



ST. BRENDAN'S COMMUNITY SCHOOL

BIRR, CO. OFFALY



Tel.: (057) 9120510/9120511

E-mail: info@stbrendanscsbirr.ie

Principal: John Kennedy Deputy Principal: Paul D'Arcy Deputy Principal: Fidelma Foy

8th June 2026

Re: Case Reference PAX92.324279 – Proposed Ballincor Wind Farm Development and Associated Road and Infrastructure Works

Observer: Board of Management, St Brendan's Community School, Birr

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Board of Management of St Brendan's Community School, Birr, wishes to register a formal submission of concern in relation to the above-referenced planning application. St Brendan's Community School is a post-primary school with approximately 850 students and a full complement of teaching and support staff. The school serves the wider Birr area and draws its student population from a large rural catchment, the majority of whom are transported to and from school by bus each day. We have a statutory duty of care to every student and staff member under the Education Act 1998 and associated welfare and safety legislation.

This submission is not an objection to the principle of renewable energy development. Our concerns are confined to the operational and safety implications of the proposed construction phase for a large secondary school whose students depend on the surrounding road network every school day.

A matter of particular and direct concern to this school is the proposed Grid Connection Route (GCR). The application documentation confirms that the GCR will run along or in close proximity to the L1071, R489, L5045, R439 N52, R489, and the development site will cause congestion and traffic management issues along the R492 and N62. Many of our students and school buses travel along these roads.

Of particular concern is the R439 Birr–Banagher Road, as this route passes by the entrance to the school and is a route used daily by all school buses serving St Brendan's. The applicant's own figures confirm that the GCR spans 12.23 km in total and will progress at a rate of approximately 250 metres per week, with up to 100 metres of open trench active at any given time. This equates to approximately 50 weeks of continuous, rolling road disruption – effectively an entire academic year – on roads that are critical to the daily operation of our school. This is not a temporary inconvenience.

Having reviewed the road and transportation documentation submitted with this application, we wish to highlight the following specific concerns:

- Grid Connection Route trenching directly on school bus corridors: The application confirms that the 2.44 km section of the GCR running along the R439 Birr–Banagher Road will require a temporary road closure of this regional road. The R439 is a key arterial route into Birr and is used by school buses serving St Brendan's from the Banagher and Clonmacnoise direction. A rolling road closure progressing at 250 metres per week on this road will create sustained, unpredictable disruption to bus scheduling for an extended period. Diverting buses onto narrower local roads to avoid active trench works adds both journey time and road safety risk to a transport operation already operating on rural road infrastructure.

AN COMISION PLEANALA	
LDG-	028927-26
ACP-	
02 JUL 2026	
Fee: €	Type: C
Time: 1.55	By: C

- Stop-and-go traffic management and school bus scheduling: Rolling trench works with temporary traffic signals, stop-and-go arrangements, and temporary road closures create an inherently unpredictable traffic environment. Post-primary school buses operate to fixed, time-critical schedules. Late arrival at school disrupts timetabling, examinations, and supervised study. Late departure leaves students stranded at a school campus without supervision. For a school of 850 students, even minor delays compound rapidly across a large number of bus runs and student journeys.
- Volume and frequency of construction HGV traffic: This development will require heavy construction vehicles on the local road network. This level of congestion at a junction critical to Birr town access is a direct operational concern for school bus scheduling in both the morning and afternoon.
- Temporary backfill and road surface deterioration: The applicant proposes to backfill open trenches with temporary surfacing material at the end of each working day. On a route used by heavy school buses, this standard is wholly inadequate. Temporary trench fills settle rapidly under load, creating surface irregularities, edge breaks, and in wet weather, dangerous conditions for bus operations. The applicant's own assessment acknowledges that grid cabling works will cause a "moderate negative temporary effect" on existing road users. This is the developer's own description. A moderate negative effect on the road surface of bus routes serving our students over a 50-week period is not an acceptable or minor outcome.
- Traffic Management Plan – school peak hours: We note that the Traffic Management Plan contained in the application documentation defines school peak hours as 08:00–09:00 and 17:00–17:00. For a post-primary school with a student population of 850, bus arrivals typically begin before 08:30 and the afternoon dismissal for a school of this size is staggered, typically between 15:50 and 16:30 depending on the year group. The 17:00 end time cited in the Traffic Management Plan does not reflect the operational reality of a large community school in a rural catchment. The inaccuracy in these figures suggests the school's specific transport patterns were not consulted during the preparation of the Traffic Management Plan.
- Emergency access to the school: In the event of a medical emergency, fire evacuation, or safeguarding incident requiring emergency services to attend the school campus, any significant delay caused by construction traffic, active trench works, or road closure on the surrounding network is unacceptable. A school of 850 students requires reliable and unimpeded emergency access at all times.
- Staff commuting and operational continuity: A secondary school of 850 students requires a substantial teaching and support staff complement, many of whom commute daily from the surrounding rural area. Prolonged and unpredictable disruption to commuting routes creates a risk of staffing gaps that cannot be readily managed through conventional substitute cover arrangements in a school context.

