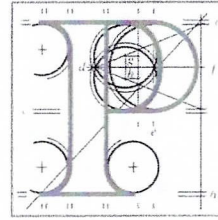


Our Case Number: ACP-324328-26



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

Rachel Leonard
Donegal Equestrian Centre
Finner Road
Bundoran
Co. Donegal

Date: 07 August 2026

Re: Proposed Tullan Strand Facility Centre for Water Sports Activities and Accessible Pathway to Tullan Strand Beach
Finner, County Donegal

Dear Sir / Madam,

An Coimisiún Pleanála has received your recent submission in relation to the above mentioned proposed development and will take it into consideration in its determination of the matter.

Please note that the proposed development shall not be carried out unless the Commission has approved it with or without modifications.

As there is no fee associated with submissions for this application type, a refund of €50 will be issued to you under separate cover.

If you have any queries in relation to the matter please contact the undersigned officer of the Commission at laps@pleanala.ie

Please quote the above mentioned An Coimisiún Pleanála reference number in any correspondence or telephone contact with the Commission.

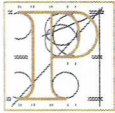
Yours faithfully,

Lauren Griffin
Executive Officer
Direct Line: 01-8737244

AA02

Teil	Tel	(01) 858 8100
Glao Áitiúil	LoCall	1800 275 175
Láithreán Gréasáin	Website	www.pleanala.ie
Ríomhphost	Email	communications@pleanala.ie

64 Sráid Maoilbhríde	64 Marlborough Street
Baile Átha Cliath 1	Dublin 1
D01 V902	D01 V902



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

SID Online Observation

Online Reference
SID-OBS-005692

Online Observation Details

Contact Name
Rachel Leonard

Lodgement Date
07/07/2026 14:46:21

Case Number / Description
324328

Payment Details

Payment Method
Online Payment

Cardholder Name
Rachel Leonard

Payment Amount
€50.00

Fee Refund Requisition

Please Arrange a Refund of Fee of

€ 50.00

Lodgement No

LDG— 089651 - 26

Reason for Refund

No fee for this case type

Documents Returned to Observer

☐

Yes

☒

No

Request Emailed to Senior Executive Officer for Approval

☒

Yes

☐

No

Signed

Lauren Coffey

EO

Date

7/8/26

Finance Section

Payment Reference

ch_3TqZKLB1CW0EN5FC09FZLytW

Checked Against Fee Income Online

EO/AA (Accounts Section)

Amount

€

Refund Date

Authorised By (1)

SEO (Finance)

Authorised By (2)

Chief Officer/Director of Corporate Affairs/SAO/Board
Member

Date

Date

Submission to An Coimisiún Pleanála

Re: Objection to Proposed Tullan Strand Water Sports Facility Centre and Associated Compulsory Purchase Order

Submitted by:

Rachel Leonard
Donegal Equestrian Centre
Finner Road
Bundoran
Co. Donegal

Introduction

I am the owner of Donegal Equestrian Centre, a long-established equestrian tourism and riding centre operating from a premise at Finner where we have direct access to Tullan Strand. I wish to formally object to the above planning application and the associated Compulsory Purchase Order.

I wish to make it clear that I am not opposed to investment in Tullan Strand, nor do I oppose the provision of improved public facilities. I recognise the importance of surfing and water sports to the area and support appropriate investment that benefits residents and visitors alike.

However, I strongly object to this proposal in its current form because it fails to properly consider the impact on existing businesses, existing tourism operators and the long-established equestrian use of Tullan Strand.

Existing Tourism Infrastructure

For decades, Donegal Equestrian Centre has welcomed visitors from Ireland and overseas.

Our business provides:

- Beach rides
- Riding lessons
- Pony camps
- Children's activities
- Employment for local people
- Tourism income for Bundoran

Our customers also support local accommodation providers, restaurants, cafés and shops.

The proposal repeatedly refers to supporting tourism and recreation but fails to recognise that these benefits already exist through established local businesses.

Failure to Consider Existing Equestrian Businesses

The Planning Policy Statement places considerable emphasis on surfing, swimming and water sports.

However, there is little meaningful assessment of the impact on established equestrian businesses despite horses having used Tullan Strand safely and responsibly for many years.

Donegal Equestrian Centre and neighbouring equestrian businesses form part of the tourism offering of the area.

The proposal appears to assume that equestrian activity can simply continue using an alternative route without any detailed assessment of whether that route is suitable or safe.

This represents a significant omission.

Proposed Alternative Equestrian Access

Having reviewed the proposed plans, I have serious concerns regarding the suggested equestrian route.

The proposed access includes sections of:

- concrete pathways
- timber boardwalks
- shared pedestrian areas

These are wholly unsuitable for horses.

Concrete surfaces create a slip hazard and risk of fall of horse and rider resulting in serious injury, they also create increased concussion on horses' limbs and are not appropriate as an access route to the beach.

