

To: An Bord Pleanála

Re: Formal Objection to Proposed Wind Farm Development at Muingmore,
Bunnahowen, Co. Mayo

Case Number: PAX16.324387

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to formally object to the proposed wind farm development at Muingmore, Bunnahowen, County Mayo (Case No. PAX16.324387).

This objection is not made in opposition to renewable energy or Ireland's climate commitments. I fully appreciate the need to transition towards sustainable sources of electricity. However, renewable energy projects must be located responsibly, with proper regard for the people who live nearby, the environment, local heritage, and the long-term wellbeing of rural communities.

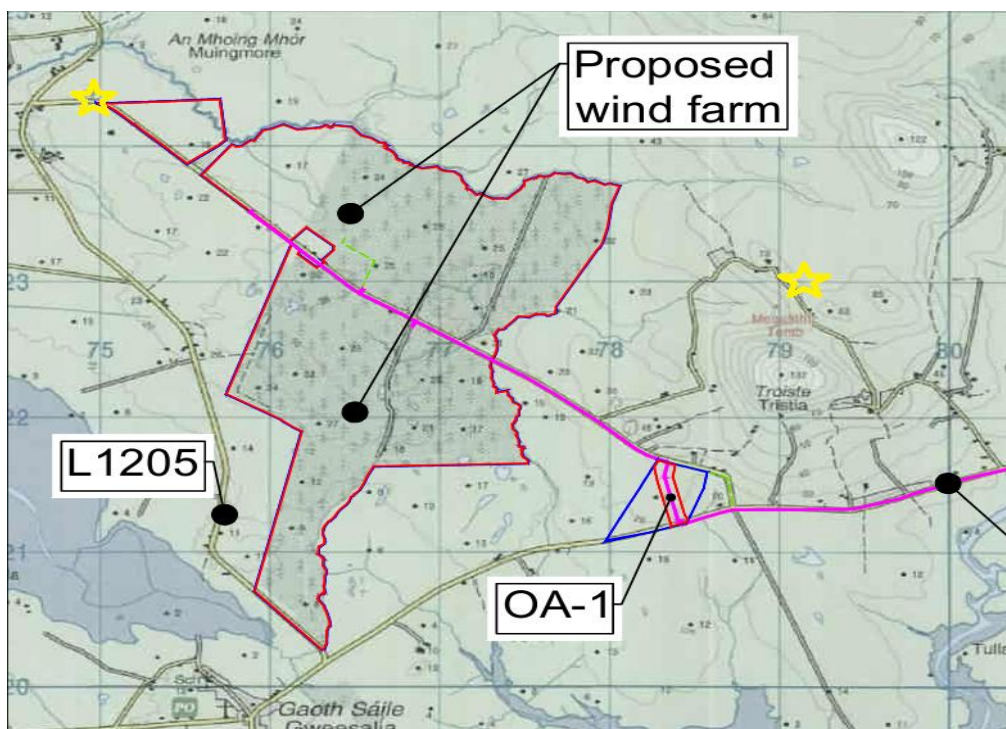
The proposal to construct thirteen wind turbines, each reaching approximately 180 metres in height, a 110kV substation, battery energy storage system (BESS) and all associated infrastructure would fundamentally and permanently alter one of the most scenic and peaceful landscapes in North Mayo. These turbines would dominate the skyline for miles around, affecting the communities of Muingmore, Mount Jubilee, Doolough, Shraigh, Geesala and the wider Erris area.

For my own family, the impact would be deeply personal. My brother has only recently completed the construction of his family home approximately 1.1 kilometres from the proposed site. Like many families who have invested their lives and savings in this area, he chose to build there because of the peace, beauty and natural surroundings and to be close to family. Instead of looking across an unspoilt rural landscape, he and his wife now face the prospect of living beside an industrial-scale wind development, having to deal with continuous noise from the development and extreme shadow flicker. Our own family home, together with countless neighbouring homes, currently enjoys uninterrupted views across the surrounding countryside. Those views are not simply an aesthetic luxury; they are part of our everyday quality of life and an important reason why generations of families have remained in this area. Once these turbines are erected, the landscape can never be restored to its present character.

The cumulative visual impact of thirteen structures standing 180 metres high cannot be understated. These are not ordinary structures, and this is plain to be seen in the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment photomontages. They are significantly taller than many of Ireland's highest buildings and would become the dominant feature of the landscape for many kilometres, with the windfarm having over 25 clear viewpoints that go as far as Fál Mór and Golden Strand, Achill Island (just over 70km from the proposed site), according to the viewpoint map relating to the development.

The proposed development also raises serious environmental concerns. The area supports a rich variety of wildlife, including otters, hedgehogs, wild deer and numerous bird species, such as pheasants and corn crakes. These animals depend upon relatively undisturbed habitats that have existed for generations. Construction activity, extensive road building, excavation, drainage works and the ongoing operation of turbines would inevitably disturb these habitats and fragment the landscape upon which these species depend.