We note that the applicant concludes its roads and transportation assessment with the finding that residual effects on the road network will be "imperceptible / not significant." We wish to place on record that we do not accept this characterisation as it applies to the operation of St Brendan's Community School. An impact that extends across an entire academic year, on the primary road network used by 850 secondary school students, cannot credibly be described as imperceptible.

Should An Coimisiún Pleanála determine to grant permission for this development, the Board of Management respectfully requests that the following matters be addressed as conditions:

- That the developer's Traffic Management Contractor be required to engage directly with the Board of Management and school transport operators serving St Brendan's Community School before any construction or trenching works commence on or adjacent to roads forming part of school bus routes, to agree a School Transport Safety Protocol for the duration of the construction phase.
- That no construction HGV movements, stop-and-go traffic management, or trench works be permitted on the R439 Birr-Banagher Road or connecting roads used by school buses during the morning school bus peak (07:30-09:00) or the afternoon school bus peak (15:30-17:00), Monday to Friday during school term, without a minimum of 72 hours' advance written notice to the school and agreement of a suitable alternative arrangement.
- That the Traffic Management Plan be revised to accurately reflect the actual school transport peak hours for St Brendan's Community School and that the school be formally consulted in the preparation of that revised plan.
- That a binding trench remediation standard be attached as a condition of any permission, requiring that all temporary backfill on roads used by school bus routes be brought to a full permanent running surface standard within a defined and short timeframe, and that independent verification of road surface condition on all school bus routes in the construction zone be carried out throughout the construction period.
- That a minimum of 72 hours' advance written notice be provided to the school of any planned road closure, traffic restriction, or abnormal load movement on roads used for school bus access, to allow alternative transport arrangements to be made.
- That emergency vehicle access to the school campus be protected and guaranteed at all times throughout the construction period, and that a pre-agreed emergency access route be communicated in advance to the HSE, the National Ambulance Service, and An Garda Síochána.

We trust that An Coimisiún Pleanála will give these matters the careful and specific consideration they warrant. The safe and reliable daily transport of 850 post-primary students to and from this school is not a secondary issue. It is a direct and immediate operational responsibility, and one that we ask the Board to treat accordingly in its assessment of this application.

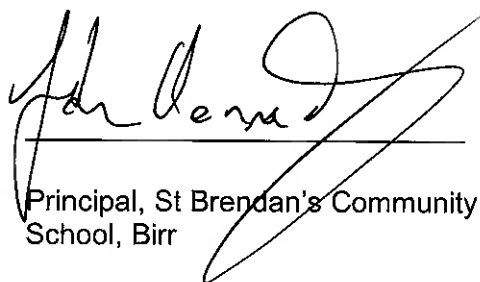
Yours faithfully,



Chairperson, Board of Management

St Brendan's Community School, Birr

Date: 18/6/26



Principal, St Brendan's Community School, Birr