

PAX16.324387

Donald Teskey RHA Tullaghanbaun, Geesala, Ballina, Co.Mayo F26W5E5

I wish to formally object to the proposed Muingmore Wind Farm development in the Geesala, Mount Jubilee and Doolough area of Erris, County Mayo.

The Landscape is a Cultural Asset, Not an Empty Space

Erris is one of Europe's last extensive wild Atlantic landscapes, a place where bog, mountain, coastline and immense skies remain largely uninterrupted by industrial development.

For artists, writers, residents, and visitors, its value lies not simply in scenery but in its atmosphere, silence and sense of scale.

Landscape is part of Ireland's cultural heritage. Once industrialised, that visual integrity cannot realistically be restored within a lifetime.

Current proposals involve turbines 180 metres in height, among the tallest structures in the region, visible across extensive areas of the peninsula and along sections of the Wild Atlantic Way.

This would fundamentally alter the character of this area. Unlike traditional rural infrastructure, turbines dominate horizons. They become the defining feature of the landscape.

Artists helped shape public appreciation of places such as Connemara, the Burren and the west coast of Ireland by revealing their cultural and emotional significance.

For an artist, there is a broader argument than simply saying that wind turbines alter a view.

The deeper issue is that the Erris landscape itself is part of Ireland's cultural heritage. It has inspired artists, writers and musicians for generations, and continues to function as a living cultural landscape rather than merely a scenic backdrop.

Heritage Value of Erris

The value of a place is not confined to protected monuments or archaeological sites. It also includes what UNESCO describes as intangible heritage, the traditions, memories, artistic responses and sense of place that develop over generations.

The bogs, cliffs, Atlantic light and open horizons of Erris have shaped local identity, language and creative expression. Once the visual character of that landscape is fundamentally altered, something more than scenery is affected; a source of historic meaning is diminished, if not lost for future generations.

For painters in particular, landscape is both subject and archive. Every generation sees the same mountains, bogs and sea under different light, yet contributes a new interpretation. The continuity between the place and successive generations of artists becomes part of the area's cultural inheritance.

Ballingen Arts Foundation as Cultural Evidence

The Ballinglen Arts Foundation, located in Ballycastle, Co. Mayo, of which I am a fellow, provides perhaps the strongest contemporary evidence that the landscape of North Mayo has international cultural significance.

Founded in 1992, the Foundation was established specifically to bring Irish and international artists to live and work in North Mayo because of the exceptional quality of its landscape and community. Since then, hundreds of artists have travelled from Europe, North America and Asia to make work in response to this place. Its stated mission is to strengthen cultural awareness while benefiting both artists and the local community through residencies, exhibitions, education and public engagement.

This is significant in the planning context because it demonstrates that the landscape already generates cultural and economic value without being industrialised.

The landscape creates value simply by remaining itself.

Artists come because of the Atlantic light, the open blanket bog, the quietness, the relationship between sea and mountain and the remarkable absence of visual clutter

Those qualities are precisely what many people fear would be eroded by large-scale wind farm development.

The Ballinglen Museum of Art now houses a permanent collection of more than 900 works created by artists during their residencies. The Foundation describes the collection as a record of artists responding to the environment, heritage and community of North Mayo over more than three decades. In that sense, the collection is not simply about art, it is a visual archive of the cultural landscape itself.

Very few rural areas in Ireland can point to such a sustained international artistic engagement.

Hundreds of artists from around the world have travelled to Erris for over thirty years because its landscape possesses exceptional artistic value. Their Erris-inspired works are represented in collections and museums around the world.

As a leading landscape painter of Ireland and a member of Aosdána, my paintings are in many notable private and public collections including the National Gallery of Ireland and the Irish Museum of Modern Art. I have introduced many other artists and visitors to the uniqueness of the Geesala peninsula where I'm based. What strikes everyone who comes here is the unspoilt beauty and quietness. One of Erris' greatest resources is quiet. Silence has aesthetic value. It has a psychological value. Once industrial windfarm activity becomes permanent, silence cannot be recreated.

There is also a wider public interest. We readily invest in museums, galleries and theatres because they are recognised as cultural infrastructure. Yet the landscape that inspires the art shown in those institutions is not always given the same recognition.

One of Ireland's Most Significant Landscapes

For many artists, the bogs, cliffs and coast of Erris are themselves a kind of open-air studio. They are not simply the setting for culture; they are part of the process by which culture is made.

There is a compelling argument to be made that the artistic importance of Erris is clearly demonstrable through the work of the many visiting painters and the international community fostered by The Ballinglen Foundation, the peninsula has become one of Ireland's most significant

centres for landscape painting. That gives the landscape a cultural value extending well beyond County Mayo.

Conclusion

The case against wind farm development in Geesala and Erris is fundamentally a case for the protection of landscape as a public good. The Erris Peninsula is more than a site of wind resource: it is a nationally significant cultural landscape whose value lies in its openness, wildness, ecological richness and artistic inspiration. Renewable energy is essential, but its deployment should be balanced with the long-term stewardship of landscapes whose environmental, cultural and aesthetic importance extends well beyond the communities in which they are located.

I respectfully request that planning permission for the proposed Muingmore Wind Farm be refused.

--