Equally important is the area's cultural and historical significance. Like much of rural Mayo, this landscape is deeply intertwined with local folklore, traditions and stories that have been handed down through generations. Places associated with fairy lore, ancient beliefs and local heritage form an important part of the cultural identity of the Erris community. These traditions are inseparable from the landscape itself. Once the landscape is industrialised, an irreplaceable part of that heritage is lost forever.



Stars on map marking the location of my brother's newly constructed home (Muingmore) and my own family's home (Tristia / Mount Jubilee).

Perhaps the most frustrating aspect of this proposal is that it appears to ignore the availability of more suitable locations. County Mayo contains extensive areas of remote bogland where there are little or no residential properties within many kilometres. If large-scale wind energy infrastructure is genuinely necessary, it seems entirely reasonable that every effort should first be made to locate such developments in areas where they would have the least impact on established communities. Instead, this proposal places thirteen enormous turbines in close proximity to homes and villages, permanently affecting hundreds of residents and future generations who wish to

continue living in this beautiful part of Ireland. Planning should seek to minimise harm wherever possible. Choosing a location that directly impacts existing communities while less intrusive alternatives may exist is difficult to justify.

There are also legitimate concerns regarding the long-term effects experienced by some residents living close to wind farms. While experiences vary from one location to another, these concerns cannot be dismissed. In 2024, the Irish High Court found that noise from the Ballyduff Wind Farm in County Wexford amounted to an unreasonable interference with neighbouring residents' enjoyment of their homes. The Court accepted evidence relating to persistent noise and its effects and awarded damages to affected homeowners. Restrictions were subsequently imposed on turbine operations because of the nuisance experienced by nearby residents.

Earlier, in 2020, legal proceedings brought by a family in County Cork concerning alleged impacts from a nearby wind farm were settled after they claimed that noise, vibration and shadow flicker forced them to leave their home. While that case settled without any admission of liability, it demonstrates that such concerns are genuine enough to result in lengthy legal proceedings. These cases do not suggest that every wind farm causes unacceptable impacts. However, they clearly demonstrate that inappropriate siting can have profound consequences for neighbouring residents and that planning authorities must exercise the greatest caution where homes are located nearby.

Beyond individual impacts, there is a growing concern among many residents that North Mayo is gradually being transformed into an industrial energy landscape. Erris is recognised throughout Ireland for its wild scenery, dramatic coastline, blanket bogs and unique sense of place. It is one of the country's last remaining areas where people can experience an open, unspoilt landscape largely unchanged by major industrial development.

This landscape has intrinsic value. It supports tourism. It attracts walkers, photographers and nature enthusiasts. It provides residents with an exceptional quality of life. Most importantly, it belongs not only to the present generation but also to those who will inherit it. Once these turbines are erected, this landscape simply cannot be returned to its former state.

The planning system exists to balance national objectives with the rights of local communities. In this instance, I respectfully submit that the balance has not been achieved. The Planning and Development Act, together with the National Planning Framework (NPF), recognises that planning authorities have a responsibility to protect landscapes of significant natural beauty while facilitating appropriate development. Similarly, the Mayo County Development Plan places considerable emphasis on

protecting landscape character, visual amenity and the environmental quality that defines the county. This proposal is incompatible with those objectives.

One of the most concerning aspects of this proposal is its potential to restrict the future development of family lands for generations to come. It is my understanding that, due to turbine setback distances, safety considerations and consultation requirements, future planning applications for houses on lands surrounding the proposed wind farm could be significantly constrained or opposed by the developer, RWE, where they are considered to conflict with the operation of the wind farm. This creates the unacceptable situation whereby local families may effectively lose the ability to build homes on land that has belonged to them for generations.

In rural Ireland and our local area in particular, it is common for sons, daughters and future generations to build homes on family land, allowing communities to remain vibrant and enabling younger people to continue living close to their families. This tradition is fundamental to the social fabric of areas such as Muingmore and the wider Erris region. A development that has the effect of sterilising surrounding lands or making it substantially more difficult for local people to obtain planning permission would undermine the long-term sustainability of the community. It is deeply concerning that a commercial development with an operational lifespan of a few decades could impose planning constraints on local families for many years, limiting opportunities for future generations to live in the area where they were born and raised. Planning decisions should support the continued viability of rural communities, not create circumstances where local people are discouraged or prevented from building homes on their own family land. The potential loss of this opportunity represents a significant and lasting social impact that should be given considerable weight in determining this application.

The visual impact, proximity to homes, effects on wildlife, loss of landscape character, potential impact on residential amenity and future residential developments, cultural significance of the area and the cumulative industrialisation of North Mayo together present compelling reasons why this application should not be approved.

I respectfully request that An Bord Pleanála carefully considers the lasting consequences this proposal would have for the people who live here every day. Renewable energy is essential, but it should never come at the unnecessary expense of rural communities when more suitable alternatives may exist.

For all of the reasons outlined above, I respectfully request that planning permission for the proposed Muingmore Wind Farm be refused.

Kind regards,

Katie Munnelly

Mount Jubilee,

Bangor Erris,

Ballina,

Co. Mayo