

The Secretary
An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902

Re: Proposed Muingmore Wind Farm Case Reference: PAX16.324387

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to make an observation on the proposed Muingmore Wind Farm.

My husband and I were born in Erris and lived here for most of our lives. We moved to the UK but have returned with our children and have been here for the past 20 years now, our family have been brought up here. We all love where we live, and we feel strongly about protecting the place that has given us such a good quality of life.

The raw beauty and tranquillity of this area is what we love. Being able to enjoy the quiet roads, open countryside, wildlife, and coastal views is a very important part of our lives. I am worried that this development would change that experience for local people for many years to come.

My daughter is profoundly deaf and a double Cochlear Implant wearer, we have researched the impact of wind turbines on cochlear implant wearers, and it is not something that she wishes to have to live with -

- Sharp whistling sounds
- Constant white noise.
- severe disorientation.
- confusion.
- loss of balance
- difficulty understanding direction and distance of sound

This is to state a few of the problems she would have to live with.

The proposed site is connected through its streams, drains, bogs and watercourses to the wider environment around Blacksod Bay. The Mullet/Blacksod Bay Complex is protected as a Special Area of Conservation under site code 000470, while Blacksod Bay/Broad Haven is protected as a Special Protection Area under site code 004037.

These protected areas support a wide range of wildlife, including otters, harbour seals and grey seals. They also support protected birds such as the Great Northern Diver, Red-throated Diver, Curlew, Dunlin, Common Scoter and Bar-tailed Godwit.

The environmental effects of the wind farm cannot be considered only within the red line of the development site. Water moves through the bog, drains, streams and rivers

before reaching the wider bay. Any increase in sediment, peat runoff or pollution during construction could travel beyond the immediate works area and affect habitats further downstream.

Blanket bog is recognised under the EU Habitats Directive as habitat code 7130. It is an important habitat that stores carbon, holds water and supports plants, birds and other wildlife.

The development would require the excavation of peat for turbine foundations, access roads, cable routes, the substation and the battery storage compound. Cutting through the peat and changing the natural drainage could affect a much wider area than the direct footprint of the works. Water could be held back in some places while other parts of the bog could begin to dry out.

The land is also sloping in parts. Peat can become heavily saturated after long periods of rain, which are common in Erris. This raises a genuine concern about peat movement, slope failure and the possibility of a landslide.

I would like to know what detailed investigations have been carried out at each turbine location, along every new road and cable route, and at the proposed substation and BESS compound. It is not enough to give general assurances about peat stability. The risks should be properly assessed for each individual part of the site before any planning decision is made.

Tourism is very important to Erris. When my children were teenagers, they worked in local hotels and bars. These jobs gave them valuable experience and income and are very important for young people growing up in rural areas.

Local hotels, pubs, cafés, restaurants, and accommodation providers depend on people choosing to visit Erris. Visitors come here for the scenery, the coast, the wildlife, the walking and cycling routes, and the peace and quiet. Erris still has a wild and authentic character that is becoming difficult to find in many other places. If the windfarm goes ahead it will seriously impact on peoples livelihoods.

Thirteen turbines reaching approximately 180 metres in height would be visible across a wide area. Together with the new roads, compounds, security fencing, lighting, substation and battery storage facility, the development would introduce a major industrial presence into the landscape.

I believe the possible effect on tourism and local employment needs to be taken much more seriously. The value of the area is not only measured by the amount of electricity that could be generated. The landscape and natural environment already support local businesses and provide employment for families and young people.

I am especially concerned about the proposed Battery Energy Storage System, or BESS. The application describes a compound containing 120 battery containers and 15 inverter containers, within an area measuring approximately 156 metres by 99 metres.

This is a very large development, and I do not believe that a battery facility of this scale is required for thirteen turbines. It should be established whether it is intended only for the Muingmore Wind Farm or whether it could also store electricity from other projects or from the wider national grid.

The risks associated with the BESS must also be fully considered. These include the possibility of fire, thermal runaway, noise from cooling equipment, security lighting, polluted firefighting water and the ability of the local emergency services to deal with a serious incident.

We live in Geesala, and from looking at the applicant's shadow-flicker maps, it appears that our house will experience some shadow flicker.

I would like to know exactly how many hours my home could be affected, what time of day it could happen and during which months of the year. The assessment should be based on the final turbine model, blade size and exact turbine locations.

A promise to shut down a turbine after shadow flicker occurs does not remove the concern. Residents should know before permission is granted what the likely effect will be on their homes and daily lives.

We are also concerned about future generations who may want to remain living in the area. Many local families hope that their children or grandchildren will be able to build homes near their families.

There needs to be a clear answer on whether the wind farm operator could object to future planning applications because a proposed home might be affected by turbine noise, shadow flicker or separation distances.

It would be unfair if a young local person was prevented from building near their family home because the wind farm had been given priority. The possible effect of this development on future rural housing should be examined as part of the present application, rather than being dealt with years later when local families apply for planning permission.

The construction traffic is another major concern. Many of the roads around Geesala, Doolough and the surrounding areas are narrow, have soft edges and pass over bog or weak ground. They were not built to carry large numbers of heavy construction vehicles.

The development would involve concrete lorries, stone trucks, cranes, abnormal turbine loads and other heavy vehicles. The weight and volume of this traffic could cause road damage, subsidence and broken road edges.

The same roads are used every day by residents, school buses, farm vehicles, cyclists, walkers and emergency services. I regularly walk and cycle locally, and I would not feel safe sharing these narrow roads with a constant flow of heavy construction traffic.

The applicant should provide a detailed structural survey of every road that would be used. This should be completed before permission is granted and should be available to the public.

There should also be clear information on the number of daily vehicle movements, the hours when deliveries would take place, possible road closures and how residents would safely travel to work, school, shops and medical appointments.

Repairing roads after construction would not undo years of disruption or remove the danger created during the works. The safety and structural ability of the road network should be proven before the development is allowed to proceed.

I support renewable energy and understand the need to reduce carbon emissions. However, renewable energy projects must be placed in suitable locations and must not create unacceptable effects on local homes, peatlands, wildlife, tourism and the future of rural communities.

Having considered the size and location of this proposal, the risks to the blanket bog and water environment, the possible effect on protected sites, the impact on local roads and tourism, the size of the BESS facility and the effect on nearby homes, I do not believe this is a suitable development for this location.

I respectfully ask An Coimisiún Pleanála to refuse permission for the proposed Muingmore Wind Farm under case reference PAX16.324387.

Yours faithfully,

Caroline & JT McDonagh

Geesala

Ballina

Co Mayo

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