

Doolough,
Geesala,
Ballina,
Co Mayo
F26 P2Y1
02.08.2026

Case Number PAX16.324387

Dear Sir/Madam

This submission is made in my personal capacity as a resident of Doolough, a wife, a mother, an Intensive Care Nurse and someone who has spent a lifetime connected to Geesala, Doolough and the Erris Peninsula. I will also be making a separate submission in my role as Director of the Erris Coast Hotel.

I was born and raised in Geesala. I attended our local school, spent my childhood exploring the beaches, bogs and shores of this extraordinary landscape and every summer rode horses along Doolough Beach. As a student I worked in the original Erris Coast Hotel (formally known as Teach Iorrais) while attending college. Every Sunday evening, as I returned to college, I felt heartbroken leaving home. I later qualified as an Intensive Care Nurse, but wherever I worked or travelled I always spoke proudly about Erris and encouraged others to visit. Throughout my life I have watched Erris evolve. For many years it struggled with emigration and a lack of opportunity, yet our landscape remained our greatest strength. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, people increasingly sought out remote, peaceful and authentic destinations. Visitors began flocking to places like Erris because they were searching for exactly what we have always had—tranquillity, natural beauty, dark skies, clean air and a chance to escape increasingly busy urban lives. It has been wonderful to see our area finally being recognised and appreciated for these qualities.

I also have the privilege of managing our family business, the Erris Coast Hotel. In that role, I have the opportunity to speak with visitors from across Ireland and overseas every day. Time and again they tell us why they have travelled to Erris. They come to escape busy cities, noise and congestion. They come to experience the unspoilt landscape, the Atlantic coastline, our beaches, mountains, blanket bog, dark skies and the peace and tranquillity that are becoming increasingly difficult to find elsewhere. Many are walkers, cyclists, anglers, birdwatchers and photographers who value the area's natural environment above all else. Others simply want somewhere to slow down, reconnect with nature and spend quality time with family and friends. Many tell us they leave feeling rested in a way they have not experienced for years. Hearing these comments day after day has reinforced my belief that our landscape is not simply beautiful—it is one of

Erris's greatest economic assets and the foundation upon which our tourism industry and future prosperity depend.

I met my husband through our annual Geesala Festival. Although he was born and raised in London, he is proudly of Irish descent and, like thousands of emigrants and their families, he never missed returning to Geesala for the festival each year. It remains one of the most special traditions in our community. Every summer, our small village comes alive as families return from across the world to reconnect with their roots, their families and the landscape that has always drawn them home. After we married, I moved to England. When our second daughter was just three weeks old, we made the decision to return permanently to Erris. My husband has commuted weekly to London for the past twelve years so our daughters could grow up here. Looking back now, it is one of the best decisions we have ever made.

For most of my adult life people have asked why we would choose to make the sacrifices we have made to live in such a remote part of Ireland. My answer has always been the same: nowhere else could give our children the childhood that Erris could.

When my husband returns home from London at the end of each working week, we make the most of our weekends together as a family. We enjoy walking on the boglands or along Doolough Beach, spending time in our garden and polytunnel, caring for our animals, or simply being outdoors together. It is a slower pace of life that we value immensely.

Our daughters learned to cycle on the quiet local roads around our home. We grow herbs and salad crops which we supply to the Erris Coast Hotel, and much of our free time is spent tending our polytunnel, caring for our donkeys, chickens, ducks, dogs and cats. As a family we enjoy birdwatching. Using the Merlin Bird ID app, we have repeatedly identified the call of a Long-eared owl in the mature boundary trees around our property. Living close to the shoreline we regularly hear the distinctive call of the Curlew echoing across the bog. At dusk bats frequently sweep through the boundary trees and across the bog while we are outdoors. These everyday experiences are among the reasons we chose to return to Erris.

