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An Coimisiún Pleanaála
64 Marlborough Street
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Re: Observation on Strategic Infrastructure Development application for the proposed Littleton Wind Farm, Co. Tipperary - Case Reference: PCX92.311587

Applicant: Littleton Wind Farm DAC (a joint venture of SSE Renewables and Bord na Móna Powergen Ltd)

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to formally object to the above proposed Strategic Infrastructure Development, comprising 11 no. wind turbines (200m blade tip height), an onsite 110kV electrical substation, a permanent meteorological mast, an onsite borrow pit, peat and spoil deposition areas, internal access tracks, recreational amenity trails and all associated works at Littleton, Longfordpass, Lanespark, Ballybeg and Derryvella Bogs, Co. Tipperary, together with the accompanying Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

I have reviewed the planning application, the EIAR and its technical appendices, and the Natura Impact Statement. I consider that the application should be refused. My objection covers six areas: (1) landscape and visual amenity; (2) peatland, drainage, hydrology and water quality; (3) ornithology and biodiversity; (4) cumulative impact and adequacy of assessment; (5) archaeological, architectural and cultural heritage; and (6) residential amenity, including noise, shadow flicker, property impacts and construction disturbance. Where relevant, I also cite recent An Coimisiún Pleanaála decisions refusing comparable wind farms elsewhere in Ireland, which raise the same concerns.

1. Landscape and Visual Amenity

At 200m to blade tip, these turbines would add a very large structure to a rural, low-lying part of east Co. Tipperary. The applicant's own Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Chapter 13 of the EIAR) actually supports refusal, not approval, for the following reasons:

- The applicant's own LVIA reveals that an earlier design used 220m turbines, but this was dropped because it created a "sense of overbearing" for nearby homes. The applicant's own consultants have therefore already confirmed that turbine scale is a real problem at this site - not a hypothetical one. The 200m turbines now proposed are still very large by any standard.
- The Tipperary Landscape Character Assessment 2016 rates the northern part of the site (LCA 8 - Littleton Raised Bog) as "sensitive," with only "limited" capacity for change, requiring "significant additional care" in design and assessment. The applicant's case for acceptability relies mainly on the more relaxed rating of the neighbouring LCA 9, and does not give enough weight to LCA 8's sensitivity.

- The applicant's own Route Screening Analysis admits that open, largely unscreened views of nine to eleven turbines together will be visible from a 4-5km band east of the site, between New Birmingham and Gortnahoe. This contradicts any claim that the development would be well screened from sensitive viewpoints.
- The >800m setback and compliance with the four-times-tip-height rule only meet the regulatory minimum under the 2019 Draft Guidelines. This is not evidence of an acceptable visual outcome - especially since the applicant's own consultants have already flagged overbearing effects as a real risk at this scale.
- This area is already saturated with wind farms. The applicant's own figures (Chapter 5, Table 5-4) show 11 wind farms already operating within 20km - around 89 turbines in total. The closest are Gurteen (4.2km east), Ballincurry (4.9km south-east) and Knocknamuck/Cnoc (7.9km east). A further 3 wind farms (38 more turbines) are already consented but not built, and one more (Brisklagh, 7 turbines) is awaiting a decision. Once these are built, Littleton would be the 17th wind farm within 20km, adding to well over 130 existing and approved turbines. The cumulative visual dominance of turbines from every direction has not been properly weighed.

This mirrors a recent decision, ABP-315656-23 (Curraglass Wind Farm, Co. Cork). There, the Board refused seven turbines of similar height (178.5m tip), finding that their combined height, scale and layout would seriously injure the area's visual amenity - even though the site had previously hosted a smaller, now-removed wind farm, and already sat in a landscape with existing wind energy and forestry. That decision shows visual harm alone can justify refusal, and that a site's existing industrial or wind-energy history does not make further, larger development acceptable. Littleton - a former industrial peat bog - is directly comparable: the applicant makes the same argument, that the site's already-degraded character counts in its favour.

A second precedent, ABP-312728-22 (Slieveacurry Wind Farm, Co. Clare), makes the same point. The Board refused permission there even though the site sat within a Council-designated "Strategic Area" considered ideal for wind energy. Favourable zoning - like Littleton's "Open for Consideration" status - does not guarantee permission when the landscape and visual evidence says otherwise.

