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The following observation relates to Muingmore Wind Farm, case reference PAX16.324387.

I implore you all at the An Coimisiun Pleanala to please refuse this development .

My name is Finola Geraghty and I live in London. My mother Mary Ruddy was from Lakefield and left her home along with countless others from Erris in the 1950s. I have gone back every year for nearly forty years and since I had my daughter some twenty years ago I have brought her back with me every year.

The diaspora are a strong and passionate voice that is not "nostalgic" or sentimental. We too feel like we have been charged with looking after this place for our children and our grandchildren and increasingly so as the world becomes more troubled and technologically driven and nature is threatened.

Tourism

Walking along the Grassmeel Road and standing on the bog of Muingmore is one of the first things we do when we go back- to be surrounded by 360 degrees of just sky. I have never been anywhere like this in the world. This unique and extraordinary view will be obliterated.

Recently at the Galway Film Fleadh an American film shot partly at Carne Golf Course was premiered and presented by the actor Ed Burn. As stated by a character in the film Carne is the only natural golf course in Ireland - it has not been dug or constructed just mowed.

It attracts a lot of visitors all year round who bring a lot of business and kudos to the area. An Irish American character Marie in the film at one point stands on the golf course and says "everywhere you look it is beautiful." The film is about to be released in America and will undoubtedly draw golfers to Carne.

The wind farm will be visible from Carne as well as from Achill, both tourist spots in an area that has been slow but ultimately successful in developing a tourist following.

Only recently people have started steadily veering off the Wild Atlantic Way to Belmullet and driving through Geesala to Doohoma, encouraged also by actor Stephen Mangan who often promotes the area. And now that route will be blighted by this proposed project.

Furthermore this development will also ruin the historic and unique races at Doolough. The structures will effect permanent change to the landscape, views, clear dark skies, quiet roads and rural character of this area.

Environmental Damage

As a neutral observer I attended the planning meetings held in 2012 ahead of the building of the tunnel to the Shell Refinery at Bellanaboy.

The INSTABILITY of the bog was raised often and acknowledged by BOTH sides, especially bog land that is near to the shoreline.

The two points that stood out were:

- the disturbance of the daub- the volatile blue clay that lies under the bog, which locals say "misbehaves" when disturbed. It is full of aluminium -this is also established from research done into the propensity of Alzheimer's disease in the west of Ireland. Once released the daub cannot be contained. Aluminium is extremely toxic to aquatic life, plants and sea weed and there will most certainly be run off into the sea and into the lakes and streams from any digging out of the land.
- the instability of the bog, its shifting nature. The wind farm will be built on waterlogged bog near the sea. These structures are 180 metres high, can the appropriate stability be maintained.

Disturbing and digging out of peat or bog land will also cause release of HUGE amounts of carbon.

Also this area of bog is adjacent to the much lauded National Park near Ballycroy proudly advertising the biggest and most unspoilt blanket bog in Europe..only for visitors to see a wind farm as its backdrop because it will be visible from there.

Cultural/ Religious Significance

This area has unique historic and cultural significance. Locals and diaspora alike know that Mount Jubilee has been a sacred place for thousands of years. It was originally the gathering point for what is now the Fair Day In Belmullet and the prehistoric mound at the top of the hill is still there but inaccessible now for the purposes of preservation.

Every year people gather for mass in the church on Mount Jubilee on August 15th the feast of the Ascension of Our Lady into Heaven, and throughout the year climb the hill to visit the church. We have all grown up with the knowledge that there was an apparition of Our Lady there, that she was seen on or next to a ladder to Heaven, coming down or going up, by a local man one night and that Archbishop McHale vouched for the Vision and placed a stone at the spot, after which time church was built. For residents and diaspora alike it does not matter that Mount Jubilee hasn't been commercialised like Knock it is a holy place and it deserves to be preserved and respected as Knock is.

In 1826 when the Penal Laws forbade the celebration of the Catholic Jubilee Archbishop McHale said one of only a handful of Masses- celebrated in the country at a time when Catholicism was illegal- on the side of the hill at what was an ancient site. The wall of the original ancient building is now incorporated into the little Church. This is surely another reason to value and protect this unassuming and spiritually rich area.

Archaeological Significance

There has been little archaeological exploration of the area but what has been found randomly suggests a sophisticated civilisation.