The noise emitted from this development is a significant concern for our family. The applicant's assessments inevitably rely on predicted noise modelling, but they cannot fully reflect the lived experience of those residing so close to turbines of this scale. Our home is located in an exceptionally quiet rural environment where natural sounds dominate—the wind across the blanket bog, birdsong and the distant sound of the Atlantic ocean. It is precisely that tranquillity which defines our quality of life. The introduction of operational turbine noise into such a quiet landscape would fundamentally alter that environment, particularly during evenings, at night and during periods when

background noise levels are naturally very low. Given our close proximity to proposed Turbine T8, I am concerned that the long-term impact on our family's residential amenity has not been fully appreciated.

The proposed aviation warning lights on turbines of this height are another significant concern. Erris lies adjacent to the internationally recognised Mayo Dark Sky Park, one of only a small number of certified International Dark Sky Parks in the world. The exceptional darkness of our night skies is one of the area's defining natural assets and an increasingly important attraction for visitors seeking an unspoilt natural environment. The introduction of permanent flashing red aviation warning lights across the skyline would be entirely alien in this landscape, replacing natural darkness with a constant industrial presence visible for many kilometres. The cumulative effect of multiple illuminated turbines would fundamentally alter the character of our night-time environment and erode one of the very qualities that makes Erris unique.

Another significant concern for me is shadow flicker. According to the applicant's assessment, our home (Property No. 39) is identified as being affected by shadow flicker. While the assessment understandably focuses on the house itself, our lives are not confined to the four walls of our home. Much of our family's time is spent outdoors. We work in our polytunnel, tend our vegetable gardens, care for our animals and simply enjoy spending time outside together. These outdoor spaces are an extension of our home and are central to our daily lives. I question whether the impact of shadow flicker on these outdoor living and working areas has been properly considered. It is difficult to understand why the assessment should stop at the walls of a dwelling when gardens, farms and surrounding land are where many rural families spend a considerable part of each day. Any assessment of our quality of life should, in my view, reflect the reality of how we live.

A further source of significant anxiety for our family is the proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) and its proximity to our home. We deliberately chose to build our forever home in this location because of its peaceful rural setting. The prospect of major energy infrastructure being located so close to our family home is deeply concerning. I have contacted our home insurance provider to discuss the proposed development. While they could not confirm at this stage whether our insurance premium would increase, they were equally unable to provide any assurance that it would not. That uncertainty alone is worrying for a family whose home represents the largest investment we have ever made.

I have also sought professional advice regarding the potential impact of the proposed development on the value of our property. I have been advised by a valuation company

that, because of our close proximity to the proposed development, our home could potentially lose up to 40% of its market value. This is an extremely distressing prospect for our family. Conversations with residents in nearby Bellacorick about the difficulty of selling or remortgaging their homes close to a major energy infrastructure have only reinforced these concerns.

Our children rely on the local school bus every day. Like many rural families, we have carefully planned our daily routines around the existing timetable, which already operates to a very tight schedule. The roads our daughters travel each day are narrow and require drivers to regularly pull in to allow other vehicles to pass. I am concerned that the significant increase in heavy construction traffic associated with this development could lead to regular delays, longer journey times and even earlier departures each morning for local children. As a parent, I believe these day-to-day impacts on family life should be fully recognised when assessing the overall effects of the proposed development.

Our family also owns approximately 11 acres of blanket bog, part of which may lie adjacent to the proposed location of Turbine 8. Having walked this bog for decades, I know how it behaves in all seasons. During the winter months it is extensively waterlogged, and in places the depth of the peat is unknown. When my children jump on parts of the bog, I can feel the movement travel through the ground many metres away beneath my feet. That experience has given me grave concerns about the scale of excavation proposed for turbine foundations and associated infrastructure, and about the potential effects on the movement of water, drainage and runoff across this highly sensitive blanket bog ecosystem.

As a resident of Doolough, I am particularly concerned about the potential impact on the Doolough Stream. The applicant's own surveys recorded significant numbers of brown trout in the stream, while also identifying it as being at "Poor Status" and "At Risk" under the Water Framework Directive.

