

AN COMMISSION
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Liam Egan
Ballyegan
Birr
Co. Offaly
R42 PV30

**Objection to the Proposed Ballincor Wind Farm
(11 Turbines and Associated Infrastructure)
Ref: ACP SID Pax92.324279**

To whom it concerns,

My home is in Ballyegan within 2km of the proposed windfarm development. I am now 73 years of age. I am a farmer. Our farm extends to land in Ballyegan, Rathbeg and Kilnalacka, all adjacent to or very close to the proposed development.

I am one of the joint owners of Sharavogue Bog which is designated as an S.A.C. and which forms part of the boundary with the proposed wind farm, so all of my lands will be impacted by this development. I also own a small stone cottage (R42 NY67) which I restored over a number of years. This cottage is situated within the SAC area, indeed it maybe the only residence within it and it is 1.2km from the proposed turbines. This property is meant for amenity purposes and it will be hugely impacted by the wind farm. Can you imagine wanting to stay for a quiet weekend under the towering presence and associated noise of the 11 turbines. The answer of course is No, so we can assume that the use of the cottage for amenity purposes will not be viable and as such will be one of the numerous casualties of this development.

Flooding and Interference

As I already mentioned some of my lands are in the townland of Rathbeg and extend along the Little Brosna River for 1.5km. This is land suitable for summer grazing and our family have carried on this tradition since the 1960's. On the other side of the Little Brosna is the proposed wind farm site. I have major concerns with a potential increase in flooding from this development and from what I have seen from the wind farm plans it is unavoidable. As it is, this land floods regularly and is accepted as a flood plain and the building of a raised road on the wind farm side of the river will ensure that more of the water is forced across the river thereby causing more flooding on my land. In the wind farm plans this road is described as a "floating road" which is complete "bunkum", it is a road like any other raised above the surface of the flood plain and thereby will have a huge impact in raising the level of the water.

I also have major concerns because this grazing land is in a quiet scenic area with the only sounds in the area coming from, a fish jumping in the river or a crane flapping its wings to take off, or the chirping of the myriad of birds present. My cattle graze contentedly and undisturbed as they have done for generations.

Enter then into this new scene an amalgam of noise and loud strange sounds from heavy industrialised machines digging and pounding and excavating and tractors and trailers and lorries flying up and down this proposed new road and a major problem emerges. i.e. if my cattle get

frightened from all the new loud activity they will take flight as cattle do and stampede and may well end up in the river as a consequence. You must understand that this is a clear possibility and I would invite a member or members of An Coimisiún Pleanála to see this for themselves. So my farming practices would be impacted by 1. flooding 2. interference with my animals. This will indeed be a burden on me in a number of ways including anxiety and worry and also financially and may well end with having to cease farming in this part of our farm.

Sharavogue Bog S.A.C

In 1989 my neighbour Patrick Headon and I were involved in a legal fight to save this bog from being dug up to provide peat. We obtained a High Court injunction to stop this work in August 1989, and indeed I myself served this injunction on the people involved. We were then sued for loss of income by the developer and then ensued another fight to protect ourselves. At the time a major portion of the bog was owned by an absentee owner and we managed to purchase this section in its entirety, and we were able to eject the bog developer and save the bog. I mention all of this merely to highlight the importance of the bog to me; we were willing to spend our own money to pay legal costs and ultimately purchase the bog. Our motivation was purely to save it in its best state for future generations. Incidentally I think this work should have been undertaken by our own government, but there didn't seem to be any apparatus or arm of government within the state capable of doing this, so it fell to private individuals to secure this clearly important area for future generations.

In 1998 we both received an award from the Dutch Conservation Society for Irish Bogs for our efforts. The presentation was made by the Irish Ambassador to Holland Mr. John Swift at a function in Utrecht. By this time our efforts were rewarded by the designation of the site as an S.A.C. and we felt that everything had fallen into place and that our reward was security for the SAC in perpetuity, that is until the R.W.E. wind company published its plans for the proposed wind farms. To be honest I was devastated, it's like "here we go again"; it's never ending. I understand that the wind farm is not going to be built directly in the SAC but it's impact on the bog and all of the protected area will be huge. This bog was once described like this "if bogs were books this is the Book of Kells. It is that important!

Building massive wind turbines towering over this unique area would be a desecration and if anything has changed since 1989 when no government apparatus was available to save it, now is the time for our state to stand up and say NO! We simply need to send a message that this type of pillaging of our protected areas cannot be tolerated.

