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27/06/2026

An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902

Case Ref: Planning Application ABP-PAX 92.324279

Ballincor Wind Farm, Counties Offaly and Tipperary



Dear Sir/Madam,

We are objecting to the application for the proposed Ballincor Wind Farm and asking the Commission to refuse planning permission. We are a family of four, running a dairy farm at Lacka, and our farm borders the proposed wind farm development. This observation is not about opposing wind energy, nor is it about our neighbouring landowners exercising their right to use their land in a way that helps them earn an income from it. Our concern is for the environment, this unique landscape, and the natural systems that could play a genuine role in addressing climate change, yet now risk being overlooked in this development process.

The community observation, which we have both signed, covers a wide range of areas of concern. Our own observation focuses on the issues that affect us most directly, and draws on our own knowledge of the habitat where the development is proposed, built up over many years of living and farming on this land.

This observation is broken down into the following main points:

- Visual Impact Effects
- Noise
- Ornithology
- Biodiversity – Mammals
- Biodiversity – Habitat
- Hydrology
- Waste Management
- Land and Turbary Rights
- Property Devaluation
- Community Engagement

Visual Impact Effects

Our property is identified as Receptor 136 in the developer's documentation. We are in very close proximity to four turbines: T3 is exactly 844 m from this house, T4 is 1.17 km away, T5 is 1 km away, and T6 is 1.05 km away. Two further turbines, T2 and T7, are well within 2 km of the house. These are 180-metre machines with a 163-metre rotor diameter, proposed on bogland at 42 to 62 metres above sea level. From our home we will be able to see all 11 turbines, with at least 5 of them clearly visible from base to tip. This will not just be a case of seeing them — given how close our house is to so many turbines, it will feel very imposing on our property.

We are concerned that the EIAR never included our stretch of road in the photomontages. The closest viewpoint used, VP22, is over 2 km to the east of our house, and the image used there makes use of summer foliage and a dip in the road to screen the turbines from view.

Figure 1: EIAR VP 22



VP22 to Loughen Cross, a distance of approximately 3 km, receptors along the route would have a clear view of all 11 turbines, yet this is not shown anywhere in the EIAR. The community observation presents images showing the true impact of the turbines on the landscape.

Our property already experiences significant, unmitigated visual impact from six operational turbines of the Lacka/Skehanagh Wind Farm, the nearest just 923 metres from our home and fully visible from our back door even in summer when vegetation screening is at its densest. The addition of the Ballincor turbines would represent a substantial intensification of this existing cumulative burden, rather than a new, isolated effect assessed in isolation from the baseline we already live with.

The community observation expands further on the visual impact of the project as a whole.

Noise

We are equally concerned about the noise impact on our home, identified as H087 in the developer's register and governed by the NML6 monitoring location. The developer's consultant (AWN) predicts a cumulative night-time noise level of 41.5 dB LA90 at 8–9 m/s against an assigned criterion of 43.2 dB — a stated margin of just 1.7 dB, narrowing to the same 1.7 dB at 7 m/s. We do not believe this leaves any meaningful headroom.

The mandatory valley correction required under §4.3.9 of the IoA Good Practice Guide has not been applied to our property. Where the geometric condition for that correction is met, the +3 dB increment that a ground factor of $G=0.5$ attracts is, on a margin of only 1.7 dB, more than enough to turn a stated compliance into an exceedance. No receptor elevation data has been supplied that would allow this correction to be independently checked. The 8 m/s wind-speed band, which is where our worst case sits, is the band in which the NML6 background noise the limit is calibrated against is not actually measured at all, but extrapolated from a summer-only survey, and AWN provides no predicted noise data above 9 m/s at all. On the developer's own numbers, applied under the developer's own methodology, we do not believe our home can be confirmed as compliant on noise.

Ornithology

Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*)

We are seriously concerned about the impact this development could have on barn owls in the area, a species that is Red-listed in Ireland with only 562–702 breeding pairs left nationally. This is not a minor local issue: during scoping, the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage specifically flagged that this site lies in an area identified as sensitive for barn owls, and requested detailed surveys and mitigation if impacts were found.