2. Peatland, Drainage, Hydrology and Water Quality

The Water Framework Directive is the EU law that sets a required health standard - "Good status" - for every river in Ireland. The site's own data shows the rivers here are already failing that standard, and the underlying data in Chapter 9 (Hydrology, Hydrogeology and Water Quality) makes the case for this development considerably weaker than the EIAR's own conclusions suggest:

- The applicant's own EPA water quality data (Tables 9-11 and 9-13) show that the rivers draining the site - the Black (Two Mile Borris), Clover and Drish - are already rated only "Poor" or "Moderate," not the "Good status" required under the Water Framework Directive. A specific pollution measure called BOD (Biochemical Oxygen Demand) already exceeds the legal "Good status" limit in every single sampled river, before construction has even started. Two of the four sampled waterbodies (Clover_010 and Drish_050) also already exceed the limit for ortho-phosphate, another pollution indicator.
- Because these rivers are already failing to meet legal water quality standards, they have little or no spare capacity to absorb further pollution without getting worse - and the Water Framework Directive specifically requires that water bodies below "Good status" are not allowed to decline further. Construction will involve 15.45km of new roads, six peat and spoil deposition areas, a borrow pit and extensive drainage works, all of which typically generate silt and nutrient runoff into nearby watercourses. Given the rivers' already-poor condition, I do not believe they can absorb this additional pollution risk without breaching the Directive's requirement not to allow further decline.

- The EIAR admits no groundwater tracing studies have been done at the karst features (swallow holes, an enclosed depression) at Borrismore and Balief Lower, along the grid connection route. This is a real gap: a long stretch of that route runs through a Regionally Important Karst Aquifer.
- The Flood Risk Assessment for the onsite substation - critical, high-value infrastructure - allows only 0.3m of freeboard above the modelled 1,000-year flood level. The same EIAR chapter projects winter rainfall in this part of Tipperary could rise by up to 24% under future climate scenarios.

This mirrors ABP-316025-23 (Cloghercor Wind Farm, Co. Donegal). There, the Department of Housing successfully argued that relying on downstream "dilution over distance" for water quality was inadequate, citing the Meenbog Wind Farm peat slippage, whose effects were detectable more than 60km downstream. Littleton's EIAR makes the same argument at paragraph 9.3.6, claiming effects "decrease progressively downstream due to the dilution effect." Since this exact reasoning already failed at Cloghercor, it should not be accepted here either - especially given how degraded the baseline water quality already is.

3. Ornithology and Biodiversity

My ecological objection centres on breeding Curlew, but also covers Buzzard, Kestrel and other species assessed in Chapter 7 (Ornithology) and its Collision Risk Model Report (Appendix 7.2):

- NPWS itself has confirmed that losing even one breeding adult Curlew could wipe out the only known breeding pair in the wider region - the population is that small and fragile. NPWS's own advice says the proposed compensation (predator control and nest protection) should only be modelled "illustratively" - not treated as a genuine, guaranteed offset.
- Over the wind farm's 35-year life, the applicant's own Collision Risk Model predicts around 185 Buzzard and 103 Kestrel deaths. The applicant's own framework rates this as "High" magnitude at the local level - it is only rated "negligible" once averaged across the whole national population. Kestrel has recently been uplisted to Red-listed status (BoCCI 2021). The report acknowledges this but does not revise its "negligible" conclusion.
- The model's results depend heavily on the "avoidance rate" chosen for each species - the report itself admits that moving from a 98% to 99% avoidance rate alone would double the predicted annual death toll. For Golden Plover, the applicant abandons the standard 98% NatureScot default in favour of a bespoke 99.8% rate, taken from a single report written for a different wind farm's appeal (Ballivor Wind Farm). This substantially lowers the modelled mortality. The Commission should treat this departure from standard guidance with real caution.

Two precedents are directly on point. In ABP-312728-22 (Clare), the Board's inspector rejected a Hen Harrier Enhancement Plan as inadequate mitigation because it relied on land outside the applicant's ownership, non-binding landowner agreements, and commitments the applicant could not guarantee for the wind farm's lifetime - finding "reasonable scientific doubt" over whether it would work. In ABP-316025-23 (Donegal), the Department of Housing similarly rejected a 252ha Golden Eagle habitat plan as too small, given the eagle's actual home range is around 90km². Littleton's curlew mitigation shares the same flaws: it is "illustrative" rather than guaranteed, depends on third parties and future decisions rather than binding commitments, and is meant to offset the loss of the only breeding pair in the area. The same conclusion should apply here - this is not adequate, verifiable mitigation.

