

Martin O Malley

Doolough

Geesala

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Observation on the Proposed Muingmore Wind Farm

Case Reference: PAX16.324387

To An Coimisiún Pleanála,

My name is Martin O'Malley. I am making this observation because the proposed Muingmore Wind Farm would have a serious effect on my home, my peace and my way of life.

My house is shown as House 36 on the shadow flicker map. I understand that I am approximately **911 metres** from Turbine 8. A turbine almost 180 metres high at that distance would be a very large presence beside my home.

I was brought up in Erris. Like many people from this area, I left Ireland and spent years living and working in the United Kingdom. I later returned home because Erris is where I belong. I came back for the quiet life, the open countryside and the familiar land around me.

As I have grown older, peace and quiet have become even more important to me. At present, the area is so still at night that I can hear owls. That is the type of quietness we have here. I find it hard to imagine what it would be like to replace that with the repeated sound of large turbine blades turning close to my home.

Noise is one of my greatest concerns. These turbines would operate during the day and through the night. I would have no control over when the sound might be heard, how long it would continue or whether it would change with the wind.

The final turbine model has not even been selected. Different turbines can produce different types and levels of sound. I do not understand how anyone can give a firm promise about the noise at my house when the actual machine has not yet been chosen.

This is the home where I expect to spend the rest of my life. If the noise becomes disturbing, I cannot simply move my house somewhere else. I should not have to wait until the turbines are operating and then try to prove that there is a problem.

The information should have been clear before the application was submitted. The uncertainty over the final turbine and its sound weakens the application and supports refusal.

I am also extremely concerned about shadow flicker. My home is identified as House 36 in the developer's own assessment. Under the different turbine scenarios, the application predicts between 17.3 and 28.3 likely hours of shadow flicker at my property each year before mitigation.

Under the largest turbine scenario, it predicts that House 36 could be affected on 219 days of the year. The worst day could involve up to 45 minutes of shadow flicker. The theoretical total is 96.7 hours in one year. These are not small figures; I must live in this house. I want to know exactly which windows would be affected, what months it would happen, what time of day it would begin, and which turbine would cause it.

The application does not give me that clear, personal answer. Instead, I am expected to rely on a future computer-controlled shutdown system.

I do not believe that is good enough. The turbines have been placed where substantial shadow flicker is predicted, and software is then offered as the answer. The sensible approach would have been to position the turbines far enough from homes to prevent the problem. I should not have to close curtains or blinds inside my own home. I should not have to make complaints or wait for someone to investigate whether the shadow I experienced was serious enough. My home should be protected from the beginning.

The roads are another major concern. I have driven these roads for many years and know how narrow they are. There are places where two ordinary vehicles can barely pass safely. There are bends, soft edges and very little room to move aside. I am worried about meeting large construction trucks while driving. The proposed development would involve heavy goods vehicles, stone trucks, machinery, cranes and abnormal loads carrying turbine parts. These vehicles would not be using wide motorways. They would be travelling on the same local roads used every day by residents, school buses, farmers and older drivers.

Traffic lights and traffic management plans will not make the roads wider. They cannot remove every danger. Meeting a large truck on a narrow road can be frightening, particularly where there is no safe place to pull in. The construction period could continue for years. Local people should not have to live with repeated disruption, delays and safety risks so that an industrial development can be built around their homes.

I have also spent many years working on and around bogland. I know this type of ground from experience. Bog holds water. It moves under weight. What looks firm on the surface may be soft underneath. When it is disturbed, drained or placed under pressure, its behaviour can change. The site is on sloping ground in places. This concerns me. Large turbine foundations, access roads, crane areas, drainage works and heavy machinery would place a great deal of pressure on peatland.

The planning documents may say that the risk can be managed, but local knowledge should not be dismissed. I know from dealing with bog over many years that it is not ordinary ground. Weather, drainage, weight and slope all matter.

A movement or peat slide would not necessarily remain inside the development boundary. Peat, mud and silt could move downhill and enter drains and streams. Once that happens, the damage may be difficult or impossible to undo.

I also find the treatment of the bog hard to understand. Ordinary people have been told for years that bogs must be protected and that turf cutting causes environmental harm. Yet this development would involve excavating peat, building roads, digging foundations and installing drains across a large area of blanket bog.