We believe this site holds real importance for the species. A 2022 survey by Lusby et al. found that west Offaly has the highest density of breeding barn owls anywhere in Ireland, with at least six confirmed breeding pairs in the grid square covering most of this project. BirdWatch Ireland has identified eight known nests within 5 km of the site. Closer still, the EIAR records a likely nest just 160 m from a turbine, where feathers, calls, pellets and a dead owl were

recorded, a historically occupied nest box 450 m away, and a confirmed nest around 600 m from the nearest turbine. Based on our own observations, we believe there may be a further nesting site within 450 m of turbine T3, close to the southern boundary.

We are concerned that, despite all this, no barn owls were actually recorded during the project's surveys. The EIAR attributes this to the species being nocturnal, yet no nocturnal-specific surveys, such as call playback, dusk watches, or roost checks, were ever carried out. Given the national importance of this population, and that the Department specifically requested detailed surveys, we do not consider this adequate. **The true extent of barn owl activity on this site remains unknown.**

We are also concerned about how the impacts have been judged. The EIAR rates operational disturbance as "Moderate" but concludes it is "not significant," relying mainly on UK data about owls breeding near turbines generally. We do not believe this reflects the reality here, where we are talking about Ireland's highest-density breeding population, with nests as close as 160 m to a turbine. No proper buffer distances or site-specific assessment have been provided.

Most seriously, despite the Department's explicit request, no barn owl-specific mitigation has been included at all: no nest buffers, no curtailment near active nests, no nest boxes, and no monitoring programme. The only protections offered are generic measures applying to birds in general.

For these reasons, we do not believe the barn owl assessment in this EIAR meets the required standard. We ask that the applicant be required to carry out proper nocturnal surveys over a full annual cycle, assess disturbance risk at known nest sites, and provide a genuine mitigation and monitoring programme before this application is determined.

Whinchat and Other Red-Listed Species

We are seriously concerned about the ornithological assessment in Chapter 7, which fails to record a species we know well from years of watching this land: the Whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*), a BoCCI Red-listed bird. We, along with other local observers, have seen them here regularly over many years, yet they are entirely absent from the survey results across every season from 2020 to 2026. This is not a minor issue: the Whinchat is one of Ireland's most rapidly declining breeding birds, with as few as 200 pairs left nationally, and the midlands, this area included, represent one of its last strongholds.

We believe this site holds real importance for the species. We have personally observed Whinchat, along with other notable species, on the cutover bog between Transects T3, T4, and T5, land that sits directly within the proposed development footprint and which the applicant's own documents describe as "flat cutover bog," habitat well known to support sensitive ground-nesting birds. Of further concern, Transects T5 and T6 were not even part of the original survey design; they were only added from November 2022 onwards. This means the whole stretch of bog had no ornithological coverage at all during the 2020 and 2021 breeding seasons, a gap that was never properly acknowledged or addressed.

We are also concerned that this same area supports nesting Snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), also Red-listed, directly on the cutover bog, and Mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), Amber-listed, nesting along the drainage ditch banks running through it, both directly contradicting the EIAR's findings. For Snipe, Chapter 7 acknowledges probable breeding through drumming males but places this activity "to the north of the site, outside the proposed project boundary," which does not match what we and others have observed, with confirmed nesting actually on the bog between T3, T4, and T5, inside the development boundary. For Mallard, the EIAR records no confirmed breeding at all across any survey season, despite our having watched them nest along those drain banks year after year.

What troubles us most is that none of this local knowledge, built up over years of actually being on this land, was ever sought out or included in the EIAR, despite this being recognised best practice. We are also concerned about weaknesses in the survey methods themselves: Chapter 7 admits that vantage point records lacked consistent height classification, that flight data were incomplete, and that the viewshed arcs did not align properly with where surveys were actually conducted, requiring corrections after the fact. The transect surveys were also limited in number and timing, and were not suited to detecting a cryptic species like Whinchat, which requires targeted early-morning visits during the breeding season.

For these reasons, we believe the surveys underlying this EIAR were not properly designed or targeted to detect these species, and that the resulting ornithological baseline significantly understates what is actually present on this site. We do not believe planning permission should be granted on the basis of a survey that is incomplete, internally inconsistent, and that disregards credible, firsthand local evidence of nationally threatened species nesting in the direct path of this development.

Biodiversity – Mammals

Irish Hare – Inadequate Assessment

We are deeply concerned that the EIAR fails to give the Irish Hare the individual consideration its protected status demands. Rather than treating it as a standalone Key Ecological Receptor, it is lumped in with a range of other small mammals, an approach that is simply inadequate for a species protected under the Wildlife Acts.

