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21/06/2026

The Secretary
An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
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Re: Objection to the Proposed Tirawley Wind Farm Strategic Infrastructure

Development Objection Submission to An Coimisiún Pleanála

Re: Planning permission for the construction of Tirawley Windfarm consisting of 16 no. wind turbines, a permanent 110kV substation, 110kV underground cable and grid connection, and ancillary development in the townlands of Ballymurphy, Ballynaleck, Barnhill Lower & Upper, Barroe, Billoos, Carn, Carrickanass, Carrowmore, Castlелacken Demesne, and other townlands in County Mayo.

Case Number: PAX16.324258

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing as a resident of the area within proximity to the proposed Tirawley Wind Farm project, submitted by Constant Energy Limited, to formally lodge my objection to this Strategic Infrastructure Development application. This development poses significant and irreversible risks to the local environment, biodiversity and local residents. In particular the proposal threatens critical habitats for protected species such as the Hen Harrier, involves substantial habitat removal including over 4 km of hedgerow, and raises serious concerns regarding visual impact, traffic disruption, and inadequate community consultation. These issues, coupled with shortcomings in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report, justify a refusal of permission for this project.

Having reviewed the public information provided and engaged with the community consultation materials, I wish to raise the following concerns:

I was born and reared in Lacken and, although I spent time away from the area, I chose to return home because of the qualities that make Lacken such a special place. It is a place of exceptional natural beauty, peace, tranquillity and community spirit. These qualities are not only valued by those who live here but also by the many visitors who come to experience the unspoilt coastal landscape of North Mayo.

The proposed development would fundamentally alter the character of the area. The introduction of multiple industrial-scale wind turbines, each reaching approximately 135 metres in height, would dominate the landscape and permanently change the visual character of Lacken and its surrounding coastal environment.

The area's identity is closely linked to its scenic beauty, heritage, dark skies, quiet rural setting and spectacular views of the Atlantic coastline. These are qualities that cannot be recreated once lost. I returned to Lacken specifically to enjoy and preserve this way of life. The proposed development threatens the very reasons why many people choose to live here and why former residents, like myself, are drawn back home.

I am also concerned about:

- The significant visual impact of turbines of this scale on the coastal landscape.
- The loss of tranquillity through turbine noise and continual turbine movement.
- Potential shadow flicker impacts on nearby residents.
- The adverse effect on tourism and recreation in an area that depends heavily on its natural environment.
- The cumulative impact on the wellbeing of residents who value the area's peaceful character.
- The effect on future generations who deserve to inherit the same landscape and quality of life that previous generations enjoyed.

I am particularly disappointed that many members of the local community feel that meaningful public consultation has been inadequate. A development of this scale, with the potential to permanently alter the character of Lacken, should not proceed where there is clear evidence that local concerns have not been fully heard and addressed.

The proposed development is incompatible with the unique landscape, heritage and character of Lacken. Having been born and reared here, and having chosen to return home, I believe it would cause unacceptable and irreversible harm to the area.

1. Residential and Property Impact

The proposed wind turbines are located uncomfortably close to existing homes. Despite the stated 540m buffer, the visual impact, noise pollution, and potential shadow flicker effects will significantly disrupt our residential amenity and quality of life. There is also a genuine concern about the likely devaluation of property prices due to proximity to large-scale industrial turbines.

(Reference: Appendix 1.6 Community Engagement Report, Pages 7-13)

2. Site Suitability and Landscape Impact

The location has been described as scattered and not suitable for a development of this scale. The area includes sensitive landscapes, visible from the Wild Atlantic Way and other designated scenic routes, which would be adversely affected by this wind farm. The visual intrusion on the unique coastal and rural landscape is unacceptable and contrary to the policies outlined in the Mayo County Development Plan regarding landscape protection and visual amenities.

(Reference: Mayo County Council submission, EIAR Chapter 17 - Traffic and Transport, Pages 9-10; Planning Statement, Pages 69-71)

3. Environmental and Ecological Concerns

The site includes sensitive habitats such as blanket bogs and areas with ecological significance under the Habitats Directive. The large volumes of peat to be extracted and the disturbance to these habitats could have long-term detrimental effects on biodiversity and peatland restoration efforts.

(Reference: Appendix 1.6 Community Engagement Report, Pages 13-14; Planning Statement, Pages 69-71)

4. Impact on Hen Harrier Habitat

I am particularly concerned about the impact of the proposed development on the hen harrier, an Annex I protected species under the EU Birds Directive and one whose Irish population has declined significantly in recent years. The EIAR acknowledges that hen harriers are present within the study area and that the site provides suitable autumn and winter foraging habitat. The site contains a combination of blanket bog, scrub, wet grassland, semi-improved grassland and hedgerow networks, all of which are important habitats for foraging and roosting hen harriers.

Of particular concern is that a winter hen harrier roost was recorded within the study area, yet no comprehensive winter roost survey appears to have been undertaken across the wind farm site itself. The applicant's roost surveys focused primarily on areas outside the development footprint, despite evidence that hen harriers utilise habitats within the proposed development area. In the absence of a robust assessment of winter roosting activity, it is difficult to conclude that the impacts on this protected species have been fully assessed.

The development will result in the permanent loss and fragmentation of habitats used by hen harriers, including substantial hedgerow removal, loss of blanket bog habitat, forestry felling and the construction of extensive site roads and infrastructure. While mitigation is proposed, there remains uncertainty as to whether replacement habitats can adequately replicate the ecological value of the habitats being lost, particularly in the short to medium term.

I am also concerned about the cumulative effects of habitat loss, construction disturbance and operational displacement. Research has shown that hen harriers may avoid otherwise suitable habitat in the vicinity of operational turbines, resulting in a reduction in available foraging area. The application does not appear to adequately assess or mitigate this displacement effect.

Given the conservation status of the species, the acknowledged presence of suitable habitat and recorded winter roosting activity within the study area, I do not believe sufficient scientific certainty has been provided to demonstrate that the proposed development will not adversely affect the hen harrier population using this landscape. The precautionary principle should therefore apply.

5. Traffic and Infrastructure Impact

The construction phase will bring significant disruption to the local road network due to the delivery of abnormal loads and turbine components. The existing roads will require widening and modifications that will impact local traffic flow and road safety. The scale of this impact has not been adequately mitigated in the proposal.

(Reference: EIAR Chapter 17 - Traffic and Transport, Pages 6-10; Appendix 1.6 Community Engagement Report, Pages 11-12)

6. Community and Socio-Economic Issues

While I acknowledge the need for renewable energy and some regional economic benefits, the socio-economic impact on sustainable family farms and local amenities is concerning. The proposal does not sufficiently address the community's needs or provide clear, direct benefits to local residents. The proposed community benefit package remains vague and unconvincing.

(Reference: Appendix 1.6 Community Engagement Report, Pages 7-14)

7. Cumulative Impact and Strategic Considerations

The project overlaps with areas where other developments are planned or existing, increasing cumulative environmental, visual, and infrastructural pressures. The scale and height of modern turbines, as noted by Mayo County Council, raise questions about the suitability of this site compared to previous assessments.

(Reference: Mayo County Council submission, EIAR Chapter 17, Pages 9-10)

In conclusion, I respectfully submit that the proposed Tirawley Wind Farm project is not appropriate for this location due to the significant negative impacts on residential amenity, local landscape, ecology, infrastructure, and the community. I urge An Coimisiún Pleanála to refuse permission for this development in the interests of proper planning and sustainable development.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours faithfully,

Sean Flannelly