An Iron Age bog butter container (around 1200 year old) was found last century and is the only one of its kind found in Ireland. Most of the fifty odd bog butter containers in the country have been found in Mayo but the one, in question, from Mount Jubilee is unique, and similar ones have only ever been seen in Skye in Scotland suggesting unexplored Iron Age links between the west of Ireland and Scotland- and a potential wealth of treasures yet to be found-not unlike the discovery at Ceide Fields.

A prehistoric axe head - (estimated to be 5000 years old) was also found there, There is also the famous trove of treasure, gold torques and amber beads, found at Doolough Beach nearby, which is on display in the National Museum of Ireland.

If this area becomes a construction site any more artefacts or expressions of the area's ancient history will be destroyed. Erris is a humble area, that has never shouted about its treasures and its magic. Any discoveries in the area have been accidental and it is the right of the people to keep it that way. They live alongside on top and with their ancient history, the way that many rich cultures do.

Energy Production and Data Centres

Why are we giving up this special place for a wind farm that by all accounts will service a data centre? Ireland's data centres use more energy than its entire domestic consumption.

People asked to sacrifice their peace of their homes and the natural beauty of the area;. Is it clear for what? How is this benefitting anyone? Is it cost effective? Or dependent on the carbon levy on people's electricity bills? £1billion was spent in Scotland last year to turn the wind farms off because the national grid has is not equipped to process the massive amounts of energy coming from the wind farms.

And what is the sacrifice for? How does it benefit Irish people whose energy needs are already being met?

A German company own the wind farm and will they pay taxes or will costs continuously wipe out their tax bill- low as it is anyway in Ireland.

Both Australia and the state of New York have called a moratorium on the building of any more data centre until they have strict regulations because of the vast amounts of energy and water consumed.

Ireland is recognised as a global data centre hub and data centres use 21 per cent of all electricity produced compared to 4 per cent in US and 1 per cent in China. For such a tiny country that feels like exploitation. There are also no regulations which is perhaps why there seems to be a rush to create these wind farms in North Mayo.

It cannot be coincidence that these countries USA and China are addressing the rumblings of a world water shortage as we all experience a heatwaves by regulating data centres, yet North Mayo seems to have been ear marked for three medium to large sites when it already has a huge and growing wind farm at Bellacorrick.

It also smacks of a lack of regard for North Mayo and Erris- in particular. Erris is a place that does not shout about itself. Putting its beautiful character aside it has contributed more than any other region in Ireland to the Irish economy in terms of the forty years of emigration of its people into the building industry in the UK and the money that was consequently and continuously sent and spent at "home."

Traffic Congestion

The proposed scheme is completely unfeasible and impractical in terms of highways .

The road through Muingmore is narrow and I have walked it frequently as a footpath through the scenery and it was always considered a lovely footpath to walk on. It can barely fit a car and certainly not a larger vehicle or two cars at the same time. Any attempt to treat it as a highway will result in congestion. How on earth will this track accommodate a major construction project? At one end is the road that people take to Geesala and Doohoma and Bangor and at the other is the Bangor. So a new road will be part of the proposal presumably.

It is untenable that huge lorries and construction machines will then use these road without serious risk to people who live at either end not to mention the livestock. It will destroy the life of the place, not just the construction area but the whole area covered by the new roads. It is Bangor Erris which is an essential resource for people from all around for supplies, will be completely changed by this and the increased traffic.

This is not a huge area and these structures and the level of construction required are completely disproportionate.

Ecological Destruction

This development will cause aluminium pollution; noise pollution; it will endanger protected species of birds who now face- along with bats- the risk of collision into the blades as has been seen in Scotland. The wild bees in Muingmore and Mount Jubilee well hidden on the Mountain are not even mentioned but locals and diaspora know about them. They will be wiped out.

Wind farms in Scotland have a varying scale- small scale is three or less, 50 m or less. This wind farm of 13 turbines, each 180 m high is called "medium" but that is hardly a natural step up from "small". A "medium sized" wind farm may sound like a reassuring label but in reality it is not. And is that where the proposal ends? What if it was decided to make the the proposed wind farm large scale ?

The Oweninny Wind Farm formerly Bellacorrick started with 29 turbines . It now has 60 and a further 18 are being added to make 78. Why are other wind farms being simultaneously passed and proposed- one near Belderrig and one near Lacken and now at Muingmore.

Why and for what ?

If it is all for data centres it is worth noting that these "buildings" are around 40 meters high.

For the above reasons, I respectfully ask that permission for the Windfarm at Muingmore be refused.