The assessment rests on seven historic NPWS sightings, all recorded between 1982 and 2007. We are familiar with this land, and we can say with confidence that the absence of recent records reflects a lack of survey effort, not a lack of hares. No targeted Irish Hare surveys were carried out as part of this application, which we consider a serious omission.

We regularly observe Irish Hare in the area between Turbines T2 and T5. This corridor is actively used by hares throughout the year for foraging and movement. The EIAR has not only failed to identify this, it has made no attempt to seek out local knowledge that would have revealed it. Construction activity, access track development, and the permanent operational presence of turbines in this zone will directly impact habitat we know to be in regular use.

We do not find the conclusion that habitat loss will result in only a “slight, permanent, negative effect” credible, given that it rests on stale data, no dedicated surveys, and no engagement with those who know the site. Unlike the Otter and Badger, the Irish Hare has been afforded no species-specific mitigation whatsoever.

We ask the Board to require targeted Irish Hare surveys across the full site, with particular focus on the T2–T5 corridor, and a revised assessment that reflects the species’ actual presence. Until that is done, we do not believe this assessment meets the requirements of the EIA Directive or the Wildlife Acts.

Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) – Inadequate Assessment

We also wish to draw attention to the inadequate treatment of the Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) in Chapter 6 of the EIAR. The Red Squirrel is a protected species under the Wildlife Acts 1976–2012 and is recorded within the study area, with 19 records in grid square S09 from the Mammals of Ireland 2016–2025 dataset. The proposed wind farm site contains mixed broadleaved and coniferous woodland, habitat well known to support this species.

Despite this, the EIAR provides no species-specific assessment of the Red Squirrel whatsoever. Instead, it is grouped together with seven other mammal species, including Fox, Rabbit, Hedgehog, Pygmy Shrew, Irish Stoat, Irish Hare, and Pine Marten, under the generic heading “Other Mammal Species” (Section 6.6.3.2.3). The impacts on all of these species are dismissed collectively in two short paragraphs, with habitat loss assessed as a “permanent, slight, negative effect” and disturbance as a “short-term, slight, negative effect,” with no species-specific reasoning provided for any individual species, including the Red Squirrel.

No dedicated Red Squirrel survey was carried out. The EIAR describes only general mammal walkover surveys recording opportunistic signs such as droppings and prints. There is no evidence of targeted survey effort such as chewed cone transects, drey searches, or trail cameras focused on squirrel activity. The most recent desktop records relied upon date from June 2017, nine years before the date of submission, and no records were returned for the adjacent N00 grid square covering part of the site.

No specific mitigation measures are proposed for the Red Squirrel. Species such as Otter, Badger, Bats, and Marsh Fritillary each receive tailored, species-specific mitigation commitments within the EIAR, while the Red Squirrel is entirely absent from this mitigation framework. We consider this a significant deficiency. A protected species present in the area, and likely to be affected by tree clearance and construction disturbance within its woodland habitat, deserves an individual assessment rather than being subsumed into a catch-all grouping. We respectfully request that the applicant be required to provide a supplementary species-specific assessment of the Red Squirrel, including targeted survey data and appropriate mitigation measures, before this application is determined.

Badger Setts, Proposed Mitigation, and Risk of TB Spread to Neighbouring Farms

Surveys identified six badger setts within or immediately adjacent to the proposed wind farm site: two main setts, two subsidiary setts, and two outlier setts. The larger of the two main

setts, located approximately 95 metres southeast of Turbine T8, contained 13 entrances, while the second main sett, situated outside the site boundary approximately 200 metres from Turbine T2, contained seven entrances. The EIAR repeatedly describes these setts as inactive at the time of survey and uses this as the basis for downplaying the risk to the local badger population. We do not believe this characterisation holds up. Badgers are well known to rotate between multiple setts throughout the year, using main, subsidiary, and outlier setts at different times depending on season, breeding activity, and disturbance levels. The fact that a sett showed no signs of activity on the specific dates it was inspected does not mean it is unused; it may simply reflect the natural ranging behaviour of the local badger social group. Describing setts as “inactive” on this basis, and then using that designation to minimise the assessed impact, represents a significant weakness in the ecological assessment that we believe the competent authority should scrutinise carefully.

