

Martin Coyle,
Doolough,
Geesala,
Co. Mayo

Case Reference PAX16.324387

I am making this submission as someone who was born and raised in Doolough and who continues to live, work and farm here. I have spent my life in this area and I am heavily involved in our local GAA community, both as a player and as a coach.

I am fortunate to be employed locally and my intention is to remain living and working in Erris. Like many people of my generation, I want there to be a sustainable future here where people can find employment, raise families and remain involved in their local communities. For that reason, I am concerned about the long-term implications of the proposed wind farm for Doolough and the surrounding area.

One of my main concerns is the scale and visibility of the proposed turbines. Having lived in Doolough all my life, I know this landscape extremely well. It is open, exposed and largely undeveloped, and structures of the scale proposed would represent a major change to its existing character.

I regularly meet visitors around Doolough Beach and the surrounding area. It is very noticeable how much tourists appreciate the scenery here. People comment on the open landscape, coastline, peace and relatively untouched nature of the area. Many visitors come specifically because Erris offers something different from more developed tourist destinations.

I am concerned that introducing turbines of up to 180 metres in height into this landscape could fundamentally alter that experience. Once structures of this scale become part of the skyline, that change will remain long after the construction phase has ended.

As a resident and farmer in Doolough, I am also concerned about the potential effects of construction on the Doolough Stream and surrounding water environment. The applicant's own surveys have recorded brown trout within the Doolough Stream and identify the waterbody as being at Poor Status and At Risk under the Water Framework Directive.

Anyone who farms this land understands how wet the Doolough area is and how quickly water moves across bogland and through drains and streams following prolonged rainfall. The proposed excavation, road construction, turbine foundations, drainage and other works therefore concern me, particularly where an existing waterbody is already under environmental pressure.

I am also concerned about the effect of the construction phase on our local roads. These are rural roads used every day by local residents, farmers, employees, school traffic, cyclists and visitors.

The volume and weight of construction traffic required for a development of this scale raises concerns about deterioration and damage to the road network, as well as delays, diversions and disruption for those of us who depend on these roads every day. As a farmer, I also need to move agricultural

machinery and livestock-related traffic on local roads. Large construction vehicles and abnormal loads would place additional pressure on roads that were never designed for sustained industrial traffic.

There should be very clear responsibility for monitoring road conditions, repairing any damage caused during construction and ensuring that local people are not left with deteriorated roads after the construction phase has finished.

I recognise that the development may provide employment during construction. However, construction employment is temporary. What concerns me more is the number of permanent jobs that will actually remain for people living in Doolough, Geesala and the wider Erris area once construction has finished.

As someone who is fortunate to have local employment and wants to remain living here, I believe this is an important distinction. A large development can generate considerable activity for a relatively short construction period, but that does not necessarily translate into sustainable employment for the community over the following decades.

If local people are expected to accept the permanent visual and environmental consequences of this development, there should be a clear and demonstrable long-term benefit to the community that will live alongside it.

My involvement in the local GAA, both as a player and coach, has given me a particular appreciation of the importance of keeping young people connected to this area. Local clubs are about much more than sport. They bring children, parents and generations of families together and are a major part of community life in rural areas such as ours.

Through coaching, I see young people growing up here who I hope will have the opportunity to remain in Erris if that is what they choose. For that to happen, we need sustainable employment, strong communities and an area that continues to be an attractive place in which to live, work and raise a family. I do not believe that temporary construction employment should be presented as an adequate substitute for that longer-term objective.

I also have grave concerns that this development could be the beginning of further wind energy developments in Doolough. I worry that, if developments of this scale become established here, the landscape could gradually change beyond recognition. The cumulative future of Doolough should be considered, not just this application in isolation.

I understand the need to develop renewable energy and my concerns are not based on opposition to renewable energy in principle. My concern is the scale and location of this particular development and what it will mean for the people who actually live here.

I was born in Doolough. I farm here, work locally and have spent much of my life involved in the local GAA. I intend to continue living here. I therefore have a genuine interest in what this area will look like and what opportunities it will provide twenty or thirty years from now.

The construction period will eventually finish, but the turbines, the changes to the landscape and any effects on our environment and tourism will remain.

I believe the long-term interests of the people who live, work, farm and are raising the next generation in this community must carry significant weight when this application is being considered, and that permission for the proposed development should be refused.

Martin Coyle

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