

Submission of Claire O Hara, 31 Skreeny Manor, Manorhamilton, Leitrim, F91R6V6.
Re: Lissinagroagh Wind Farm - Case reference PAX12.324290

Applicant: FuturEnergy Ireland
Development: Proposed Dough Mountain (Lissinagroagh) Wind Farm
Case Reference: PAX12.324290

Location: Boleyboy, Cashelaveela, Cherrybrook, Killea, Coolodonnell, Faughary, Lissinagroagh, Lisdarush, Lugasnaghta, Raheelin, Shasmore, Tawnyfeacle and Tullyskeherny, Co. Leitrim

Dear Sir/Madam

I wish to make this submission to the proposed Lissinagroagh Wind Farm Development. Having reviewed the application, I will outline my concerns regarding this proposal.

Noise, Shadow Flicker and Quality of Life

My name is Claire O Hara. I reside in Skreeny Manor, Manorhamilton, Leitrim with my daughter, Kaytlin. I was born and reared in the townland of Brackary More, Manorhamilton, Leitrim. My family have lived and farmed in Brackary More for generations. The townland of Brackary More is situated on the mountain directly opposite to Faughary Wind Farm, Manorhamilton, Leitrim. Faughary Windfarm is situated in the townland of Faughary, Manorhamilton and is comprised of three wind turbines measuring 125 metres in height. It was constructed in 2013. My family residence is situated within the 2km radius of those turbines. Faughary Windfarm has been in existence for the past thirteen years and it will be there for many more. The life span of a turbine is thirty plus years. So, I am fully aware that those three turbines are going nowhere. Back in 2013 there was very little awareness around wind farm developments so the planning for Faughary wind farm went through with little objection. Really before many of the locals became aware of what was proposed, that wind farm was under construction. Since that wind farm became operational, the noise is constant. It never stops. It can be heard both inside and outside my family home and when I speak with neighbours, many will tell me the same thing. In my personal experience, the noise is particularly noticeable on the stillest of days, when there is little to no wind. The constant whooshing and thumping of the blades can be heard throughout the area and have become part of daily life for those living nearby. Then there is the issue of shadow flicker. For those unfortunate enough to live in homes affected by it, this is something they must contend with every single day. At certain times when the sun catches the rotating blades the resulting flickering light is cast into our homes and living spaces. As a result, residents are not only living with ongoing noise associated with these turbines but also the disruptive shadow flicker. Over the years, many people have come to visit our family home, be it family, friends, local councilors and indeed representatives of Futureenergy amongst others. Some have minimized the noise that can be heard, some have stated they cannot hear anything, some have remarked how comforting the noise is while some others have likened it to the sound of the sea. However, it is my belief that standing and listening to the turbines for a very short period of time is very different from living next to them every day. It is only when you experience their constant presence, day in and day out that you begin to understand how disruptive they can be. The noise that is there when you are trying to sleep at night, while you sit in your own kitchen or carry out your daily routine. My point is simple, nobody understands what it is like to live beside a wind farm until you live beside one. This may sound simplistic but the fact is we can listen to all the experts and courts in

the land who will tell you that turbines do not produce noise, that shadow flicker can be resolved or that turbines pose no health risks but is An Bord Pleanála willing to listen to the people who live beside an actual wind farm. I know that Faughary wind farm is here to stay, however, I am absolutely horrified that a wind farm of the magnitude of the proposed Lissinagroagh wind farm could possibly get planning authorization for that same area, Dough Mountain. What is being proposed is fourteen turbines measuring up to 180 metres in height, the tallest Ireland has ever seen, situated in and around the current Faughary wind farm. Life is hard enough living near one wind farm but the prospect of an additional development of such an unprecedented scale – one that has been classified as a Strategic Infrastructure Development – is beyond anything local residents could reasonably have anticipated. The cumulative impact of living alongside two windfarms would fundamentally alter the character of the area and place a significant additional burden on all those who live there.

I am a member of An Garda Síochána and have been very fortunate to be stationed close enough that I have been able to continue residing in Manorhamilton. I don't think I ever contemplated living anywhere else. I purchased my home for myself and my daughter back in 2006. As a single mother it was a struggle but I like many others in Manorhamilton chose to make the town and surrounding villages and areas our home. Like me, many chose to purchase or build in the area, some assumed ownership of family homes, many moved to the area. People remained or were drawn to build their lives in this area because of its sense of community, the tranquility, the peace and quiet, the area's natural beauty, the quality of life and opportunities it offers to those who live here. I believe that Lissinagroagh wind farm will be detrimental to the area. Manorhamilton will no longer be a scenic and tranquil haven. It will no longer attract new families to come make the area their home and raise their families in.