The EIAR further acknowledges that a bog woodland earmarked for removal as part of bat mitigation works overlies one of these setts, and that ground disturbance in this area could degrade or collapse the sett structure permanently, an effect the EIAR itself assesses as a likely long-term, moderate negative impact. Two setts also fall within 150 metres of turbine bases where piling will be required. The proposed mitigation relies primarily on pre-construction surveys, soft-blocking of entrances, one-way badger gates to facilitate evacuation, and a restriction of noisy works near setts to daytime hours. While these measures follow standard NRA guidance, the permanent loss of an established sett through woodland removal remains an acknowledged irreversible outcome, and we believe the adequacy of relying on animals simply vacating and relocating warrants serious scrutiny, particularly in the absence of any understanding of where those displaced animals are likely to move.

We wish to raise a further concern that is entirely absent from the EIAR: the potential impact of badger displacement on bovine tuberculosis (TB) in neighbouring farm holdings. It is well established that badgers are a wildlife reservoir for TB in Ireland, and that the disturbance or displacement of badger populations can prompt animals to move into new territories and come into contact with cattle herds they would not otherwise encounter. This is not a theoretical risk in this locality. Every landowner bordering the proposed wind farm development site has experienced a TB breakdown within their herd in the last two years. While the precise cause of any individual TB case is difficult to establish with certainty, the pattern in this area is deeply concerning and cannot be ignored.

This concern is acutely personal to us. Our farm and our herd are located on the perimeter of the development site, at its closest point to Turbines T1, T2, and T3. We are therefore the landholding most immediately and directly exposed to any displacement of badgers from this part of the site. A TB breakdown in our herd as a result of increased badger contact arising from this development could have devastating consequences. In the worst case, it could result in the depopulation of our entire herd, the loss of animals we have bred and managed over many years, and the destruction of the productive capacity of our farm. The financial consequences of such an outcome would be severe and long-lasting, potentially leaving our farm in a position from which it could not recover. Beyond the financial impact, the stress and personal hardship that a TB breakdown and potential depopulation brings to farming families

cannot be overstated. It affects every aspect of daily life and takes an enormous toll on the mental health and wellbeing of those involved. We ask the competent authority to recognise that this is not an abstract or remote concern; it is a very real risk to our livelihood, our farm, and our family.

A further and serious deficiency in the badger assessment is the apparent failure of the applicant to consult with the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) or the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, both of whom hold decades of data on badger population distribution, sett locations, and animal movements in this area. This is not a remote or unstudied landscape. This area is currently under active and intensive investigation by a number of specialists within the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine. At a local level, Dr Martina Ryan, based in Tipperary, is conducting ongoing research specifically concerning badger populations and TB dynamics in this locality. At a county level, Tom Murray, Superintendent Veterinary Inspector for Offaly, holds detailed knowledge of TB incidence, badger activity, and herd breakdown patterns across this precise area. At a national level, this region falls under the remit of Damien Barrett and Conor O'Mahony, whose oversight of the national TB eradication programme gives them an unparalleled understanding of badger-related TB risk and population movement at landscape scale. The applicant's ecological team appear to have conducted only spot-check walkover surveys to identify sett locations and assess activity, with no attempt made to consult or engage with any of these individuals or to access the substantial body of scientific and veterinary knowledge they collectively hold. We consider this a wholly inadequate basis upon which to assess the impacts of a major infrastructure development on the local badger population. Had the applicant engaged with the NPWS and the relevant personnel within the Department of Agriculture, a far more complete and accurate picture of badger activity, ranging behaviour, population connectivity, and TB risk in this area would have been available to inform the assessment. We respectfully request that the competent authority require this consultation to be carried out before any decision is reached.

The proposed development will disturb multiple setts, remove woodland overlying an established sett, and necessitate the evacuation and displacement of the local badger population during construction. The EIAR makes no acknowledgement whatsoever of the TB risk to neighbouring farms arising from this displacement, nor does it propose any measures to address it. Farmers in this area already bear a significant financial and operational burden in attempting to manage and contain TB through mandatory testing, movement restrictions, and herd depopulation. We do not believe it is adequate for an application of this scale, in an area with a demonstrable and active TB problem, to fail to address the potential role of badger displacement in exacerbating that situation. We respectfully request that the competent authority require the applicant to engage with the NPWS and the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, and specifically with the ongoing research being conducted in this area by Dr Martina Ryan, regarding the TB implications of badger disturbance arising from this development before any decision is made.

