

An Coimisiún Pleanála

64 Marlborough Street

Dublin 1

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Date: 6th August 2026

RE: Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) Application – Muingmore Wind Farm

An Coimisiún Pleanála Case Reference: 324387

Applicant: RWE Renewables Ireland Ltd.

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to formally submit my observation and strong objection regarding the proposed Muingmore Wind Farm development in North Mayo. Please find enclosed the statutory fee of €50.

As noted by many and recently observed by Colin Sheridan writing in the Irish Examiner “Mayo is not a place, but a state of mind. A consciousness that permeates the fabric of personality, hewn from the soil, the rocks and the ocean. Many other Western counties suffered similar hardships and share the same wild beauty. None, though, have contrived in quite the same way as Mayo to merge the spirituality of landscape, a conflicted zeitgeist of a people and a poetic memory of a community”. These words capture what living in Erris means to so many of us. It is the landscape, its sense of place, and its unspoilt character that define our community and our quality of life. Protecting that landscape should be a priority, not only for those who live here today but for our children and future generations.

As we enter Erris, the towering wind turbines at Bellacorick serve as a constant reminder of how industrial development has already transformed a landscape that was once defined by its natural beauty. Erris has already made a substantial contribution to Ireland’s energy ambitions. No single region should be expected to shoulder a disproportionate share of the country’s energy infrastructure at the expense of its environment, heritage, and identity. While developments of this nature may provide temporary construction jobs and community funding, these benefits are short-lived when compared with the permanent alteration of the landscape. Short-term disruption to the travel of the local community would be expected during the construction phase. The principal long-term beneficiaries are commercial energy companies and the large industrial consumers they supply, including international data centres. Ireland already has some of the highest electricity prices in Europe providing profits to corporate giants. Meanwhile, local communities are left with the enduring visual, environmental, and social impacts of the proposed developments.

We request that An Coimisiún Pleanála takes the following material planning considerations into account when assessing this application:

1. **Peatland Degradation and Carbon Sequestration:** The proposed development sits upon unique cutaway boglands. The extensive excavation required for 13 large-scale turbine foundations, access roads, and grid infrastructure risks severely destabilising the local peat hydrology. This disruption threatens to release significant stored carbon, directly contradicting Ireland’s climate goals of preserving and restoring active peatland sinks. In my opinion the owners of the land should be concentrating on restoring landscape to its natural state rather than further excessive profiteering. It is somewhat ironic that the applicant broadcasts it’s

decarbonisation credentials while its German parent company made its profits from burning lignite (a slightly harder version of peat). There is no question that the current landscape will be permanently altered. The applicants own website states a strong preference for repowering using larger turbines to extend the windfarm lifetime rather than decommissioning.

2. **Visual Impact and Proximity to Protected Areas:** The immense scale of these proposed turbines will create an overbearing visual intrusion on the low-lying, sensitive North Mayo landscape. Furthermore, the development is located near the boundaries of the globally recognised Mayo Dark Sky Park. The required aviation safety lighting and industrial footprint pose a threat to the pristine night skies and the ecotourism economy built around them. The photomontage provided by the applicant is truly worrying for residents of Doolough, Geesala (e.g. VP22) and all who live in Erris. The applicant has reduced the original proposed 200m tip height of the turbines by 20m which does nothing to address the visual impact. Tourists visiting the Wild Atlantic Way are attracted by the rugged beauty of the North Mayo landscape not by large scale industrialised developments. The applicants Environmental Impact report concludes the impact to be “**Substantial-Moderate** / Negative / Long-term within and immediately around 1km from the site”. The impact is a matter of opinion and the report uses language difficult to understand. The report further states “In terms of residual visual effects, the proposed turbines will be a **dominant** built feature for the nearest surrounding **visual** receptors, which principally include local community receptors, as well as tourism, amenity, and heritage receptors (the WAW).” The report acknowledges “Nevertheless, while the central and wider study area includes some **High-Medium and High visual receptors...**” and concludes “it is considered that the Proposed Project will result in a **marked degree of change** within its immediate surrounding context with regard to **both landscape and visual receptors.**”
3. **Residential Amenity (Noise and Shadow Flicker):** The close proximity of the proposed site to established communities—including Geesala, Bangor Erris, and surrounding townlands—poses a serious threat to local residential amenities. I am deeply concerned about the long-term impact of continuous operational acoustic noise and the disruptive effects of shadow flicker on the health and well-being of local families. The applicant seems happy to dismiss the draft Revised Wind Energy Development Guidelines December 2019 and fails to address any additional noise arising from the battery storage facility.
4. **Ecology and Wildlife Protection:** The construction phase risks severe disruption to localized wildlife habitats, specifically bird species and aquatic life in nearby river catchments, which could be impacted by heavy sediment runoff during the excavation of the boglands.
5. **Linked Planning applications:** We do not understand how this application can be considered in isolation from that of the required 110kV underground grid connection and all associated works, from the proposed onsite Substation to the Bellacorick Substation (within the townlands of Doolough, Tristia, Goolamore, Drumanaffrin, Kiltany, Srahmore, Bangor, Srahanarry, Briska, Largan More, Largan Beg, Tawnaghmore, Kilsallagh, Bellacorick).
6. **Consultation and leaflet drops.** The applicant limited information to 2.5km radius of the main site, conveniently omitting some of the largest populated areas in the region such as Geesala.

7. **Draft Renewable Energy Strategy** for County Mayo (28th April 2026) places the applicants project in an area that is proposed to be classified as 'Unsuitable' for wind energy development. While the applicant makes arguments as to the inconsistency of the proposed new classification, the reality in my opinion is that large scale onshore windfarms should not be located in areas of population or scenic landscape since they impinge in a significant way on the character, integrity and distinctiveness of the area.

For these reasons, I believe the Muingmore Wind Farm proposal represents over-development in an unsuitable, ecologically vulnerable location. I respectfully urge the Board to show leadership and vision to refuse planning permission for this project before our landscape is irrevocably blighted by this and likely future projects.

Renewable energy is essential, but its development must be balanced, proportionate, and equitable. It should not come at the cost of sacrificing the unique landscapes and communities that have already contributed so much. Erris has done its part. This application represents another step in the continuing industrialisation of a landscape that is central to the identity, heritage, and future of this region. For these reasons, I respectfully ask that permission for this development be refused.

Please acknowledge receipt of this submission and keep me informed of the Board's final decision.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Kelly McGowan', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

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