One further point: the Collision Risk Model Report's own reference and appendix pages are headed "CLIENT: Statkraft / PROJECT NAME: Gortloughra Wind Farm" - a completely unrelated project by a different developer. This is not a pedantic point. It shows this document - which the Commission is asked to rely on for species-by-species mortality figures - was not properly checked before submission. It raises a fair question: what other, more substantive errors might be hiding in the rest of the assessment?

4. Cumulative Impact and Adequacy of Assessment

- The applicant's cumulative landscape and visual assessment (Section 13.9) uses non-statutory Scottish (NatureScot) guidance - by its own admission, because "there is no current guidance document in Ireland" for this. With no settled Irish methodology, the Commission should scrutinise this assessment carefully, especially given how many wind farms already exist or are proposed within the 20km study area (Figure 4.06).
- The 30.9km underground grid connection to Ballyragget, Co. Kilkenny is excluded from this application and will need a separate one - even though it crosses the River Nore Special Protection Area (via horizontal directional drilling), several watercourses, and a Regionally Important Karst Aquifer. Splitting the wind farm and its grid connection into two separate applications risks an artificial, piecemeal assessment of what is really a single project.
- There is a wider rigour problem too. The Geotechnical and Peat Stability Assessment Report (Appendix 8.1) gives three different, contradictory sets of coordinates for the same turbines across different tables in the same report - Turbine 1 alone is listed as 624044/657148, 591665/5835865, and 614198/727373. Combined with the unrelated "Gortloughra Wind Farm/Statkraft" heading noted above, this raises a real question over whether the EIAR was properly cross-checked before submission - and whether the Commission can be satisfied it is, in the words of the CJEU in *Sweetman v An Bord Pleanála*, free of lacunae and contains complete, precise and definitive findings.
- I am also concerned about the adequacy of community consultation. The application documents refer to local roads L4114, L2201, L1857 and L4153 as being affected by construction and delivery traffic, but these roads are not identified anywhere on the submission's own maps, nor are they cross-referenced to the names residents actually use. The only location information provided is a set of GPS coordinates buried in a technical appendix. This requires a reader to independently plot coordinates into third-party mapping software simply to find out which road near their own home is being referred to. I do not consider this an adequate or genuine basis for public consultation: the information may be technically present in the application, but it has not been presented in a form that residents could reasonably be expected to use to identify how the development would affect them.

In ABP-312728-22 (Clare), observers raised similar concerns, calling the EIAR a "copy/paste job" not properly tailored to the site. In ABP-316025-23 (Donegal), the Department of Housing criticised the applicant for not providing a future forestry management plan, which hindered proper assessment of cumulative effects. The inconsistencies identified above at Littleton raise the same concern about the reliability of the assessment as a whole.

There is also a compliance risk worth noting. *Donegal County Council v Planree Ltd* [2024] IEHC 193 (upheld on appeal, [2024] IECA 300) concerned the same Meenbog Wind Farm cited above for its peat slippage. The High Court found the developer had built the wind farm with so many material deviations from its permission that the entire development was ruled unauthorised, and granted an injunction halting further works. This shows that a grant of permission, even with detailed conditions attached, does not guarantee compliance. Given the inconsistencies already identified in Littleton's own EIAR, the Commission should satisfy itself that real, independently verifiable compliance and monitoring mechanisms would be in place - not simply rely on the applicant's good faith.

5. Archaeological, Architectural and Cultural Heritage

- Chapter 14 mainly assesses effects on prominent regional heritage sites (Rock of Cashel, Holy Cross Abbey, Kilcooley Abbey), most found to be far enough away or screened. But closer, less prominent sites haven't been given enough weight - particularly Derrynaflan Church (about 3.6km from the nearest turbine) and the many local graveyards the applicant's own consultants used as landscape viewpoints. An industrial-scale turbine array would materially change the setting of all of these.

- The scale of groundworks is considerable: 15.45km of new access track, six peat and spoil deposition areas, and 24 months of construction across a 1,177ha site with a documented archaeological inventory. Large-scale peat and topsoil stripping on this scale could disturb unrecorded or sub-surface archaeological features. More rigorous pre-construction survey and monitoring commitments are needed than are currently proposed.