Biodiversity – Habitat

We are deeply concerned about the scale of habitat destruction this development would cause. The proposed Ballincor Wind Farm, on the border of County Tipperary and Offaly, would result in the permanent and irreversible loss of approximately 28.38 hectares of habitat, a figure the applicant's own Chapter 6 acknowledges. This land, which we know well, supports a rich mosaic of ecologically important habitat, from nationally significant Active Raised Bog, a priority habitat protected under the EU Habitats Directive, to County-important Dry Siliceous Heath, and a range of locally valuable semi-natural habitats including Wet Grassland, Bog Woodland, Mixed Broadleaved Woodland, Hedgerows, and Treelines. Even the EIAR itself classifies the loss of the most sensitive of these as "significant, permanent, negative effects," including the destruction of 4.77 hectares of Wet Grassland that supports the protected Marsh Fritillary butterfly, 2.82 hectares of Bog Woodland, and 1.02 hectares of Mixed Broadleaved Woodland.

The Cutover Bog (PB4)

One area that concerns us most is the proposed permanent loss of 0.62 hectares of Cutover Bog (PB4), a habitat that even the applicant's own ecologists admit is actively regenerating and supports rare and uncommon species. The EIAR records Bog Rosemary, Deer Grass, Scots Pine, and Oak here, alongside peatland species such as Common Cottongrass, Cross-leaved Heath, Bog Myrtle, and Ling Heather. We do not accept the applicant's attempt to downplay this loss by describing the habitat as degraded and in poor condition. This framing runs contrary to best practice guidance from CIEEM (2018), which is clear that peatlands in sub-optimal condition should never be undervalued, particularly where they remain capable of supporting indicator species, which this one clearly is.

Tellingly, the EIAR itself acknowledges that regeneration is already underway in areas where harvesting has stopped. From what we see every day, across all the seasons, this is not a degraded habitat in decline; it is peatland actively recovering, one which, with the right management, could in time help restore the nationally important Active Raised Bog system it adjoins. Permanently destroying this regenerating habitat, on top of the additional dust-related disturbance the EIAR itself assesses as having a moderate negative effect on its peat-forming capacity, would set back any chance of natural restoration by decades, if not for good.



Figure 2: Cutover Bog at Ballincor, as documented in the applicant's EIAR (Plate 6-8). The image shows a very small area, which is the only part not currently regenerating.

Figure 3: The Cutover Bog as we observed it on site. This photograph shows active regeneration of peatland vegetation, including the re-establishment of characteristic bog species, something the EIAR fails to properly account for.



We firmly reject the applicant's attempt to frame this loss as being "in line with existing baseline trends." Ecological succession from cutover bog toward scrub and bog woodland is a natural process of recovery, not a justification for accelerating its destruction. As our own photographs show, regeneration is clearly underway here. Allowing the permanent removal of this recovering peatland, so close to a nationally important Active Raised Bog, would run contrary to the National Peatlands Strategy and Ireland's broader commitments to peatland restoration and climate action.

Loss of Hedgerows and Treeline

The project would also permanently remove 1.3 kilometres of hedgerow and 0.4 kilometres of treeline, habitats the EIAR itself recognises as essential ecological corridors for protected wildlife, and whose loss would fragment this landscape in ways that simply cannot be properly mitigated.

Damage to the Raised Bog (PB1)

We are equally concerned about the damage this development would cause to the raised bog habitat at the heart of this site, and we believe the EIAR significantly understates both the scale of that damage and the true ecological value of what stands to be lost. The EIAR itself confirms that PB1 Raised Bog, located in the centre of the proposed wind farm site, corresponds to the priority Annex I habitat 7110 *Active Raised Bog and is valued as of National Importance.



Figure 4: Sphagnum Mosses – 50 metres from T5

It also acknowledges that dust deposition from construction will likely reduce the cover of Sphagnum mosses on this bog, reducing its peat-forming capacity, with the effect assessed as moderate and long-term, persisting over a 35-year rehabilitation timeframe. We do not believe a moderate, long-term negative effect on a nationally important, priority Annex I habitat sitting within the wind farm site itself can reasonably be dismissed as acceptable, particularly when the Sharavogue Bog SAC, itself designated for Active Raised Bog, lies just 10 metres from the site boundary and is hydrologically connected to the wider bog complex we know from this land.

