

## **Planning Objection to the Proposed Wind Farm Development in North Mayo**

### **To: An Coimisiún Pleanála**

I wish to lodge a formal objection to the proposed wind farm development in North Mayo. I believe this proposal would result in unacceptable and irreversible impacts on the area's environment, biodiversity, landscape, local communities and economy. My concerns reflect not only my own views but also those shared by many residents who are deeply concerned about the long-term consequences of this development.

North Mayo is widely recognised for its outstanding natural scenery, ecological significance and largely unspoilt landscapes. The scale of the proposed turbines, together with the associated infrastructure, would dramatically alter the character of this unique coastal region and have lasting effects on wildlife, habitats and the people who depend upon this landscape.

### **Environmental Effects on Habitats and Biodiversity**

North Mayo contains some of Ireland's most valuable coastal ecosystems, including blanket bog, peatland, coastal heath, wetlands, estuaries and dune systems. Many of these habitats benefit from protection under both Irish and European environmental legislation because of their ecological importance.

The construction of turbine foundations, new access roads and associated infrastructure would inevitably disturb these sensitive environments. Peatlands in particular have developed over thousands of years and perform an important environmental function. Disturbance to these areas may:

- Release substantial amounts of stored carbon.
- Disrupt natural drainage systems.
- Increase sediment entering rivers and streams.
- Reduce water quality.
- Damage specialised peatland vegetation such as Sphagnum mosses, bog asphodel, sundews and other native plant species.

Once degraded, these habitats are extremely difficult to restore to their original condition.

### **Effects on Bird Populations**

North Mayo forms part of an internationally significant migration corridor and provides habitat for many protected bird species.

Large wind turbines are known to increase the risk of collision while also causing birds to avoid traditional feeding, nesting and breeding areas.

Species potentially affected include:

- Golden Plover
- Hen Harrier
- Merlin
- Peregrine Falcon
- Curlew

- Chough
- Red Grouse
- Snipe
- Greenland White-fronted Goose
- Whooper Swan
- Kittiwake
- Fulmar
- Guillemot
- Razorbill

Many of these species are protected under the EU Birds Directive and are recognised as being of significant conservation concern.

### **Impacts on Bat Species**

Bats are especially vulnerable to wind energy developments yet often receive less public attention.

Species known to occur within County Mayo include:

- Common Pipistrelle
- Soprano Pipistrelle
- Leisler's Bat

In addition to collision risks, bats may suffer fatal injuries caused by rapid pressure changes around rotating turbine blades (barotrauma). Because bat populations reproduce slowly, even limited additional mortality can have serious long-term consequences.

### **Mammals and Marine Ecology**

The coastline and surrounding habitats support a wide variety of protected mammals, including:

- Otter
- Irish Hare
- Pine Marten

Construction activities, increased marine traffic and operational disturbance could interfere with important feeding, breeding and resting areas used by these species.

### **Landscape and Tourism**

Tourism plays an important role in the economy of North Mayo, with visitors attracted by its exceptional scenery and outdoor recreation opportunities.

The area is renowned for:

- The Wild Atlantic Way
- Undeveloped coastal scenery
- Dark skies

- Birdwatching
- Walking
- Photography
- Angling
- Archaeological and heritage attractions

Industrial-scale wind turbines would permanently change many of the panoramic views that currently define the landscape. Rather than strengthening tourism, this development risks reducing the attractiveness of one of the region's greatest assets and could negatively affect accommodation providers, cafés, restaurants and other local businesses.

### **Residential Amenity**

Residents living near the proposed development could experience a range of ongoing impacts, including:

- Operational turbine noise.
- Low-frequency sound.
- Shadow flicker.
- Aviation safety lighting during darkness.

These effects have the potential to diminish the enjoyment of homes and reduce the tranquillity that is a defining feature of rural North Mayo. Strong scientific evidence supports the view that **annoyance, sleep disturbance and reduced quality of life** can occur for people living close to wind turbines, particularly where noise or visual impacts are significant.

### **Construction Impacts**

The construction phase would involve considerable heavy vehicle traffic transporting turbine components, machinery and concrete along local roads.

This is likely to result in:

- Damage to existing road infrastructure.
- Increased road safety concerns.
- Disruption to agricultural activities.
- Difficulties for local businesses.
- Extended periods of construction-related disturbance.

### **Heritage**

North Mayo has a rich cultural and archaeological heritage consisting of historic landscapes, traditional farming patterns and archaeological features that contribute significantly to the area's identity.

The introduction of large-scale industrial infrastructure would diminish the historic character of this landscape and reduce the amenity value enjoyed by residents and visitors.

## **Cumulative Effects**

The proposal should be assessed alongside existing and approved wind energy developments rather than in isolation.

The combined visual, ecological and environmental effects of multiple wind farms have the potential to fundamentally alter the character of North Mayo if development continues on this scale.

## **Protecting North Mayo's Natural Environment**

Although the impacts on residents—including visual intrusion, noise, increased traffic, shadow flicker and possible effects on property values—are important considerations, the greatest concern relates to the permanent environmental consequences.

North Mayo's peatlands, coastal habitats and wildlife have evolved over many thousands of years. Once damaged, these ecosystems cannot simply be recreated. Permanent losses would undermine decades of conservation efforts and affect future generations.

Many habitats and species in the region are protected through Irish legislation and European environmental law, including the EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), and Ireland's Wildlife Acts 1976–2023. Large parts of North Mayo are designated as, or connected with, Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) because of their exceptional ecological importance.

These protections require that developments do not adversely affect protected habitats or species, whether individually or through cumulative impacts. Where uncertainty exists regarding the possibility of significant environmental harm, the precautionary principle should apply. This principle recognises that where there is a risk of serious or irreversible damage, uncertainty should not be used as justification for proceeding.

Given the recognised risks associated with large wind farms—including impacts on peatlands, protected birds, bat populations, biodiversity and water quality—there is legitimate concern that this proposal may conflict with Ireland's environmental obligations unless it can be demonstrated beyond reasonable scientific doubt that protected sites and species will not be adversely affected.

Support for renewable energy does not require acceptance of development in every location. Most residents recognise the need to reduce carbon emissions and support the transition to cleaner energy sources. However, renewable energy projects should be located where they avoid significant environmental harm and do not compromise nationally and internationally important conservation interests.

The biodiversity, habitats and landscapes of North Mayo represent irreplaceable natural assets. Once degraded, they cannot realistically be restored within the lifetime of the present generation. In my view, the environmental costs associated with this proposal outweigh any potential benefits, and the concerns expressed by the local community deserve significant consideration.

## **Conclusion**

Renewable energy is an important part of addressing climate change, but developments must be carefully located to minimise environmental damage.

North Mayo is an environmentally sensitive area of national and international importance. The potential impacts on peatlands, protected habitats, birds, bats, marine wildlife, landscape quality and the tourism economy are considerable and cannot be fully mitigated.

Local opposition is not based on resistance to renewable energy itself but on the belief that this exceptional part of County Mayo is an unsuitable location for industrial-scale wind energy infrastructure.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála refuse permission for the proposed wind farm development.

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