6. Residential Amenity - Noise, Shadow Flicker, Property Impacts and Construction Disturbance

- The applicant meets the minimum regulatory setback (4 x tip height, 800m minimum). But meeting the bare minimum doesn't guarantee an acceptable outcome for visual amenity, noise or shadow flicker at the closest homes - especially for the 101 properties within 2km of the turbine array.
- A Private Members' Bill currently before the Oireachtas, the Wind Turbine Regulation Bill 2025, passed Second Stage in the Dáil in November 2025 and is moving to the Seanad. Section 6 would require a setback of 7.5 times tip height for turbines over 30m - at 200m tip height, that's roughly 1,500m, nearly double Littleton's proposed 851m to the closest home. Section 5 would require noise to meet WHO Community Noise Guidelines, and would stop shadow flicker falling on windows at all. The Department of Housing has separately confirmed it is reviewing the 2006 Guidelines on exactly these points - setback, noise and shadow flicker. With both live legislation and a live departmental review reconsidering these very standards, the Commission should treat the current guideline distances as under active question, not as settled, adequate protection.
- Shadow flicker: the applicant's own Chapter 12 modelling shows that, in a worst-case scenario, 16 of 36 receptors would exceed the 30-hours-per-year guideline, and 18 would exceed 30 minutes per day. One receptor (SFAL22) is modelled at almost 76 hours a year. The applicant only avoids a "significant effect" finding by applying a sunshine-hours correction to the annual figure - but admits this correction cannot be applied to the daily 30-minute limit. So the 18-receptor daily exceedance is not actually resolved by that adjustment. The proposed fix is reactive, not preventative: turbines only shut down after a resident reports flicker and it is validated against the model, rather than being designed out from the start, as the Draft 2019 Guidelines' "zero shadow flicker" policy recommends. Residents should not have to detect, report and wait for validation of an impact the applicant's own modelling already predicts.
- Noise: there is no statutory Irish limit for construction-phase noise - the applicant relies on a British standard (BS 5228) instead. Chapter 5 itself admits that borrow pit construction is expected to have "a significant negative effect" (albeit temporary) at the nearest noise-sensitive properties - one of very few places in the whole EIAR where the applicant concedes an effect this serious.
- A recent decision on an operational Irish wind farm (reported by Pinsent Masons, 5 May 2026) found the operator liable in nuisance for noise during night hours and quiet waking hours, and confirmed that planning permission does not fully protect against a private nuisance claim. The Court found the character of the noise - its rhythmic quality, unpredictability and timing - mattered as much as the decibel level, and criticised the operator for defending itself rather than fixing the problem, calling this "unneighbourly." Littleton's modelled decibel compliance in Chapter 11 should not be taken as a guarantee against real-world nuisance, particularly at night. Relevant literature includes Freiberg et al. (2019, Environmental Research) and King, Pilla and Mahon (2012, Energy Policy).
- The turbines could also cause electromagnetic interference, disrupting mobile phone, TV and broadband signals. This raises a real safety concern: it could impair a resident's ability to contact emergency services in a genuine emergency. This risk has not been adequately addressed in the application.

- Property value: the applicant's Chapter 5 relies mainly on large US, UK and Scottish studies finding no measurable effect on house prices. But it also cites the only Irish study available - Gillespie and McHale (2023, University of Galway) - which found a real "proximity effect," with prices dropping "more pronounced within a 2-3km radius," driven by visual intrusion and noise. The applicant then discounts this Irish study in favour of the foreign ones, citing its shorter timeframe and use of asking rather than sale prices. But a study using Irish housing data, Irish wind farms and the Irish property market is inherently more relevant to Littleton than US, UK or Scottish data - whatever its sample size. Its finding of a discount within 2-3km matters directly here: 101 properties sit within 2km of the turbine array, and 12 within 1km.
- Sellability is a separate issue from average price effects, and the EIAR doesn't address it at all. Mortgage lenders, valuers or buyers may be cautious about properties near industrial-scale energy infrastructure - this could extend time-to-sale or lower offers for individual homes, even if large studies show no average market-wide effect.
- Construction disturbance: the wind farm build alone is expected to take 24 months, plus a separate 12-18 months of "rolling" road and lane closures for the grid connection, along a route with 87 one-off houses directly alongside it. Chapter 5 itself admits "potential temporary significant, negative effects to human safety" during turbine delivery if not properly managed, given abnormal loads routed via the M8 and through Urlingford. The Commission should require firm, binding working hours, independent (not self-reported) noise and dust monitoring, and a clear complaints and compensation process. At comparable wind farms, construction traffic for foundation pours has run from 04:00 to 22:00 continuously, with oversized loads sometimes delivered at night.

