

Planning Objection to the Proposed Wind Farm Development in County Mayo

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála

I wish to submit a formal objection to the proposed wind farm development in North Mayo. I strongly oppose this proposal due to the significant and irreversible impacts it would have on the unique environment, biodiversity, landscape, local communities and economy of the region. This objection reflects not only my own concerns but also the widespread and deeply held opposition shared by local residents throughout the area.

North Mayo is internationally recognised for its exceptional natural beauty, unspoilt landscapes and ecological importance. The scale and height of the proposed turbines would fundamentally alter the character of this coastline and have lasting consequences for wildlife, habitats and the people who live and work here.

Environmental Impact on Flora, Fauna and Protected Habitats

The proposed development poses serious risks to one of Ireland's most environmentally significant coastal landscapes. North Mayo contains extensive blanket bogs, peatlands, coastal heath, sand dune systems, estuaries and wetlands, many of which are protected under Irish and European environmental legislation.

Construction of turbine foundations, access roads and associated infrastructure would disturb fragile peatlands that have taken thousands of years to develop. Damage to peatlands can:

- Release significant quantities of stored carbon into the atmosphere.
- Alter natural drainage patterns.
- Increase sediment entering rivers and streams.
- Reduce water quality.
- Damage rare plant communities including bog mosses (Sphagnum species), sundews, bog asphodel and other peatland vegetation.

These habitats are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to restore once disturbed.

Impact on Birds

North Mayo lies along an internationally important migration route and supports numerous protected bird species throughout the year.

Large wind turbines present well-documented risks of collision, habitat displacement and disturbance for many species, including:

- Golden Plover
- Hen Harrier
- Merlin
- Peregrine Falcon
- White-tailed Eagle (occasionally recorded in the west)
- Barn Owl
- Curlew
- Red Grouse
- Snipe

- Lapwing
- Chough
- Whooper Swan
- Greenland White-fronted Goose
- Brent Goose
- Various gull species including Kittiwake
- Puffins on nearby offshore colonies
- Guillemots
- Razorbills
- Fulmars
- Gannets
- Storm Petrels

Many of these species are of high conservation concern and are protected under the EU Birds Directive. Numerous studies have shown that large turbines can increase mortality through collisions while also causing birds to abandon traditional feeding, breeding and nesting areas.

Impact on Bats

Although often overlooked, bats are particularly vulnerable to wind turbines.

Species recorded in County Mayo include:

- Common Pipistrelle
- Soprano Pipistrelle
- Leisler's Bat
- Brown Long-eared Bat

Bats are susceptible not only to collisions but also to barotrauma caused by rapid air pressure changes around turbine blades. As bats reproduce slowly, even relatively small increases in mortality can have significant long-term impacts on local populations.

Mammals and Marine Wildlife

The North Mayo coastline supports a diverse range of wildlife including:

- Otters
- Irish Hare
- Pine Marten
- Red Deer in surrounding areas
- Offshore waters are home to:
- Bottlenose Dolphins
- Harbour Porpoise
- Common Dolphin
- Minke Whale
- Grey Seals
- Harbour Seals

Construction noise, increased vessel movements and associated infrastructure may disturb marine mammals and affect important feeding and breeding areas.

Tourism and Landscape

North Mayo's economy depends heavily upon tourism, outdoor recreation and its internationally recognised scenery.

Visitors come specifically to experience:

- Wild Atlantic Way scenery
- Unspoilt coastlines
- Dark skies
- Birdwatching
- Walking
- Photography
- Angling
- Heritage sites

The introduction of industrial-scale turbines into this landscape would permanently alter views enjoyed by residents and visitors alike.

Rather than enhancing tourism, such developments risk diminishing one of the area's greatest assets—its natural landscape—which supports local accommodation providers, restaurants, cafés and small businesses.

Noise, Shadow Flicker and Residential Amenity

Residents living near the proposed development would be exposed to:

- Continuous operational noise.
- Low-frequency noise.
- Shadow flicker.
- Aviation warning lights during hours of darkness.