Potential Devaluation of Property

I work hard to pay my mortgage as does everyone else in Manorhamilton, Kiltclogher, Rossinver, Glenfarne and all the areas in between. I am concerned that such a development will have negative effect on the value of my home. For many people, our homes are our largest investment, built and paid for through years of hard work. I think it is only fair to ask whether the presence of such a large scale industrial wind energy development on the outskirts of Manorhamilton and surrounding areas could affect the attractiveness of the area to future buyers. Has it been considered that properties may be devalued by such a development? For those of us who have invested heavily in our homes and chosen to build our lives here, this is a legitimate concern that I believe deserves careful consideration.

For those in this area who have gone through the planning process to build or renovate a home or those who are currently navigating the many requirements and conditions needed to secure planning permission, it must be very frustrating that a development such as the proposed Lissinagroagh wind farm development could be afforded planning permission while people spend years preparing applications, commissioning reports and satisfying strict planning criteria to build a home. I think it is therefore reasonable to ask whether the same level of scrutiny is being applied to a project of this scale and significance and one that will have a lasting visual impact on the area. I recall many years ago when my parents were renovating and extending our family home how they could not get planning permission for a few dormer windows in the roof and had to change their application to Velux pivot roof windows. I ask how can a planning application for a few dormer windows be refused in a rural location with no neighbours nearby, while fourteen, 185 metre turbines are considered acceptable?

My Dad passed away last year and I have inherited a piece of land in Brackary More so I am a land owner in a neighbouring townland to the proposed Lissinagroagh wind farm. I am concerned for the future. What about our children and grandchildren who may want to build their homes here and remain in the community? Can anyone say with certainty that future planning policies or setback requirements will never change? If restrictions on residential development around large scale wind energy projects become more stringent in the years ahead, could locals find themselves unable to secure planning permission on land that might otherwise have provided a home for our next generation?

Tourism, Recreation and Amentity

North Leitrim has long been recognised for its outstanding natural and unspoiled beauty. The Five Glens of Leitrim attract visitors from all over who come to enjoy our unspoilt landscape, the walking trails, the hills, the forests and lakes and the sense of tranquility that makes our area unique. Tourism plays an important role in the local economy. Many businesses such as accommodation providers, restaurants, bars, shops and museums rely on visitors to the area to support jobs and generate income. I think it is reasonable to ask what impact turbines of such magnitude could have on the area's appeal as a tourism destination? Will tourists continue to be drawn to the area for its natural beauty, it's rural and rugged landscape if that landscape becomes dominated by massive turbines. What effect could this have on the local businesses and jobs that depend on tourism and outdoor recreation? County Leitrim is a core pillar of Ireland's hidden heartlands and is known for its beautiful landscape, meandering waterways, its dramatic mountain views and wild and rugged walking and hiking trails. Manorhamilton is known to be a beautifully preserved heritage town. The Organic Centre in Rossinver, Leitrim welcomes visitors and offers courses and tours on sustainable living and organic gardening. It will sit underneath Lissinagroagh Wind farm if the development goes ahead. Kiltyclogher village is the proud birthplace of Sean Mac Diarmada. Tourists flock to visit the local heritage centre and visit the birthplace of Sean Mac Diarmada. Will they still come when Kiltyclogher is over shadowed by a strategic infrastructure development? Discover Ireland describes the area on their website as "open valleys, network of serene waterways and characteristic villages and towns, Ireland's Hidden heartlands invites a slower, more deliberate kind of exploration." What tourist wants to explore a windfarm that is described as a strategic industrial development. Are the tourists and visitors to the area not attracted by a peaceful experience focused on boating, hiking, walking, cycling and immersing themselves in unspoilt, tranquil nature?

