes as much negative visual impact as if it were on the High value landscape itself when it clearly impacts so severely upon the visual and auditory enjoyment of same.

There is a mounting body of evidence from experimental studies that clearly indicate that **nature exposure plays a causal role in improving affect in the short term** (Bratman et al. 2019. Sci Advances. 5). What is tourism if not an endeavour to improve positive affect in the short term?!

Furthermore, nature experience has been reliably correlated with improved sleep, reductions in both self reported and biomarker assessed stress levels (both acute and chronic). The size of the area of nature available as well as the diversity of landscape and natural elements are key to these positive benefits. The negative visual impact of a wind farm in this area of West Cork potentially negates all this positive health benefit which both locals and tourists benefit from due to its visibility from such great distances. Cork County Council seems to be completely ignorant of this important research frontier as evidenced by their limited landscape classification system. It is hoped that An Coimisiún Pleanála will have a more informed and comprehensive opinion of **the value of nature experience in and of itself**.

If members of this board are unfamiliar with the affected region then they should make a point of visiting the area before ruling on this project so that they would have the chance to experience the unique character of the area. There is no doubt but that the opportunities for experiencing this type of diverse 'wild' landscape in Ireland, as well as globally, are disappearing rapidly. West Cork is a genuinely unique natural environment which should be preserved, not further diminished by insertion of yet more foreign industrial elements which are so jarring to the senses.

(iii) Effects on Long Term Tourism

Our tourism industry is so firmly based in the natural environment. There are numerous walking routes throughout the extended area which will be negatively impacted in terms of loss of scenic views. Local businesses are based on the concept of immersion in nature and scenic beauty. Road users will also be affected on two main roads in the area eg Cousane Gap. Cruise ship visitors will be affected. It would be reckless to think that such negative visual impact would not affect tourist numbers in the longer term.

4. Objection based on level of annoyance during construction phase.

I am worried about the noise level during construction. Rock breaking noise is extremely loud and due to the inherent nature of the Maelagh valley the sound reverberates such a great

distance from the source of the noise. At 600m for an extended period of time the noise level would be unbearable. I know this from experience. When the farmer next door was rock breaking illegally during Covid I felt I was going to go crazy as it was relentless. Leaving the house to go for a walk provided little relief as the sound carried loudly even at 3kms+. There would be no alternative except for me to leave my house every day while this work would be ongoing. Playing music loudly etc only helps to a certain extent as I cannot last 8/9 hours of such a high level of auditory sensory overload. I choose to live in the country to avoid such extreme noise!

I'm also concerned about the new road, as well as the traffic management during the construction . I'm not convinced that the plans in place are acceptable.

I am also concerned about effects on water quality during construction phase as there will be run off into the streams and the general ground water supply. As I have stated before mountain streams are the main source of water for most in my area.

5. Ethical Objection due to Negative Environmental and Social Impacts.

Wind farms are a short term solution which cause extreme harm globally due to environmental injustice where communities are being displaced and deprived of their water sources so mining can occur; labour rights violations and human rights violations where children are being trafficked and enslaved to mine these required rare earth minerals; geopolitical monopoly as processing of these minerals is almost entirely concentrated in China thus causing global geopolitical instability. Also the issue of recycling of the turbines is still unresolved and a cause of yet more forever toxins in our world.

These objections may fall outside the remit of consideration for An Coimisiún Pleanála however they are extremely valid and important concerns which I feel very strongly about. Placement of a turbine in my locality which has caused the enslavement of even one child or the displacement of even one village in South America or Africa is unacceptable to me as a citizen of this world. The cost is too high and thus I strongly object on ethical and moral grounds.

The future of true green energy can only be nuclear. Any other solution, such as this proposed wind farm development, is merely faux green and worse again is entirely unethical as it turns a blind eye to the global socioeconomic and geopolitical costs. And if it is going to be wind farms, may the developers at least have the decency to invest in offshore technology, keeping turbines well away from residential properties and thus avoiding the indisputable negative impacts on our health and wellbeing.

Is mise le meas,
Áine Ní Éalaithe