Timber boardwalks present additional safety concerns including:

- reduced grip in wet weather

- increased risk of slipping
- hollow sounds beneath horses' feet
- movement within timber structures which many horses find unsettling

Shared pedestrian routes also increase the likelihood of conflict between horses, pedestrians, cyclists and young children.

There is no evidence within the application that the proposed route has been assessed by equestrian professionals or designed in accordance with recognised guidance for equestrian access.

Safety

Horse riding is a risk-managed activity.

Safe access routes are essential.

The proposed route appears to prioritise pedestrian movement while requiring horses to negotiate infrastructure that is unsuitable for equestrian use.

This creates increased risks for:

- riders
- pedestrians
- children
- horse welfare

The proposal therefore has significant implications for public safety.

Impact on Existing Businesses

This proposal has the potential to seriously affect:

- Donegal Equestrian Centre
- neighbouring equestrian businesses
- local employment
- tourism revenue

These businesses have invested in the area for many years and contribute significantly to the local economy.

Planning policy should seek to support existing sustainable rural enterprises rather than place them at risk.

Lack of Proper Economic Assessment

The Planning Policy Statement discusses the economic benefits arising from the proposed development.

However, it does not appear to quantify the economic loss that could result from the restriction of existing businesses.

There is no meaningful assessment of:

- existing visitor numbers generated by equestrian tourism
- employment supported by equestrian businesses
- economic contribution already being made
- potential business losses

A balanced planning assessment requires consideration of both benefits and adverse impacts.

Compulsory Purchase Order

I am particularly concerned by the associated Compulsory Purchase Order.

Private land that has facilitated public access for many years should not be acquired without clear justification.

A local family has maintained access benefiting both the public and local businesses for many years.

It is deeply disappointing that land which has historically enabled public enjoyment of Tullan Strand is now proposed for compulsory acquisition.

The application has not demonstrated that this level of land acquisition is the only reasonable option available.

Alternative designs should be fully explored before compulsory purchase powers are exercised.

Environmental Character

Tullan Strand is valued because it remains a natural coastal landscape.

Large-scale infrastructure, additional hard surfacing and increased urbanisation risk changing the character of this unique location.

Development should complement the landscape rather than dominate it.

Importance of Off-Road Equestrian Access

Tullan Strand provides one of the few safe, off-road riding environments in the area. Retaining practical access to the beach is important not only for equestrian businesses but also for rider safety and horse welfare.

Nationally, there is increasing recognition of the need to provide more off-road routes for equestrians, walkers and cyclists to reduce conflict with motor traffic. Removing or restricting an established off-road equestrian route is contrary to this principle and would force more horses onto public roads, increasing interaction with vehicles.

Horse riders are among the most vulnerable road users. While riding on public roads is sometimes unavoidable, reducing the need to do so benefits everyone by improving safety for riders, motorists, cyclists and pedestrians alike.

Rather than diminishing existing off-road access, planning decisions should seek to protect and enhance it wherever possible.

The proposed alternative route, incorporating concrete surfaces, timber boardwalks and shared pedestrian areas, does not provide a practical or appropriate replacement for the existing access to the beach. Any alternative equestrian route should be designed specifically for horses, taking account of safety, surface suitability and ease of use.

Protection of Year-Round Equestrian Access

It is essential that any planning permission expressly protects and guarantees unrestricted equestrian access to Tullan Strand throughout the year. Unlike a number of other beaches in County Donegal, where seasonal by-laws restrict horses to certain times of the day during the summer months, Tullan Strand has historically provided year-round access for equestrian users. This unrestricted access is fundamental to the operation of established equestrian businesses, riding schools and tourism activities.

The introduction of seasonal or time-based restrictions would have a significant adverse impact on these businesses, particularly during the peak tourism season when demand for beach rides is greatest. Any development should therefore ensure that equestrian access is preserved **365 days a year, at all times of the day**, without seasonal or hourly restrictions.

Should permission be granted, a condition should be attached requiring that unrestricted equestrian access to Tullan Strand is maintained permanently, with no seasonal, daily or time-of-day restrictions introduced as a consequence of the development.

Conclusion

I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála refuse this application in its current form.

Should the proposal proceed, substantial amendments are required to:

- protect existing equestrian businesses;
- retain safe and practical equestrian access;
- avoid unnecessary compulsory acquisition of private land;
- properly assess the economic impact on existing tourism operators;
- ensure that all recreational users of Tullan Strand are treated equally.

Investment in public facilities should enhance Tullan Strand without undermining the businesses and families who have contributed to its success for generations.

The planning system should seek to accommodate all legitimate recreational users of Tullan Strand. Equestrian users should be afforded the same consideration as walkers, cyclists and water sports participants, particularly where their activities support local employment, tourism and the rural economy.
