

Sabina Barrett Munnelly

Muingmore
Bunnahowen
Ballina
Co Mayo

1 August 2026

To:

An Coimisiún Pleanála

Re: Observation on Muingmore Wind Farm – Case Reference PAX16.324387

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to make a formal observation regarding the proposed Muingmore Wind Farm (Case Reference PAX16.324387). I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála refuse permission for this development, and I have set out my reasons for same in more detail below.

By way of background, I am a resident of the area, having built my home together with my husband Sean. Our home was built in Muingmore in 2025. To that end, I have a strong interest in protecting the unique environmental, ecological and cultural heritage of Muingmore and the wider Erris area. The proposed development represents a significant industrialisation of an important rural landscape in my view and also raises serious concerns regarding its long-term impacts.

In my opinion, this proposal extends far beyond the installation of wind turbines. It includes thirteen turbines of up to approximately 180 metres in height, a 110kV substation, a large Battery Energy Storage System (BESS), new access roads, hardstands, underground cabling, drainage works, construction compounds and associated infrastructure. Together these elements would permanently alter the character of the surrounding landscape, diminish the area's tranquillity and dark skies, and contribute to the cumulative impact of energy infrastructure already present across North Mayo. One interesting point I would like to draw your attention to is that when my husband and I sought planning permission to build our family home in Muingmore back in 2024, we were told that the visual impact of the proposed development on the coastal landscape would be significant and failed to demonstrate enhancement to the local landscape character. At that time, we were advised that the planning authority had serious concerns in relation to the proposed house design, on the basis that it did not embrace the principles as set out in the Mayo Rural Housing Design Guidelines 2008. It was said that the proposed house design would fail to integrate successfully into this designated coastal landscape, would seriously injure the amenities of the area and would be contrary to the provisions of Mayo County Development Plan 2022 - 2028. The local authority also stated that the proposed design by virtue of its porch design, fenestration, scale, massing and prominence, if permitted, would constitute an

incongruous design feature that would be out of character with the coastal landscape which was necessary to protect. We were advised at that point to submit revised drawings that would incorporate the principles set out in the Mayo Rural House Design Guidelines 2008. The point I am trying to make then is, how can a porch measuring 4240mm be more damaging to the area than the aforementioned thirteen 180 metre wind turbines?

I am particularly concerned about the potential impacts on internationally and nationally protected habitats and species. The proposed development is located within a landscape closely connected to important protected sites including Blacksod Bay/Broad Haven SPA, the Mullet/Blacksod Bay Complex SAC, Bellacorick Bog Complex SAC, the Owenduff/Nephin Complex SAC and SPA, and nearby National Heritage Areas such as Tristia Bog and Tullaghan Bay and Bog. These protected areas support internationally important bird populations, sensitive peatland habitats and diverse wildlife that should not be placed at risk through drainage changes, peat disturbance, sediment runoff, pollution or increased human activity.

The proposed site contains extensive peatland, which is both environmentally valuable and highly sensitive. Peatlands are irreplaceable carbon stores and support important habitats such as blanket bog and wet heath. Excavation, drainage and construction activities have the potential to destabilise peat, increase the risk of erosion and peat slides, alter natural hydrology and reduce water quality in local streams and downstream catchments. Given the high rainfall characteristic of the Atlantic region, these risks require particularly careful assessment.

The planning documentation identifies a number of protected bird species using the wider area, including species associated with the nearby Special Protection Areas. I am concerned that the proposal could increase collision risk, disturb breeding and feeding areas, alter established flight paths and contribute to cumulative impacts alongside existing and proposed wind energy developments in the region. These matters require the highest level of scientific assessment.

I am also concerned about the proposed Battery Energy Storage System. A development of this scale introduces additional issues including fire safety, emergency response, potential pollution from firefighting water, operational noise, lighting and the wider industrialisation of an otherwise rural landscape. These concerns deserve careful scrutiny before any consent is considered.

The proposal also raises concerns regarding traffic and road safety during construction. Local roads are regularly used by residents, school transport, agricultural vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists. The movement of abnormal loads, heavy goods vehicles and construction traffic could significantly disrupt local communities and create unacceptable safety risks.

In addition, I believe the proposal has the potential to adversely affect the area's archaeological heritage and cultural landscape. Peatlands frequently preserve important

archaeological material, while the wider area contains recorded monuments and sites of cultural significance that contribute to the identity and history of the region.

I am also concerned about the overall impact of this development on the landscape, tourism, local amenities and quality of life. The open bogland, natural scenery, wildlife and peaceful character of Erris are among its greatest assets. The introduction of very large turbines together with extensive associated infrastructure would fundamentally alter this landscape for present and future generations.

As a resident living in close proximity to the proposed windfarm, I am extremely concerned about the potential impact it may have on the health and wellbeing of my family, both now and in the future. While there is ongoing debate regarding the health effects of living near large-scale wind turbines, concerns have been raised about issues such as noise, shadow flicker, sleep disturbance, stress and their potential impact on the quality of life. The possibility of these effects is particularly concerning when considering the long-term wellbeing of those who may spend their lives in the area. Our home represents a long-term commitment, and we expect to enjoy a quiet, healthy and tranquil setting. The introduction of industrial-scale turbines in close proximity has the potential to negatively affect our enjoyment of our home, our quality of life, and the environment in which we hope to raise a family.

I have concerns of the future of the villages that surround this proposed development. For example, in my own case, I grew up in Erris. Although I left Erris for a number of years to attend third level education and begin my career, my plan was always to move back to Erris and build my own home. We were fortunate enough to secure planning permission on a site owned by my husband two years ago, an opportunity I fear will not be available to other local people going forward, should this development be granted. That will mean many acres of family-owned land that has been passed down through generations of the same families will no longer be viable to use to build family homes. This in turn will negatively impact our local amenities, our schools, our churches, our shops, our playgrounds.

Finally, I note that Mayo County Council formally adopted the Renewable Energy Strategy for County Mayo as Variation No. 2 to the County Development Plan 2022 – 2028 on 13 July 2026, during the observation period for this application. The applicants own EIAR (Chapter 10) admits that the site is located within an area deemed to be “Unsuitable” for wind energy development under the new strategy. This development then is in material contravention of the current County Development Plan. I understand that under Section 37(2)(b) of the Planning and Development Act, An Coimisiún Pleanála cannot grant permission for development in material contravention of a development plan without specific justification. I further understand that no such justification has been provided.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála gives full consideration to the environmental, ecological, archaeological, landscape and community impacts of this proposal on the area. I believe the risks associated with this development have not been sufficiently addressed, and I therefore respectfully request that planning permission be refused.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to read and consider my observation.

Yours faithfully,

Sabina Barrett Munnely