

Observation on Strategic Infrastructure Development Application

Case Number: PAX16.324387

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Introduction

I respectfully object to the proposed Muingmore Wind Farm Strategic Infrastructure Development application (Case Number PAX16.324387).

I was born in this area in 1981 and come from a local family of eight siblings with deep roots in the Erris community. Although employment opportunities in the area are limited and often require significant travel, I made the decision to move home because of the exceptional natural beauty, tranquillity and quality of life that this unique part of County Mayo provides.

My house is not simply a property; it is my home. The surrounding landscape, coastline and uninterrupted views form an important part of my everyday life and wellbeing. I walk the local beaches and coastline almost every day and the peace, fresh air and natural beauty are among the main reasons I chose to return to live here.

I believe this proposed development would have significant adverse impacts on the landscape, residential amenity, tourism, biodiversity and the long-term character of the Erris Peninsula.

1. Visual Impact on the Landscape and Views

The proposed development consists of thirteen turbines approximately 180 metres in height.

Each turbine would be taller than the Spire in Dublin and approximately equivalent to a 60-storey building. Given the open coastal nature of the Erris Peninsula and the proximity of my home, I believe these turbines will become a dominant feature of the landscape and permanently alter views that have remained largely unspoilt for generations.

The Wild Atlantic Way is promoted internationally because of its dramatic scenery, open landscapes and sense of remoteness. Introducing industrial-scale structures of this height into such a landscape would fundamentally change its character.

2. Residential Amenity

My enjoyment of my home extends far beyond the walls of the house itself. The surrounding scenery, peace and tranquillity are integral to why I chose to return to live here.

Although my home is located approximately two kilometres from the proposed turbines and I do not expect shadow flicker to be a significant issue at that distance, I remain concerned about the overall impact that structures of this scale would have on residential amenity and the character of the area.

3. Physical and Mental Wellbeing

The natural environment contributes greatly to my physical and mental wellbeing. Daily walks along the local beaches and coastline provide opportunities for exercise, relaxation and connection with nature. The peaceful landscape is one of the principal reasons I chose to return to this area despite the need to travel for employment opportunities.

4. Tourism and Local Economy

Tourism is fundamental to the economy of North Mayo. Visitors come to experience the Wild Atlantic Way, the beaches, cliffs, boglands, wildlife and unspoilt scenery that make this area unique. Local accommodation providers, cafés, restaurants, shops, activity providers and many other small businesses depend upon protecting these natural assets.

5. Biodiversity, Blanket Bog and Environmental Impact

The surrounding landscape is characterised by extensive blanket bog, peatlands and coastal habitats that contribute significantly to the biodiversity of the Erris Peninsula.

I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála carefully considers the potential impacts of construction on blanket bog habitats, peatland stability, biodiversity, water quality, drainage patterns, protected species and long-term environmental sustainability.

6. Water Environment

Given the scale of excavation and construction proposed, I ask that careful consideration be given to protecting local streams, watercourses and downstream water quality throughout both construction and operation.

7. Traffic and Construction

The construction of thirteen turbines of this size will inevitably require substantial movements of abnormal loads, heavy machinery and construction traffic. The impact on rural roads, road safety, local residents and visitors should be carefully assessed.

8. Heritage and Community

The Erris Peninsula represents generations of history, family life, culture and community. The landscape forms part of our identity and contributes to the unique character of this region. I believe future generations should have the opportunity to enjoy the same unspoilt landscape that previous generations have valued.

9. Cumulative Impact

I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála considers the cumulative impact of this proposal together with existing and permitted wind energy developments within the wider region.

10. Planning Policy

I note that Mayo County Council has recently adopted an updated Renewable Energy Strategy identifying certain areas as unsuitable for wind energy development. I respectfully request that the Board gives full consideration to this strategy together with Mayo County Council's landscape assessments and any concerns expressed regarding the visual impact of turbines of this scale.

Conclusion

Ireland must continue to develop renewable energy, and I support the transition to cleaner sources of electricity. However, I do not believe every location is suitable for industrial-scale wind energy development.

The Erris Peninsula is one of Ireland's most outstanding coastal landscapes. Its scenery, biodiversity, tourism value and importance to local communities deserve careful protection.

For me, this proposal is not simply about the construction of wind turbines. It concerns the future character of the place I have chosen to call home, the landscape that supports local communities and businesses, and the environment that contributes so greatly to the health and wellbeing of those who live here.

I chose to come home because of this landscape. I respectfully ask that future generations are given the opportunity to make that same choice.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála refuses permission for the proposed development.