

The Secretary
An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902

Natasha Walsh
Meadoran
Geesala
Ballina
Co.Mayo
05.08.2026

Observation on the Proposed Muingmore Wind Farm

An Coimisiún Pleanála Case Reference: PAX16.324387

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to make an observation on the proposed Muingmore Wind Farm. I am asking An Coimisiún Pleanála to refuse permission for this development because I believe it is completely out of scale with this area and would cause permanent damage to our homes, our landscape, our wildlife and our way of life.

My family and I grew up in this area. We have farmed the land, lived locally and built our lives here. When we wanted to build our own family home, we had to apply repeatedly for planning permission. We waited approximately sixteen years and spent a considerable amount of money before we were eventually allowed to build. We were refused on a number of occasions because an ordinary bungalow was said not to meet planning guidelines or to be suitable for the landscape.

It is extremely difficult to understand how a modest family home could be considered unacceptable in this landscape, while a huge industrial development involving thirteen turbines of up to approximately 180 metres, a large battery storage compound, a substation, extensive roads, cabling, concrete foundations and years of construction could now be considered acceptable beside us.

Local families have had to prove their connection to the area, their housing need and their right to build on their own land. We had to follow strict rules about the size, design and location of our homes. Yet this developer is seeking permission for a project that would dominate the entire landscape. That feels deeply unfair.

I love the natural environment here. I spend as much time as possible outdoors, sitting outside, walking and enjoying the peace of the countryside. I love listening to birds and watching the different species that visit the area. I often research the birds that fly through Erris, particularly migratory birds such as Whooper Swan, Golden Plover, Curlew, Brent Goose, Dunlin, Sanderling and Bar-tailed Godwit.

These birds are not simply names in an environmental report. They are part of the life and character of this area. Some travel enormous distances and depend on quiet feeding, resting and breeding grounds. The proposed turbines, roads, lighting, construction activity and habitat disturbance could affect the places they use and the routes they travel.

I am also very concerned about birds of prey and other protected species, including Merlin, Hen Harrier and Kestrel. Large turbines create risks of collision and displacement, but the full cumulative impact on vulnerable bird populations cannot be dismissed simply because only small numbers were recorded during particular surveys. When a species is already scarce or declining, every bird matters.

Hares and red deer have also been seen along the Grassmeale Road. These animals use the fields, bog and quiet roads around the proposed development. The construction traffic, fencing, noise, lighting and physical fragmentation of the land would change their habitat and movement routes. This area is alive with wildlife, even when it may appear empty to someone looking at it only as a location on a map.

There is also a clear contradiction in how local people are treated compared with a large developer. In our own home, we were placed under planning restrictions and were not allowed to have an open fire or use turf. These restrictions were imposed in the name of environmental protection.

At the same time, this proposal would involve excavating, disturbing and building across extensive areas of blanket bog and peatland. Roads, turbine foundations, cable trenches, hardstanding areas, the battery compound and the substation would permanently interfere with the peat. It is hard to accept that local families are restricted from using turf in their own homes while a major industrial development may be allowed to cut through and damage large areas of peatland.

Peatland is not waste ground. It stores carbon, holds water, supports wildlife and helps regulate the movement of water through the landscape. Once its hydrology is damaged, it

is very difficult to put it back as it was. Promises of restoration or biodiversity gain elsewhere cannot truly replace intact peatland that has taken thousands of years to form.

I am also very concerned about the possible effects on streams, drains and downstream waters. Construction on deep, wet peat creates a risk of sediment, silt, dirty water, concrete residue, fuel and other pollutants entering local watercourses. These waters ultimately connect with extremely important habitats, including Blacksod Bay.

Blacksod Bay is one of the greatest natural assets of Erris. It supports birds, marine life, fisheries, tourism and local livelihoods. It must be protected. It should not be placed at risk by runoff, siltation, construction pollution or changes to the movement of water through the bog and surrounding land.

The proposed development would also damage tourism. A great deal of time, public money and local effort has gone into promoting the Wild Atlantic Way and encouraging people to visit Erris. Visitors come here for the unspoilt landscape, open views, dark skies, wildlife, peace and sense of remoteness.

My daughters have part-time jobs in a local hotel. Tourism is not an abstract issue to us. It supports local young people, hotels, shops, cafés, accommodation providers and many families throughout the area.

I cannot understand how we can promote Erris as an unspoilt destination while at the same time allowing enormous industrial turbines to dominate the landscape. People do not travel the Wild Atlantic Way to look at an industrial wind farm. They come to experience the natural coastline, bogland, mountains, wildlife and quiet rural environment.

During construction, the area would become a major construction site. There would be heavy vehicles, abnormal loads, concrete lorries, excavation, roadworks, dust, noise and traffic disruption. The construction period described in the application is extremely concerning. A possible ten-year construction phase raises serious questions about the true scale and future intentions connected with this site.

Why is such a long period required for thirteen turbines? What further works or developments could be planned in the future? Local people deserve a clear and honest answer before any permission is granted.

I am particularly concerned about the size of the proposed battery energy storage system and substation. The BESS is a major industrial compound in its own right, containing a very large number of battery and inverter containers, along with security fencing, lighting, drainage and associated infrastructure.

It is not clear to the public why a battery compound of this size is necessary for this particular wind farm. There are understandable concerns that it may be intended to serve a much larger energy development or future expansion. If that is the case, it should be openly explained and fully assessed now.

The BESS and substation would bring further noise, lighting, hard surfaces, peat excavation and industrialisation. There are also concerns about fire, emergency access, contaminated firewater and the ability of emergency services to deal with a serious battery incident in this remote location.

The noise from the turbines, BESS, substation and construction traffic is also a major concern. People living nearby should not be expected to accept continuous or recurring industrial noise in a quiet rural area. Noise can affect sleep, stress levels and the enjoyment of a person's home. The fact that this area currently has such a low background noise level makes the introduction of industrial sound even more serious.

Light pollution would cause further damage. Aviation lights on turbines, security lighting at the BESS and substation and construction lighting would change the night-time character of the area. Erris is valued for its dark skies. The darkness, peace and clear views of the night sky are part of what makes this place special.

Our homes and property must also be considered. We have invested our lives, savings and work into building and maintaining our homes here. The presence of an industrial wind farm, battery storage compound and substation could reduce the value and attractiveness of nearby homes and land.

There is also a serious issue of fairness. Once turbines are constructed, developers may object to or restrict new family homes being built nearby because of noise limits, shadow flicker or safety considerations. Local families could therefore find themselves unable to build on their own land because of a development that was allowed to come into their community.

Developers may gain a degree of control over what can be built around their wind farm, yet local residents had no similar right to prevent this massive development from being proposed beside their homes. We were expected to meet every planning rule when building ordinary houses, but the developer is asking for permission to fundamentally change the entire area.

Climate action should not be used to justify destroying peatland, industrialising an unspoilt landscape, disturbing protected wildlife or placing an unfair burden on one rural community.

This is our home. It is where we grew up, where we raised our families and where we hope future generations will continue to live. Once the peatland is cut, the landscape industrialised and the peace lost, it cannot simply be restored to what it was.

I respectfully ask An Coimisiún Pleanála to consider the lived experience of the people who will remain here long after the construction teams and developers have left. I believe the scale, location and combined impacts of the wind farm, battery storage compound, substation, roads and associated infrastructure make this proposal unsuitable for Muingmore and the wider Erris area.

For these reasons, I ask that planning permission be refused.

Yours faithfully,

Name: Natasha Gaughan