

Observations on the Proposed Tirawley Wind Farm Development

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As long-term residents of Carrowmore, Ballycastle, as were all of those that went before us for centuries, we wish to submit the following observations regarding the proposed Tirawley Wind Farm development.

Our concerns arise from our deep connection to the area and from our belief that the landscape surrounding Ballycastle, Lacken and the Céide Coast represents one of the most important natural, cultural and heritage resources in Ireland.

We believe that developments of this scale must be carefully located to ensure that they do not compromise landscapes and heritage assets that cannot be replaced. In our view, the proposed development ***represents a significant threat to the unique qualities that have made North Mayo increasingly recognised as a destination for heritage tourism, outdoor recreation and cultural appreciation.***

The Importance of the Wider Céide Fields Landscape

The significance of the Céide Fields extends far beyond the interpretive Centre and the excavated field systems familiar to visitors. The wider landscape of Ballycastle, Belderrig, Carrowmore and Lacken forms part of an archaeological setting that has evolved over thousands of years and remains remarkably intact. ***Particularly significant is the presence of Rathlacken Court Tomb, a nationally important archaeological monument*** dating back approximately 5,500 years and believed to originate from the same Neolithic period as the Céide Fields. These monuments are not isolated features. They derive much of their importance from the surrounding landscape in which they exist. The open ridgelines, blanket bogs, valleys and coastal views help visitors understand how ancient communities lived, farmed and interacted with the environment. ***We believe that the introduction of industrial-scale wind energy infrastructure into this landscape would fundamentally alter that setting.*** The proposed turbines would become dominant features visible across extensive areas of North Mayo and would ***diminish the visual relationship between the archaeological monuments and the wider landscape*** that gives them context and meaning.

A Landscape of National Importance

North Mayo possesses a landscape that is increasingly recognised both nationally and internationally. Downpatrick Head has become one of the most visited attractions along the Wild Atlantic Way and continues to attract visitors because of its dramatic scenery, geological features and uninterrupted views across both land and sea. The approach to Ballycastle, the views from the Céide Fields, the uplands surrounding Lacken Hill and the broader Céide Coast all contribute to a visitor experience that is genuinely unique.

One of the defining characteristics of this landscape is its sense of openness. Visitors are able to experience extensive panoramic views that remain largely free from major industrial development. The proposed wind farm would significantly alter this character. The visual presence of multiple large-scale turbines across the skyline would inevitably become a defining feature of the landscape. In our opinion, this would represent a substantial change to an area whose value derives largely from its natural beauty and cultural significance.

Tourism as a Sustainable Future for North Mayo

Tourism has become one of the most important economic sectors in North Mayo. The area's success has not been built upon industrial development but upon the protection and promotion of its landscape, archaeology, heritage and coastal environment. The Céide Fields, Downpatrick Head and the wider Wild Atlantic Way have become key drivers of economic activity throughout the region. Local accommodation providers, restaurants, shops and tourism businesses all benefit from visitors who come specifically to experience the scenery and heritage of the area. ***We are particularly concerned about the implications for future tourism projects. The recently approved Céide Coast Walk (<https://www.northmayo.ie/wild-mayo-destination-and-experience-development-plan/>) has the potential to become one of the most important tourism developments ever undertaken in North Mayo.***

The project will link the Céide Fields and Downpatrick Head through approximately fifteen kilometres of spectacular coastline and landscape. ***Substantial public, private and community effort has been invested in advancing this vision.*** The success of this project will depend heavily upon maintaining the quality and authenticity of the surrounding landscape. We believe the proposed wind farm would undermine many of the very qualities that the Céide Coast Walk seeks to celebrate and promote.

Community Investment and Local Aspirations

Over recent years, the local Ceide Coast Community voluntary group have worked tirelessly to promote Ballycastle and the wider North Mayo area. The success of events such as the Red Bull Cliff Diving Championships at Downpatrick Head demonstrated the international appeal of the area and highlighted the importance of protecting its unique landscape setting. ***The future vision for North Mayo is increasingly centred around sustainable tourism, outdoor recreation, heritage appreciation and environmental stewardship. We are concerned that the proposed development points the area in a very different direction.*** We question whether this particular location is appropriate given the concentration of heritage assets, tourism resources and landscape sensitivities that exist within the receiving environment.

Cumulative Change Across North Mayo

Another significant concern relates to the cumulative impact of wind energy development throughout North Mayo. While individual developments may appear acceptable when assessed independently, local communities experience them collectively. ***The gradual introduction of additional wind farms across the uplands of North Mayo has the potential to fundamentally and negatively alter the character of the region over time.*** We believe that planning decisions should not only consider the immediate impacts of a single proposal but also the broader trajectory of landscape change that may result from multiple developments.

Final Observation

The landscape surrounding Ballycastle, Lacken, Carrowmore, Downpatrick Head and the Céide Fields is an irreplaceable asset. It supports tourism, preserves internationally important archaeology, provides recreational opportunities and contributes enormously to the quality of life enjoyed by local residents. ***We believe that the proposed Tirawley Wind Farm would result in significant adverse impacts upon these qualities and would alter the character of the area in a manner that cannot easily be reversed.***

We respectfully ask An Coimisiún Pleanála to give considerable weight to the heritage, tourism, landscape and community concerns outlined above when determining this application.

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