These impacts have the potential to reduce quality of life and enjoyment of homes, particularly in a quiet rural landscape where tranquillity is one of the defining characteristics.

Traffic and Construction

Construction would require significant heavy goods vehicle movements transporting turbine components, concrete and machinery along rural roads.

This would:

- Damage local roads.
- Increase safety risks.
- Disrupt farming activities.
- Affect local businesses.
- Create prolonged construction disturbance for nearby communities.

Heritage and Local Amenity

North Mayo possesses a rich archaeological and cultural heritage, including ancient field systems, historic sites and traditional landscapes that contribute to the area's identity.

The industrialisation of this landscape would erode its historic character and reduce the value of local amenities enjoyed by residents and visitors.

Cumulative Impact

This proposal should not be considered in isolation. The cumulative visual, ecological and environmental impacts alongside existing and permitted wind energy developments must be fully assessed.

The continued expansion of industrial-scale wind energy infrastructure risks fundamentally changing the character of North Mayo beyond recognition.

The Importance of Protecting North Mayo's Natural Environment

While the impacts on local residents—including visual intrusion, noise, shadow flicker, increased traffic, and the potential effects on property values—are significant and deserve careful consideration, it is the irreversible environmental consequences of this development that are of greatest concern to the local community.

The landscapes, peatlands, coastal habitats and wildlife of North Mayo have developed over thousands of years and cannot simply be recreated or replaced once damaged. Unlike temporary construction impacts, the loss or degradation of these sensitive ecosystems would be permanent, affecting future generations and undermining decades of conservation work.

The North Mayo coastline supports habitats and species that are protected under both Irish and European law. These protections include the EU Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), the EU Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), and Ireland's obligations under the Wildlife Acts 1976–2023. Many areas within North Mayo are designated or connected to Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs) because of their exceptional ecological value.

These legal protections exist to ensure that developments do not adversely affect protected habitats or species, either individually or through cumulative impacts. Where there is scientific uncertainty regarding the potential for significant harm, the precautionary principle, which underpins European environmental law, should apply. This principle requires that where there is a risk of serious or irreversible environmental damage, a lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason to proceed with development.

Given the recognised risks that large wind farms pose to protected bird species, peatland ecosystems, bat populations, water quality and biodiversity, there is a legitimate concern that this proposal could conflict with Ireland's obligations to protect these habitats and species. Any adverse effect on the integrity of designated European sites would be inconsistent with the objectives of the Habitats Directive unless it can be demonstrated beyond reasonable scientific doubt that no such impacts would occur.

The people of North Mayo are not opposed to renewable energy. They recognise the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions and transition towards sustainable energy sources. However, this transition must not come at the expense of some of Ireland's most valuable natural landscapes and wildlife.

Renewable energy projects must be located where they do not cause irreversible environmental harm or undermine national and international conservation commitments.

For these reasons, the long-term protection of North Mayo's unique biodiversity, protected habitats and ecological heritage should be afforded the highest priority. Once these natural assets are lost or degraded, they cannot be recovered within our lifetime. The environmental costs of this proposal far outweigh any potential benefits, and the widespread concerns expressed by the local community should be given substantial weight in determining this application.

Conclusion

While renewable energy has an essential role in addressing climate change, it must be developed in appropriate locations where environmental damage is minimised.

North Mayo is an exceptionally sensitive landscape of national and international ecological importance. The risks to protected habitats, peatlands, wildlife, bird populations, bats, marine species, landscape quality and tourism are substantial and cannot be adequately mitigated. The overwhelming view of local residents is that this development is inappropriate for this location. There is strong and widespread opposition throughout the community, based not on opposition to renewable energy itself, but on the belief that this unique and environmentally important part of County Mayo should not be sacrificed for an industrial-scale development. For these reasons, I respectfully request that permission for this proposed wind farm be refused.

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