

JOINT SUBMISSION / OBSERVATION TO AN COIMISIÚN PLEANÁLA

Case Reference: VA16.324429

Proposed Development: 110 kV Onsite Electrical Substation, Loop-In Grid Connection and Associated Infrastructure and Works

Location: Cloonbaul, County Mayo

Applicant: Cunlaghfadda Green Energy Limited

Submitted jointly by:

Laura Killeen Walshe

Peter Walshe

Conor Walshe

Katie Walshe

Keelan Walshe

Barreel
Mayo Abbey
Claremorris
Co. Mayo
F12 T8X2

Correspondence to: Laura Killeen Walshe at the above address

Date: 31st August 2026

To:

An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902

Re: Joint Submission/Observation – Case Reference VA16.324429

Dear Sir/Madam,

We wish to make a formal joint submission/observation in relation to the above proposed development and to state our objection to the proposed 110 kV electrical substation, loop-in grid connection and associated infrastructure at Cloonbaul, County Mayo.

This proposed development raises serious concerns regarding its suitability for this rural location and its potential impact on existing homes, families, the surrounding environment and the wider Mayo Abbey community.

Our Connection to This Area

For Laura Killeen Walshe, this is not simply a location on a planning map. Laura was born and raised in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development. The Walshe family has strong family and community ties to Mayo Abbey and the surrounding countryside.

The house in which Laura grew up is identified as Receptor 001/House 1 in the associated wind-farm documentation, while the home Laura and Peter subsequently built on family land is identified as

Receptor 052/House 52. The family invested their life savings in establishing what they intended to be their permanent family home in this peaceful rural area.

The quiet, natural character of this countryside was one of the principal reasons the family chose to establish their home here. After previously living close to wind turbines elsewhere, Laura and her family returned to her home area seeking the quiet and nature-filled environment which exists here. In 2019, they began building their present home on family land as their planned forever home.

That personal family experience makes us particularly concerned about the gradual industrialisation of this rural landscape.

The Substation Cannot Reasonably Be Viewed in Isolation

Our principal concern is that this application should not be assessed as though the proposed substation were a stand-alone piece of infrastructure.

The proposed 110 kV substation, loop-in grid connection and associated infrastructure form part of a much wider picture of energy development proposed for this locality.

The associated seven-turbine C unlaghfadda Wind Farm has already been the subject of a separate planning application and is now before An Coimisiún Pleanála following Mayo County Council's refusal.

We respectfully ask the Commission to consider the true cumulative effect of the infrastructure proposed for this relatively small rural community rather than examining each component as though the others did not exist.

This substation is particularly significant because it represents major permanent electrical infrastructure. Its implications therefore extend beyond simply the physical footprint of the buildings and equipment proposed in this application.

Residential Amenity, Noise and the Character of Our Home

A 110 kV electrical substation represents substantial permanent electrical infrastructure within what is presently a quiet rural landscape.

We are particularly concerned about operational noise and the potential for tonal or continuous electrical noise from substation equipment, together with construction noise, traffic and the cumulative noise environment if the associated developments proceed.

For our family, this is especially important.

We have previous direct experience of the impact that industrial energy infrastructure can have on everyday family life. A member of our family is neurodiverse and has a very low sensory-overload threshold. Our previous experience living near wind turbines was extremely difficult for our family and was one of the reasons we ultimately returned to Laura's home area.

After turbines became operational near our former home, our family member experienced sleep disturbance, sensory overload and significant disruption to everyday life. This experience contributed to our family's decision to return to Mayo Abbey.

Since establishing our home here, the quiet, calm and nature-filled environment has been enormously important to our family.

We therefore ask that the Commission give particular consideration to existing residents and sensitive individuals and not simply whether predicted noise falls within a numerical limit. A planning assessment should also consider the change that a new industrial noise source represents in an exceptionally quiet rural environment.

Cumulative Development and Piecemeal Industrialisation

We are deeply concerned about the cumulative transformation of this part of Mayo Abbey.