Lack of Infrastructure to Support Proposed Lissinagroagh Windfarm

I am aware that the Lissinagroagh windfarm development is for fourteen wind turbines and that a separate application for a 110kV substation and grid connection will be submitted to An Bord Pleanala in the future. I believe that the current application for fourteen wind turbines is premature, putting the cart before the donkey so to speak. Lissinagroagh windfarm will depend on outdated or under built electricity transmission lines that cannot handle maximum wind capacity resulting in grid operators frequently shutting off the wind farm and wasting massive amounts of potential green energy. When wind output dips, the lack of battery storage will force the grid to rely heavily on fossil fuel generators to maintain caseload power defeating the emission reduction purpose of the wind farm. I am also concerned that if Lissinagroagh wind farm is successful in obtaining planning permission it will open the doors to other energy companies looking to other parts of the area to build similar developments. There are already two wind farms in the

environs of Manorhamilton and my concern is that if planning is granted for this, the third it will clear the way for many more.

Wildlife and Nature

I drive, walk and run Dough mountain regularly. It is simply exquisite. It is rugged and unspoilt. It is teeming with bio diversity. There are plants, animals, fungi and microorganisms making up a complex and interconnected ecosystem specific to Dough mountain. I am aware of two breeding pairs of hen harriers, one of Ireland's rarest and most threatened birds of prey, living and foraging on the mountain. Dough mountain provides the exact terrain these raptors require to nest and hunt. A white tailed eagle has been commonly spotted foraging in the area. Sand Martins make their long journey from Africa every Summer to live on Dough Mountain to breed. Instead of their usual sandy cliffs, the sand martins choose to live in the soft, dried bog banks of Dough mountain year after year. Red data book species that are found within the site include the Irish hare, common frog and red grouse. There are several species of bat on the mountain residing in its Karst caves and fissures. Bats are a protected species under Irish and EU legislation. Buzzards can also be seen in the sky around Dough mountain. I am also aware that the Marsh Fritillary, Ireland's only legally protected insect and which is listed as vulnerable in Europe has been observed on Dough Mountain. Every organism on Dough Mountain plays a role in keeping our eco system functioning and the loss of a single species could cause a detrimental ripple effect throughout all life on the mountain. Dough mountain is largely an unspoilt landscape which is an area of upland bog, heath and grassland. It is also made up of rough pasture, areas of peat cutting and conifer plantations. The site ranges from 170 metres to 465 metres and is underlain by shale, sandstone and large amounts of limestone. I am concerned that Lissinagroagh wind farm development poses a serious threat of environmental damage to protected peatlands on Dough mountain and the potential destruction of habitats, animal and plant life and the entire eco system on Dough Mountain.

Peat, Bog and Ground Conditions/Suitability of location

The amount of peatland and bog that will have to be dug up during the construction of these turbines will destroy fragile ecosystems, release massive quantities of stored carbon into the atmosphere which could lead to severe environmental, structural and ecological consequences. Peatlands are the world's most effective terrestrial carbon sinks and by digging it away and exposing it to oxygen, it will decompose and release enormous amounts of carbon and methane. How is this green energy when you destroy something so natural that is working away at holding onto carbon to make way for a man made eco-friendly alternative? Surely, destroying the peatland on Dough Mountain risks offsetting the carbon emission benefits of the wind turbines that are being built. Peatland is highly water logged and structurally weak and by digging into it and disturbing it can cause surrounding land to subside or slip. Need we forget the incident at Meenbog, Donegal in 2020 where massive slippage occurred along the Donegal Tyrone border causing trees and bog to slide into the Mourne Beg river, famous for its salmon spawning causing a devastating environmental crisis. Or the Shass mountain landslide in Drumshanbo, Leitrim in 2020 where a combination of heavy rain and commercial forestation drainage issues caused a landslide that devastated infrastructure, farmland and caused the evacuation of homes. In the instance of Shass mountain I believe we were shown how fragile our peatland can be and how it should be both respected and protected.

Hydrology

The construction of this proposed development will cause extensive vegetation clearing, soil compaction and a huge amount of excavation and these alterations will change the natural drainage patterns on Dough Mountain and increase the risk of water contamination and soil erosion. It will disrupt the natural water flow pathway. Loosened soil can cause silt laden runoffs and this can degrade water quality in the region and impact aquatic habitats. The amount of concrete that will be required to form the foundations of the turbines could potentially contaminate surface water on the mountain. The Owenmore river is the primary river that flows from Dough mountain and it along with other surrounding rivers, streams, natural springs and wells drain into the Bonet river and eventually empties into Lough Gill. Other streams from Dough mountain flow into Lough Melvin. Both lakes are renowned angling and fishing spots. Lough Gill also serves as a vital source of drinking water for thousands of people. It is the primary raw water source for Sligo and Environs Water Supply Scheme as well as North Leitrim Regional Water Supply Scheme. It is a key municipal water source and this development has the potential to adversely affect it. In turn, Lough Melvin serves as a drinking supply for local communities in Leitrim and Donegal. In Northern Ireland in the town of Garrison, Fermanagh, the Lough is considered a shared environmental and recreational asset. The potential risk that Lissinagroagh Wind Farm could cause significant water pollution is a matter of serious concern. Any such impacts could extend far beyond the immediate area of Dough Mountain, affecting numerous communities, towns and potentially multiple counties.