In ABP-312728-22 (Clare), residents gave direct evidence about the neighbouring Slieve Callan Wind Farm - noise complaints now in legal proceedings, and TV/telecoms interference - which the Board's inspector treated as significant, credible evidence, going beyond the applicant's own modelling. I would encourage residents near Littleton to submit their own direct observations, and their lived experience of existing nearby wind farms (including Gurteen and Ballincurry, both within 5km). This kind of first-hand evidence has proven persuasive before, and no amount of modelling can pre-empt it.

Personal Impact Statement

I would ask the Commission to also consider the personal circumstances underlying this objection. My family invested our life savings into our home, including a patio that looks directly out over the bog lands where this development is proposed. We chose to live in this area specifically for its quiet, rural character and the natural beauty of the landscape, and the enjoyment we take from the scenery and views from our home is a significant and daily part of our quality of life.

From our patio, we can see beautiful sunsets over the farmland and bog. On a clear night before the moon rises, the sky is black and we have a clear view of the milky way.

As it stands, the community has been inundated with windfarm development over the past decade. There are significantly more wind farms in this locale than in any other part of the region that I have observed.

The proposed windfarm development would situate turbines T01, T02, T03, T04, T05 and T06 directly in view from our patio. We would no longer have our beautiful sunsets, and the red lights set on top of the turbines are a constant blemish to the night sky.

The industrialisation of this landscape with 200m turbines would come at a real cost to us: both financial (significant loss in value *if* the property could ever be sold) and personal, through the loss of the rural outlook and setting that were central to our decision to live here. This is not an abstract or

hypothetical concern. It reflects a home and a view we have invested in financially and emotionally over the past 24 years.

Equity is a key element of green energy policy. In this instance, a single community being asked to shoulder a much greater share of the weight of the green transition by accepting ever more and more industrial wind farm development. Windfarm operators profit, local landholders profit, but the community itself loses its property values as well as its character. In my opinion, this is highly inequitable, and contrary to the goals of green energy policy.

Conclusion

For these reasons, I submit that Littleton Wind Farm should be refused permission. In summary:

- The landscape and visual case is weaker than presented, once the applicant's own findings on overbearance, landscape sensitivity and screening are properly weighed - and Curraglass (Co. Cork) confirms visual harm alone can justify refusal. This is made worse by the sheer density of existing and planned wind farms within 20km: 11 operating, 3 consented and 1 pending, over 130 turbines once built, none of it properly weighed in the cumulative visual assessment.
- The rivers here already fail Water Framework Directive 'Good status' thresholds, and the applicant's reliance on downstream dilution mirrors an argument the Board already rejected at Cloghercor (Co. Donegal).
- The curlew mitigation is illustrative, not guaranteed, and depends on third parties - the same flaw the Board rejected in both the Clare and Donegal decisions above.
- The EIAR contains real internal inconsistencies - mismatched turbine coordinates, an unrelated project's name in the Collision Risk Model Report - that call its overall rigour into question. Donegal County Council v Planree Ltd (the same Meenbog site) confirms that compliance with permission conditions cannot simply be assumed.
- I would argue that the community engagement is not genuine. Case in point: roads affected by construction traffic are only identified as raw GPS coordinates buried in a technical appendix - not as a usable map, and not in the road names residents actually use (L4114, L2201, L1857, L4153). This calls into question whether the community consultation carried out was genuinely meaningful.
- Cumulative assessment relies on non-statutory Scottish guidance, and artificially separates the grid connection from the wind farm.
- Heritage effects on closer, less prominent sites have not been given enough weight.
- Residential amenity has been understated on multiple fronts: real (not theoretical) shadow flicker exceedances; noise mitigation that recent case law confirms doesn't guarantee no real nuisance; a genuine Irish property-value discount within 2-3km, sidelined in favour of less relevant foreign studies; and over two years of combined construction disturbance. A Bill currently before the Oireachtas also proposes a far larger setback distance than the applicant relies on here.

I would be grateful if the Commission would take full account of these matters, and I respectfully request that permission be refused.

Yours faithfully,

Tim & Orla Rae