Hydrology

We are concerned that the developers assert in Chapter 9 of the EIAR that there is no hydrogeological connection between the proposed Ballincor Wind Farm and the Sharavogue Bog SAC. We do not believe this conclusion holds up when the physical reality of the site is considered. The Sharavogue Bog SAC sits just 0.1 km from the wind farm boundary, with the only feature separating the two being the Little Brosna River itself. Far from demonstrating an absence of connectivity, the presence of a shared river corridor between the wind farm and one of Ireland's designated raised bog SACs represents a direct and continuous hydrological pathway. A river does not act as a barrier between two adjacent landmasses; it connects them. Any surface water runoff, sediment, or contaminants generated during construction or operation of the wind farm would drain toward and into the Little Brosna River, which flows directly alongside the SAC boundary.

We believe a claim that two sites separated only by a river have no hydrological connection is, at best, a misleading characterisation, and at worst a significant underestimation of the potential risk posed to this protected and ecologically sensitive habitat. It is particularly concerning to us that An Coimisiún Pleanála itself, during the pre-application consultation process, specifically advised that given the proximity of the Sharavogue Bog SAC, any potential impacts on this site should be robustly assessed. We do not believe the developers' response to that advice, a conclusion that effectively dismisses meaningful connectivity with a designated SAC located metres away, meets what was called for, and we believe it raises serious questions about the adequacy of the environmental assessment carried out. We ask

that this conclusion be subject to serious scrutiny and independent review before any planning permission is granted.

Waste Management

We are also concerned about the adequacy of the waste management assessment contained in EIAR Chapter 15, prepared by TOBIN Consulting Engineers, which we do not believe meets the standard required of an Environmental Impact Assessment Report under the EPA EIAR Guidelines (2022). The assessment is conducted entirely by desk study, relying solely on EPA licence register data without any independent verification of the operational status or available capacity of the facilities identified. We believe this approach has produced a critically flawed result: of the seven facilities listed in Table 15-1 as the available waste management infrastructure for the proposed development, three are confirmed closed (Peat Ash Ltd., Ballydonagh Landfill closed 2010, Pollboy Landfill closed 2005), and one is a waste transfer station only, not a final disposal destination (Bord Na Móna Recycling Ltd.).

A further facility, Shannon Vermicomposting Facility, is not accepting new waste and has in fact been subject to an environmental clean-up since 2005 due to hazardous waste on site, in breach of licence, which has to date cost Tipperary County Council €2.5 million and is part of an ongoing legal case between the owners and Tipperary County Council. Chapter 15 itself acknowledges in a footnote that as recently as February 2025, and we can confirm this remains the case, residual waste from that clean-up was still being transferred to Ballaghveny Landfill, the facility identified as the nearest licensed site to the development. The application also states that Ballaghveny Landfill is only 12 km from the site, when in fact it is 26 km from the access point at Sharavogue. We are further concerned that Ballaghveny Landfill, the applicant's primary proposed receiving location, is now the subject of reported drinking water contamination concerns, as raised by Councillors in Tipperary at their June 2026 Council meeting.

We are also concerned by the chapter's treatment of construction and demolition waste volumes: it describes C&D waste as "anticipated to be small" without providing any project-specific volumetric assessment, relying instead on generic national statistics which the chapter itself acknowledges "can vary significantly from one project to another." The municipal waste assessment projects approximately 10,319 kg to be sent to landfill over the construction period, yet identifies no confirmed facility capable of receiving it. We do not believe the chapter's conclusions for both the construction and operational phases, that "no significant effects on waste/waste management are anticipated" and therefore "no specific mitigation measures are proposed," are supported, given the absence of any identified, operational, and suitable receiving facility. Mitigation Measure MM20 (Chapter 20), which requires waste to be taken to "the nearest appropriately licensed waste management facilities," is similarly rendered meaningless when the chapter has failed to establish that any such facility exists. We do not believe this assessment can be regarded as compliant with the EPA EIAR Guidelines (2022), and we ask that it be substantially revised before any grant of permission could be considered.