Planning for Previous Application Denied

In 2009 an energy company by the name of An Dough Windfarm Limited submitted a planning application to erect a wind farm across 140 hectares close to the summit of Dough Mountain. That proposed development was to consist of eight turbines, eighty metres in height, a transformer compound, an electrical control building, inter turbine service roadways, eight hard stand areas and ancillary works such as underground electrical ducting. (Planning application 09260 Leitrim County Council). Leitrim County Council refused planning permission due to adverse visual and landscape effects it would have on the surrounding region and nearby landmarks. What has changed? Lissinagroagh windfarm development is substantially larger in scale than the development that was previously refused planning permission. If anything, Lissinagroagh windfarm development raises more concerns that the impact on the landscape, local infrastructure, biodiversity and nearby residents would be even greater than those identified in the earlier refusal.

Engagement With Local Communities

I would also like to raise my concern regarding the manner in which Futureenergy engaged with the local community during its pre application consultation process. The company held two consultation clinics on midweek dates and during standard working hours, when many people were unable to attend due to work or other commitments. Furthermore, notification of these clinics were by way of fliers that were only distributed to residences within 2km of the proposed development days before the actual clinics were to be held. Given the scale of Lissinagroagh Wind Farm Development, its impacts will extend well beyond a 2 km radius and will affect many neighbouring communities who were not notified. I, like many others, was unable to attend because I was at work on those days. The consultation clinics were held in a community centre in Rossinver, a rural location with limited accessibility and no public transport for those who do not drive. This made attendance more difficult for many people living in the surrounding towns and communities. Family members who were able to attend informed me that the consultations were conducted on an individual, appointment based basis rather than in

an open public forum where members of the community could hear the same information, ask questions collectively and benefit from a transparent exchange of views. While one to one meetings have their place, they do not provide the same level of openness or opportunity for public discussion as a conventional public meeting. For these reasons, I do not believe the consultation process provided a fair or meaningful opportunity for all those likely to be affected by this development to participate. In my view, the level of community engagement undertaken did not reflect the scale of this development or the breadth of the communities that stand to be affected.

Conclusion

I am not opposed to renewable energy and I recognize that the demand for electricity continues to grow. However, I have serious concerns about this proposed development. In my view, it is not the right development for this location due to its scale and the extent of its potential impacts. I believe that the proposed development is simply too large for this area and would pose significant risks to the landscape, biodiversity, hydrology, the local tourism industry and the wider community. While renewable energy infrastructure is essential in supporting the transition to a low carbon future, it must be appropriately sited and designed to ensure that the environmental, social and economic costs do not outweigh the benefits. In this case, I do not believe that balance has been achieved. I do not consider myself opposed to Lissinagroagh Wind Farm development simply because it is close to where I live. However, this proposed development directly effects my home, my family's homes, my community and the landscape in which I live and love. It is precisely because this is my local area that I feel a responsibility to raise my concerns. If those who are most familiar with Dough Mountain and who stand to experience the long term consequences of the development do not participate in the planning process, then important local knowledge, opinions and perspectives may not be heard. I am not a NIMBY but the irony is this is my back yard. I understand that Ireland is legally committed to significant climate action, including reducing greenhouse emissions by over 42% by 2030 and attaining a climate neutral economy by 2050 but these goals do not require disregarding rural communities. While wind energy development is an important part of decarbonizing the electricity system, its expansion should not come at the expense of the rural areas being disproportionately burdened by those wind farms. The challenge lies in ensuring that renewable energy infrastructure is planned and implemented in a way that balances national climate objectives with local consultation, biodiversity, the landscape, tourism and support for those communities who host it.

I therefore object to the proposed Lissinagroagh Windfarm development, to the 10 year permission period, to the 14 wind turbines that will stand on Dough Mountain, to all the infrastructure that is attached to said application. I respectfully request that planning permission for this proposal be refused.

Yours Sincerely.

Claire O Hara