This is an extremely wet, peat-based landscape where water moves quickly through drains and streams after heavy rainfall. Extensive peat excavation, roads, turbine foundations and construction works create a real risk of sediment and pollutants entering this already vulnerable watercourse. The Doolough Stream ultimately connects towards Blacksod Bay and sensitive protected habitats downstream. For those of us who actually live in Doolough, protecting this stream and the wider water environment should take precedence over introducing further environmental pressure to a waterbody that is already classified as being at risk.

I also believe it is extremely important that this application is considered in the context of the planning policy that is now in place for County Mayo. On 13 July 2026, Mayo County Council adopted Variation No. 2 of the Mayo County Development Plan 2022–2028, incorporating the updated Renewable Energy Strategy for County Mayo.

I appreciate that this planning application was prepared and submitted before the final strategy was adopted. However, this development has not yet been decided. The decision will be made now, at a time when the updated Renewable Energy Strategy forms part of the County Development Plan. I therefore believe that the proposed development should be fully assessed against the planning policy now in force and that the adopted strategy should be given appropriate weight in determining this application.

For those of us who will live with the consequences of this development, this is particularly important. Planning policy evolves for a reason. The updated Renewable Energy Strategy represents Mayo County Council's current approach to how renewable energy development should be planned across the county. It would be deeply concerning to local residents if a development of this scale were assessed without full regard to that updated policy simply because the application was lodged before the variation was formally adopted.

A further concern is that many of those who are selling or leasing land for this proposed development will not be the people who must live with its consequences for generations to come. Many do not have children growing up in this community, and a significant number do not reside in County Mayo. A considerable proportion of the lands involved are also owned by Coillte, a State forestry company. As a result, many of the decisions shaping the future of this landscape are being made by organisations or individuals who will not experience the long-term effects on daily life in this community. Yet decisions that will permanently alter our landscape, environment and way of life are being driven by landowners who will not experience the day-to-day impacts on local families, schools and communities. While I fully respect the rights of landowners to make decisions regarding their own property, those private financial arrangements must be balanced against the rights of the wider community, whose homes, children's future, landscape and quality of life will be affected long after any lease payments have ended.

Many local people also feel a deep sense of powerlessness throughout this process. There is a genuine question being asked across our community: "Is there any point in making a submission? Will our views really make a difference?" That question alone should be a matter of concern. The scale and financial resources available to the developer create a widespread perception that local voices are competing against organisations with far greater legal and financial resources. Many residents fear that, regardless of the outcome

of this application, prolonged legal challenges could follow, making it difficult to believe that the concerns of ordinary families will ultimately carry equal weight. Whether or not those fears are justified, they are sincerely held by many members of this community. That growing sense of helplessness risks undermining public confidence in the planning process itself. It is vital that local people know their voices matter and that their submissions are genuinely considered on their planning merits.

Planning decisions such as this are effectively irreversible. Lease agreements may expire and ownership may change, but the industrialisation of this landscape will remain for generations. As parents, we are not simply making decisions for ourselves but acting as custodians of a place that we hope to pass intact to our children and grandchildren. Once this landscape is altered, it cannot simply be returned to its natural state.

Erris has spent decades trying to reverse depopulation and rebuild vibrant rural communities. Young families like ours have made conscious decisions to return home, to invest here, to raise children here and to build businesses here because of the unique qualities of this landscape. Developments of this scale risk undermining decades of that progress. The question before An Coimisiún Pleanála is not simply whether this development can be built, but whether it should be built in a place whose greatest strength is the very landscape that so many families have fought to preserve and return to

Throughout my nursing career, I learned that health is about far more than treating illness. It is about the environments in which people live, the quality of the air they breathe, the peace they experience, their connection with nature, and the strength of their families and communities. Those same values are what brought me home to Erris and what compel me to make this submission today. I therefore ask An Coimisiún Pleanála to refuse permission for this proposed development. My hope is that my daughters, and one day their own children, will be able to enjoy the same peaceful landscape, wildlife, quiet roads and sense of belonging that have shaped my own life.

Yours Sincerely

Deborah O'Sullivan