Land

Land Survey Limitations

We are concerned about gaps in the ecological survey work acknowledged in Section 6.2.7 of Chapter 6. While access was granted across all areas of the proposed project site, and surveys were carried out by TOBIN ecologists alongside third-party specialists, a number of practical constraints limited the completeness of the survey work. Some small areas could not be fully surveyed on foot due to dense vegetation. Drainage features on the site presented physical barriers that prevented full on-foot access in certain areas. The nature of the soft cutover bog habitat meant that some areas were physically inaccessible to surveyors on foot. Deep sections of watercourses within the site were too deep to safely enter and could not be fully accessed for aquatic surveys. In all of these cases, the surveyors relied on visual assessment from adjacent banks, surrounding lands, or public roads, using binoculars where possible, supplemented by aerial photography and desktop study data.

We are concerned that these limitations are presented briefly, without any detailed assessment of what specific ecological features or habitats may have been missed or inadequately assessed as a result. Given that the site includes watercourses, bog habitat, and areas of dense vegetation, all of which can support protected species, we believe the inability to fully survey these areas is a notable gap that the EIAR does not adequately address, and one that reinforces the concerns we have raised throughout this observation about species such as Barn Owl, Whinchat, Irish Hare, and Red Squirrel being underrepresented in the baseline data.

Absence of Turbary Agreements

A significant transparency concern arising from the project documents is the complete absence of any turbary agreements from the planning application, not even in a redacted form. The EIAR references landowner letters of consent in Appendix 2-6 and states that the 355-hectare site “is owned by third-party private landowners who have consented to the planning application,” yet no agreement specifically dealing with the extinguishment, cessation, or transfer of turbary rights over the peatland portions of the site has been made available for public scrutiny. We also raise a largely unexamined issue: turbary rights attach not to the land but to the dwelling house under Irish law, meaning any landowner who signed an early option agreement may no longer hold that right by now, having passed it to a successor in title, heir, or new purchaser through sale, inheritance, or subdivision. The planning file contains no evidence of Land Registry searches to establish current rights-holders or any updated consent from successors, leaving a significant gap in the application's legal underpinning and exposing the development to challenge by parties whose property rights were never identified or addressed.

Property Devaluation

We are concerned that the EIAR's assessment of property devaluation relies heavily on the findings of a single Irish study: a 2023 working paper by the Centre for Economic Research on Inclusivity and Sustainability (CERIS), entitled *Wind Turbines and House Prices Along the*

West of Ireland: A Hedonic Pricing Approach (Gillespie & McHale, 2023). This study identified a potential decrease in property values of approximately 14.7% within 0–1 km of a wind turbine. We question the applicability of this figure to the Ballincor site on several grounds. First, the study was conducted exclusively across counties on the west coast of Ireland, Cork, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Leitrim, Mayo, and Sligo, which represent a very different rural landscape, property market, and socio-economic context to the Midlands counties of Offaly and Tipperary in which the proposed development is located. Second, the study sourced its housing price data from the property listing website daft.ie rather than from verified sale prices, with the authors themselves acknowledging that listed prices are not necessarily equivalent to agreed sale prices. Third, the sample size on which the 14.7% figure is based was notably small, comprising only approximately 225 houses within the 0–1 km range, which the EIAR itself concedes does not fully represent the broader landscape of Irish rural residential properties.

Even setting aside these methodological weaknesses, we want to emphasise that a depreciation of 14.7% is not a minor or trivial impact; it represents a very significant loss of household wealth for any affected homeowner. For a property in the local area with a median value of €213,750 as recorded by the CSO in May 2025, a 14.7% reduction would equate to a loss of approximately €31,400. For homeowners, a family home typically represents their single largest financial asset and, in many cases, their primary source of financial security. We believe a devaluation of this magnitude is not an abstraction; it directly undermines the ability of residents to refinance, release equity, or fund retirement, and places them in a deeply inequitable position whereby they bear a substantial private financial cost as a direct consequence of a commercial development they had no role in initiating.

This concern is compounded significantly by the broader context of the Irish property market. In rural areas, house prices have increased by approximately 30% in the twelve months to June 2026, reflecting exceptional and sustained demand. We believe homeowners in the vicinity of the proposed Ballincor Wind Farm are therefore being asked to accept a potential devaluation against a backdrop of rapidly rising values, meaning the real financial loss, relative to what their property would otherwise be worth, may be considerably greater than the 14.7% figure alone suggests.