A substation of this nature is significant infrastructure in its own right. However, when considered together with the proposed wind farm, grid infrastructure and other energy-related development proposed for the locality, a very different picture emerges.

What concerns us is not one individual structure viewed on a drawing. It is the combined effect upon the people who already live here: additional industrial structures, electrical infrastructure, traffic, noise, lighting, construction activity and alteration of the rural landscape.

We are also concerned about the longer-term implications of establishing major grid infrastructure in this rural location and the potential for such infrastructure to facilitate further development in the future.

The Commission should therefore consider carefully not only the immediate development proposed but whether this represents appropriate long-term planning for this rural community.

Landscape, Community and Sense of Place

The landscape around Mayo Abbey, Cloonbaul and the adjoining townlands is part of the identity of this community.

Laura remembers this countryside from childhood as an environment filled with wildlife. Cuckoos and corncrakes could be heard, Marsh Fritillary butterflies were present, bats used the family shed, and hares and foxes regularly appeared around the home.

These memories matter because they demonstrate that this is a living rural environment rather than vacant land waiting for industrial development.

A younger member of our family now explores the same bogland and has developed a profound interest in its wildlife and natural environment.

Development decisions made today will determine what remains of that environment for his generation and those that follow.

Ecology, Soils and Water

We ask the Commission to apply particular scrutiny to the potential effects of construction and operation upon peatland and bog habitat, drainage, groundwater, surface water, wildlife and biodiversity.

Electrical infrastructure of this scale involves permanent development together with access, foundations, cabling, drainage and construction activity.

In a rural environment containing sensitive habitats and water systems, we believe that the potential environmental effects require careful and precautionary assessment.

The cumulative environmental effects of the substation and the developments with which it is associated should also be considered rather than assessing the physical footprint of the substation alone.

Construction Traffic and Local Roads

The suitability of the surrounding rural road network for construction traffic associated with a project of this scale is another serious concern for us.

These roads are not merely transport routes shown on engineering drawings. They are the everyday roads used by residents, families, farmers, school traffic, pedestrians and other members of the community.

We ask the Commission to consider the effects of construction traffic, abnormal loads, road works and increased heavy-vehicle movements upon road safety and the ordinary use and enjoyment of the area by residents.

The Importance of Proper Planning

The provision of national energy infrastructure does not remove the requirement to establish that an individual site is suitable or that the consequences for the existing community are acceptable.

Communities such as ours should not be expected to accept an increasing concentration of large-scale energy infrastructure simply because individual elements are presented through separate planning applications.

Proper planning requires consideration of the overall picture.

It requires consideration of the people who already live here, their homes, the existing rural environment, biodiversity, landscape, roads, water and the cumulative burden that multiple developments may place upon one relatively small community.

In our view, this proposed location does not achieve an appropriate balance.

Conclusion

We are a local family with deep and longstanding connections to this area. Our family has lived here for generations, and Laura and Peter invested in building their permanent family home here because of the peace, countryside and quality of life that Mayo Abbey offered.

Our concern is not based upon an abstract objection to development. It is based upon our family's lived experience and upon what we believe this development, when considered alongside the other infrastructure proposed for this area, could mean for our home and our community.

We have strong family and community ties and wish that this land, which has supported our family for generations, should continue to do so for generations to come.

We respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála consider the proposed substation in its full context, including its relationship with the associated Cúnlaghfadda Wind Farm and the cumulative effect of the energy infrastructure proposed for this community.

For the reasons set out above, particularly the potential effects upon residential amenity, family wellbeing, the existing noise environment, landscape and rural character, biodiversity, roads and traffic, and the cumulative industrialisation of the area, we respectfully request that permission for the proposed development under Case Reference VA16.324429 be refused.

Yours faithfully,

Laura Killeen Walshe

Peter Walshe

Conor Walshe

Katie Walshe

Keelan Walshe

Date: 31st August 2026