The applicant's own documents identify areas of lowland blanket bog and cutover bog that align with **European Annex I habitat code 7130**, which covers blanket bog habitat.

I cannot understand how the small amount of turf cut by local families is treated as a serious concern while large-scale industrial works across peatland are presented as manageable. The bog is more than soil waiting to be dug away. It holds water, stores carbon and supports wildlife. It also carries the history of the people who have lived and worked here for generations.

Water leaving this land has to go somewhere. The drains and smaller streams connect with the Doolough Stream and the wider catchment leading towards Blacksod Bay.

The applicant's surveys found brown trout and European eel in the Doolough Stream. The wider surveys also recorded Atlantic salmon, which is protected under the EU Habitats Directive.

Fine peat, silt, fuel, oil or other pollution entering a stream could affect fish and other aquatic life. It could also travel further downstream. Settlement ponds and written procedures do not guarantee that an accident, heavy rainfall or drainage failure will never happen.

Blacksod Bay and the surrounding coastal waters are environmentally sensitive. They include the Mullet/Blacksod Bay Complex Special Area of Conservation and the Blacksod Bay/Broad Haven Special Protection Area. These protections must mean something in practice.

I am also concerned about the wildlife that depends on the bog, streams and open countryside. Otters use rivers, streams and wet ground. The area supports birdlife, including twite, and the recovery of the corncrake is important to people in Erris.

I regularly hear owls because the area is so quiet at night. Their presence reminds me that this countryside remains a place where wildlife can still live close to people.

Thirteen large turbines, moving blades, new roads, lighting and years of disturbance would change that environment. Wildlife moves across the bog, streams, fields and coast .

The turbines would also have a major effect on the views. I returned to Erris because I love the open landscape. I value being able to look across the land without large industrial structures dominating the skyline.

Turbines of almost 180 metres would not blend into these surroundings. Their height and moving blades would make them visible from a wide area. They would become the main feature in views that people have known all their lives.

There would also be aviation warning lights at night. The darkness and quietness of this area are part of what makes it special. I do not want to look out from my home and see flashing or steady warning lights marking an industrial site where there is now open countryside.

The proposed Battery Energy Storage System also causes me concern. This is not a small battery beside a turbine. The application describes a large compound containing 120 battery containers and 15 inverter containers, along with electrical equipment, cooling systems, fencing, lighting and internal roads.

The compound would be approximately 156 metres long and 99 metres wide. It would be a substantial industrial development in its own right and would be located close to the local community.

I am not an electrical engineer, but the more I read and hear about the BESS, the more complex it appears. It involves batteries, inverters, cooling equipment and the risk of overheating. The final battery supplier and exact technology have not been selected. Important details are to be completed later. Those matters should have been settled before permission was sought, especially when homes are located nearby.

I am concerned about noise from the cooling equipment and inverters, as well as fire safety and the possibility of contaminated water entering drains if there were a serious incident.

Residents should not be asked to accept such a large battery installation without knowing the exact system, its full safety arrangements and how an emergency would be handled.

Taken together, this is far more than thirteen turbines. It includes the turbines, roads, foundations, drainage, substation, battery compound, electrical equipment, construction traffic and lighting.

It would turn a quiet rural area into a major industrial site. I did not return to Erris to live beside an industrial complex. I returned because this is my home and because I value the land, the people, the peace and the views.

At my age, I should be able to feel secure in my own house. Instead, I am being asked to accept uncertainty about noise, up to 28.3 likely hours of shadow flicker in a year, heavy trucks on narrow roads, large-scale excavation of peat and a complex battery compound close to where I live.

These concerns are not imagined. They arise from the scale of the proposal and from the information contained in the applicant's own documents.

Important parts of the development remain uncertain. The final turbine has not been selected. The exact battery system is unknown. The proposal relies heavily on future monitoring, software, management plans and mitigation.

Those matters should have been fully resolved at application stage. Their omission weakens the application and leaves local residents carrying too much of the risk.

I respectfully ask An Coimisiún Pleanála to consider what this development would mean for the people who already live here.

For all of the reasons set out in this observation, I believe that planning permission for the proposed Muingmore Wind Farm should be refused.

Yours sincerely,

Martin O'Malley