The Slender Cottongrass (protected) exists in the SAC, it also exists on the site of the wind farm. The Alder Buckthorn (very rare) exists in the SAC and in the wind farm site. All of this to say that both sides of the River Brosna are connect, they are a single ecological site and the river acts as a conduit supporting both sides.

This application must be refused. **One of my greatest fears for the bog is that the excavation and digging will damage it hydrologically, drawing down the water table and lowering water levels**

across the bog. This will have a detrimental impact on the life of the bog and the growth of the bog and all of its plant life. Envisaging the bog as another casualty of the wind farm is not an option.

Birds and Wild Life

There is an abundance of birds and wild life on both the site of the wind farm and the neighbouring SAC. Foxes, badgers and hares live there. Birds heard on an every-day basis include the Long-Tailed Tit, the Common Chaffinch, the European Robin, the Meadow Pipit, the Eurasian Wren, Eurasian Siskin, the Reed Bunting, the Western House-Martin, the Eurasian Linnet, and the Redpoll. Cranes have also lived by the river for generations, loving the isolation there. Swans are using this area for my lifetime and indeed will be totally disrupted from this their traditional place and will be a major casualty if this goes ahead. Not only do 100's of them use it as a winter-feeding ground but some swans hatch their families on the banks of the Little Brosna every year and teach their children how to live, swim, and fly from there. I have watched them every year and it makes me sad knowing what the future may hold for them. They too I fear will be a casualty if this goes ahead.

Otters live on the river, they mate and give birth to their pups there. Otters are rare; the average person may never see one, so it is an honour for people like myself to be in a position to witness at first hand. Otters like their own solitude, they shy away from humans both sight and sound. I still remember many years ago when I first saw them, I had gone to the river early in the year to judge the water level in the river before I brought cattle down there to graze and suddenly, there they were. They didn't see me at first as they were so intent on playing with one another, both on land and in the water it was all the same to them, they moved from solid ground to the water seamlessly, rolling around together so intent on each other, then it hit me they were mating and I had intruded on this important and clearly enjoyable occasion. Imagine what the diggers and tractors and lorries and engines and turbines will do to these beautiful creatures. Simply put it will drive away. Another casualty.

Local Amenity

Over the last number of years Birr Outdoor Pursuit Centre have been using this stretch of the river for canoeing, bringing young kids from the local area and outside the area to enjoy the amenity that is provided by this wild area stuffed with nature. I have met kids from as far away as Thurles and Clara as they were enjoying a break on my land by the river. I have seen groups of more than 20 youngsters learning about the outdoors and about nature. I have told them that were always welcome and I have to say this is what I want for the area. If the wind farm goes ahead there will be no more canoes, and no more excited youngsters to see what real nature is like. Is this what we want? Must we destroy something that is so precious for dubious gain.

Unsuitable for Wind Energy

County Offaly has been to the fore in the development of wind energy over the last number of years. The county covers 2.84% of the land mass of the Rep of Ireland. At the moment, Offaly produces over 11% of the wind energy of the country. These figures seem totally out of sync, are the people of Offaly not entitled to enjoy their natural landscapes equally with people in say Longford, Kildare, Dublin, Wicklow. We need balance, not a 21st Century plantation of Offaly with wind turbines.

Offaly Co Co in it's wisdom produced a County development plan, the members were democratically elected to look after the interests of the county and we the people trust them to do that. They collectively agreed that the Ballincor site is totally unsuitable for wind development. At the same time they allocated huge tracts of land (28%) as suitable for wind development. Why are we even discussing Ballincor as a potential site for wind farming?

From my farm I can already see 4 wind farms close by, another, Carraig has been passed for development, Silvermines and Monahincha are a little further away but still visible. We have more than our share already and we certainly don't need another.

There is so much to say about this place, I have wrote about my experiences as one of the longest living residents of this area and there are other issues also such as possible pollution of the river containing fish such as the Croneen Trout. What will be the effect on the population of our Barn Owls (one of the highest in the country). Will the White Tailed Eagle which has been photographed by the river continue to visit or will all of these species be added to the list of casualties that I have already outlined.

We must do the right thing and it is now up to the people who make these decisions to do that — the right thing is to refuse the submission seeking planning for the 11 wind turbines at Ballincor. I sincerely and honestly ask you to do so

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liam Egan', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.