

**Observation regarding Planning Application Case Number: PAX16.324387
Proposed Wind Farm Development located at Muingmore/Doolough County
Mayo**

Name: Barbara and Alan Burke, Doolough, Geesala, Ballina, Co. Mayo, F26 HR9V

Case Number: PAX16.324387

We are writing to formally submit our observations and strong objection regarding the above-mentioned planning application for the construction of wind turbines in the Muingmore/Doolough/Bangor area.

We recognise the importance of Irelands move towards renewable energy sources, however we strongly oppose this specific development due to the disproportionate negative impacts it will have on our family and our community's overall quality of life.

We live in a rural, scenic and tranquil part of Ireland that must be protected.

Our family have lived in this area of Erris for generations. In the past people within our community had to emigrate because of the lack of employment opportunities, Today, due to more flexible working arrangements and advances in technology and communications people are choosing to stay and return. The lifestyle and quality of life the area has to offer plays a key factor. As a population we are more health conscious, our mental health, and wellbeing are of upmost importance. Young people are choosing to live here, to raise their families here and others are choosing to return and retire here. Our community as a result is being reborn, our economy is growing, new business is being developed and greater employment and recreational opportunities are available. This is now at risk.

The proposed development includes 13 wind turbines (as part of phase 1), a substation and a battery energy storage system. There are over 400 homes located within a 2km radius of the proposed site. The largest onshore wind farm in Ireland, Oweninney Wind Farm, is already located 17km from this location. Surely this development, due to its scale, is better suited offshore or in another, less populated location.

We urge An Coimisiun Pleanála to refuse permission on the following grounds:

Landscape and Visual Impact

Our home is located less than 3 kms of the site boundary. The proposed turbines, at a tip height of 80 meters, is exceptionally high, will tower over the landscape and will completely dominate the skyline, overshadowing the area, destroying its natural beauty. I am deeply concerned about the visual impact this will have on my family and community. In an area known for its unspoilt terrain, this development will destroy what we the local community cherish. The visual intrusion will not alone impact our local community, but I believe it will adversely affect the wider Erris area and have a detrimental impact to tourism in the region.

Environmental and Ecological

The proposed site is located on bogland and forestry. This development will inevitably impact the wildlife living in our local area.

- Birds & Bats: there is a high risk of collision, due to the proposed height, from spinning turbine blades and barrier effects that may alter the flight paths of these birds & bats. Noise and visual disturbances could also force these birds and bats out of the area.
- Mammals: Otter, Hare and Deer, known to live in this area will be impacted by disturbances to their breeding and foraging ground and from noise that will be generated.
- Habitats: the construction of new access roads and turbine bases will divide the natural habitats, cutting away bog and forestry. This will harm vital ecosystems and raises serious concerns regarding contamination of local streams, rivers and impact to aquatic wildlife.

Health and Wellbeing

Noise, and Shadow Flicker

It has been widely documented about the known health effects directly associated with operational noise (low frequency vibrations) and shadow flicker generated by rotating blades in Wind Farm developments. Due to the height & size of the turbines proposed in this development, and as the development is in such proximity to a residential area, it is highly likely that those of us living close to this development will experience adverse health effects, such as sleep disturbance, headaches, asthma (due to dust and air pollution) and an overall decreased quality of life. It is also important to note that 5 of 7 noise monitoring instruments failed calibration checks during the survey completed by RWE.

Disruption during Preconstruction & Construction

The impact of noise and disturbances to day-to-day activities, during the preconstruction and construction stages of this development are also of grave concern to us. The roads leading to access points for the proposed site are considered local roads and connect to the only road network to our nearest hospital in Castlebar. Traffic disruption and delays that will inevitably be caused from the construction of this site will as a result cause delays to accessing the hospital. This is a major issue.

Drinking Water

The Doolough water stream is already classified as 'Poor' under European water laws. The runoff from disturbing the bog running straight into this water stream poses a heightened risk of pollution to our drinking water.

Mental Health

Mental health concerns are unfortunately a challenge for many in North West Mayo, with a widespread prevalence of both depression and anxiety recorded in the area. There are of course many factors which contribute to this; however, we are already seeing heightened stress, anxiety and fear within our community as a result of this proposed development. Should this development go ahead and due to the health

effects listed above I believe that rates of mental health within our community will rise. This is of massive concern particularly as the supports available are already under pressure.

Tourism and Local Economy

Located along the Wild Atlantic Way, the area of Doolough, Geesala, Bangor and Erris as a whole rely on tourism and communities have worked hard in developing and nurturing local tourism. The area is renowned for its unspoiled scenic beauty, ruggedness, wild landscape, bogland and coastal views. The proposed wind farm, with turbines reaching heights of 180 meters are incompatible with the landscape and will dominate the skyline, significantly degrading the views that are vital to the Wild Atlantic Way tourism route.

Tourists choose to visit our area to explore and enjoy the beauty of nature, our beaches, take in the scenic view and enjoy the wildness the area has to offer. This development will completely change the look, feel and heart of this area. We will no longer be able to offer the peace & tranquillity tourists desire, instead our community will be turned into an industrial landscape, with over towering and unappealing turbines.

This development seriously threatens our local tourism businesses, from accommodation service providers, restaurants, bars, local shops, hospitality businesses, local providers of tourism activities whose livelihoods rely on this source of income. Employment is at risk and future employment opportunities will be diminished in this sector.

Property Devaluation

The proximity of these massive industrial wind turbines will devalue our home, which was built using our lifelong savings. It will also devalue the agricultural land in the area and have a negative impact to family members wishing to live and build homes here in the future.

For the reasons outlined above, we respectfully request An Coimisiun Pleanála to refuse permission for this wind turbine development.

Thank you for your time, consideration, and for ensuring the protection of our local community and environment.

Sincerely,

Barbara and Alan Burke