

Why I Am Concerned About the Future of My Local Area

**Submission by Jason O'Neill and Marian Haran
Carrowmore, Ballycastle, Co. Mayo (F26NH32)**

Planning Application Reference: 324258

My name is Jason O'Neill and I am a resident of Carrowmore, Ballycastle.

I am submitting this observation because I am deeply concerned about the proposed Tirawley Wind Farm and the impact I believe it will have on the future of the area in which I live.

Unlike many planning applications, this proposal is not something that will happen somewhere else. The proposed turbines are located within close proximity to my home and would become a permanent feature of the landscape that surrounds me every day.

Having grown up in North Mayo, I have always appreciated the unique qualities of the area. The scenery, heritage, coastline and sense of community are what make Ballycastle different from many other places and why I chose to settle here to hopefully raise a family.

These qualities are also what make people want to remain here.

The Landscape We Inherit

The landscape around Carrowmore, Lacken and Ballycastle is not simply open countryside.

It is a landscape shaped by thousands of years of human history.

The nearby Céide Fields are internationally recognised and have helped place North Mayo on the map. Equally important is Lacken Court Tomb, which stands as a reminder of the communities that lived and farmed this area approximately 5,000 years ago.

One of the things I value most about living here is the sense of connection between the landscape, history and local community.

The proposed wind farm would introduce a major industrial development into this setting. One that is entirely out of character with the surrounding landscape with no material long term benefit to the area.

The cumulative effect of multiple turbines extending across the skyline would fundamentally alter the character of the area.

Living Close to the Proposed Development

I live within close proximity of the proposed development and therefore experience the landscape very differently to somebody who may only visit occasionally.

The visual presence of turbines of the height proposed would be unavoidable.

They would become a dominant feature of the local environment both during the day and at night.

Like many local residents, I am concerned about visual impacts, potential shadow flicker effects and the introduction of aviation lighting within an area that currently experiences relatively dark night skies.

The sense of openness and tranquillity that currently exists would inevitably be reduced.

These are not temporary effects. They would remain throughout the operational life of the development.

Tourism and Recreation

The future of North Mayo increasingly depends upon sustainable tourism and outdoor recreation.

The success of attractions such as Downpatrick Head and the Céide Fields demonstrates that visitors are attracted to the area because of its landscape, heritage and authenticity.

The approved Céide Coast Walk has the potential to further strengthen the local economy by attracting walkers and visitors from throughout Ireland and overseas.

As somebody who enjoys walking, exploring the coastline and spending time outdoors, I can see enormous potential in this approach to rural development.

Projects based on landscape, heritage and recreation enhance what already exists.

The proposed wind farm would negatively move the area in a very different direction.

I believe there is a genuine risk that the development would diminish some of the qualities that attract visitors in the first place.

Opportunities for Future Generations

One of the biggest challenges facing rural Ireland is retaining young people.

Communities such as Ballycastle need opportunities, investment and long-term vision if they are to remain vibrant and sustainable. I can see it in my local GAA club with whom I've played football with for years representing the area.

In my opinion, this area's future lies in building upon its existing strengths.

These strengths include tourism, outdoor recreation, archaeology, heritage and environmental quality.

The landscape itself has become an asset. Once altered, it cannot easily be returned to its current condition.

I would much rather see investment directed towards projects that celebrate and enhance the area's unique character rather than projects that risk undermining it.

A Different Vision for North Mayo

I appreciate that renewable energy infrastructure is part of the country's energy requirements. However, I do not believe every location is suitable for development of this scale. **The area surrounding Ballycastle, Lacken Hill, Carrowmore, Lacken Court Tomb and the Céide Fields represents a nationally significant landscape. Its value extends beyond local boundaries and forms part of Ireland's cultural and natural heritage.**

In my opinion, the long-term interests of the area are better served through protecting and enhancing these assets rather than introducing a major industrial development into their midst.

Final Comments

The decisions made today will shape the future of North Mayo for decades to come.

I believe it is important that those decisions consider not only energy generation targets but also the long-term protection of landscape, heritage, tourism and community wellbeing.

For the reasons outlined above, I strongly oppose the proposed Tirawley Wind Farm development and ask that careful consideration be given to the concerns raised by myself and other local residents and communities, people that have lived here for decades if not longer.....

Yours sincerely

Jason O'Neill

Carrowmore

Ballycastle

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