Of equal or greater concern to us is the very real risk that affected properties may become effectively unsellable. The Ballincor Wind Farm does not exist in isolation; with up to three wind farm developments potentially visible from homes in the area, prospective buyers are likely to be deterred entirely, regardless of price. We believe a property that cannot attract a buyer in the open market has not merely depreciated; it has, in practical terms, lost its market value altogether. No financial compensation mechanism or community benefit fund is proposed to address this outcome, and the EIAR makes no meaningful assessment of it. Given these circumstances, we believe the dismissal of property value impacts as “slight” in the EIAR is wholly inadequate and fails to reflect the lived reality facing homeowners in the area.

Community Engagement

We acknowledge that RWE conducted a structured community engagement process across multiple phases. In July 2023, they delivered a brochure and cover letter to 232 homes within a 2 km radius of the proposed turbines, followed by door-to-door visits over three days where they met with 122 households. A dedicated phone line and email address were established, and a project website was set up and maintained throughout. A second round of outreach took place in September 2025, with further door-to-door visits meeting 88 households. Cumulatively, RWE claim to have met face-to-face with representatives from 210 of the 232 homes (91%) within the 2 km zone. A drop-in clinic was held at the County Arms in Birr on 4 February 2026, which 46 people attended, and local elected representatives were contacted by email at each stage.

While RWE present this engagement process as thorough and meaningful, our own experience and that of our neighbours tells a very different story. The dedicated phone line, cited as a key point of contact, was non-functional, and residents were unable to reach anyone through this channel. Similarly, while email queries were initially responded to, correspondence went unanswered following the departure of Community Liaison Officer Kieran O’Byrne, leaving residents without any functioning point of contact.

Most critically, following the drop-in clinic at the County Arms in February 2026, an event that proved deeply unsettling for many attendees as the true scale of the proposed development became apparent for the first time, residents were left entirely without support or follow-up. No replacement liaison was put in place, no further communication was issued, and no mechanism existed for residents to raise the concerns and anxieties that had emerged from that consultation.

On a personal level, the only direct engagement we received from RWE following the public consultation was an unplanned, chance encounter on the road near our home. During this brief exchange, when concerns about the project were raised and clarity was sought on where things stood, the response was to “enjoy your bog walk for the next 18 months.” We found this remark deeply upsetting and wholly inappropriate. It was dismissive of the very real anxiety and distress that local residents are experiencing, and it conveyed in the clearest possible terms the attitude of the developer towards those most affected by this proposal: that the outcome is already decided and that our concerns are of no consequence. For a representative of RWE to make such a remark to a local resident, in place of any meaningful engagement, is both disrespectful and revealing. It speaks to an underlying contempt for the community that no amount of structured consultation can disguise.

We believe this represents a serious failure of duty of care on the part of the developer. What RWE describes as community engagement was, in practice, a one-directional information exercise. When it mattered most, after residents had processed the full reality of what was being proposed, the developer was simply unreachable, and when contact was made by chance, it was met with a dismissive and hurtful remark. We do not believe this can be considered genuine or adequate engagement under the spirit of the Aarhus Convention, which RWE itself cites as underpinning its consultation methodology.

Conclusion

Taken together, the concerns set out above — on visual and cumulative impact, noise, ornithology, mammals, habitat loss, hydrology, waste management, land and turbary rights, property devaluation, and community engagement — lead us to conclude that this application has not adequately or accurately assessed its true impact on existing residents, particularly those, like ourselves, already living with significant cumulative effects from the operational Lacka/Skehanagh turbines. On this basis, we ask the Commission to refuse planning permission for the proposed Ballincor Wind Farm, or, at minimum, to require the applicant to substantively address the deficiencies identified above including a proper cumulative assessment that does not discount existing operational wind farms as mere 'baseline' before any decision is made.

Beyond these technical deficiencies, we are deeply concerned about what this development means for the future of this place. The character and amenity of this landscape, once altered at this scale, will be lost for generations to come. We fear that our own children may grow up unwilling, or unable, to make a home here, in the place we have always called home.

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We thank the Commission for its consideration of this observation.

Yours faithfully,

Eoin & Johanna Doorley