

SUBMISSION TO AN COIMISIÚN PLEANÁLA

Re: Case Ref. 324429 — Proposed 110kV Substation, Cloonbaul, Co. Mayo
Applicant: Cunlaghfadda Green Energy Ltd.

From: Mary Mc Namara

Address: New Road, Knockroe, Mayo Abbey, Claremorris, Co. Mayo

Date: 25th August

I wish to object to this application and respectfully request that permission be refused.

Mayo Abbey and the heritage of this area. This substation is sited in the townland of Cloonbaul, within the wider heritage landscape of Mayo Abbey — the early-medieval monastery of St Colmán, once known as "Mayo of the Saxons," which gave this county its name. It is one of the most important early Christian ecclesiastical sites in Ireland. The Council's own Senior Archaeologist has identified a previously unrecorded archaeological mound in Cloonbaul itself — the same townland as the proposed substation — that has not been properly assessed. The applicant's EIAR records ninety-four archaeological sites within five kilometres and forty-six unrecorded cultural heritage features within two kilometres. This is not a landscape that should be industrialised. Mayo County Council has already refused the associated wind farm in part because it would "undermine the setting of Mayo Abbey Cemetery and Church ruins." Granting the substation — with its compound, switchgear and two lattice end masts — would compound that harm.

The Plains of Mayo. This is the landscape known as the Plains of Mayo — the flat, green, open expanse from which the county takes its name. Its very openness, the quality that defines it, is what makes it most vulnerable to industrial structures. The substation, its masts and the overhead connections would permanently alter the character of a landscape that is valued precisely because it has remained largely undeveloped. The applicant's own landscape assessment rates the visual effect as "Significant" at four residential viewpoints in the surrounding area, including Knockroe. This is not the place for a 12,000 m² industrial compound.

Flooding and agriculture. The lands surrounding this development are a mix of reclaimed peat, cutover bog and improved agricultural pasture, much of which is already prone to flooding and waterlogging during heavy rainfall. The area is operating at or close to the limits of its drainage capacity. The substation compound — at approximately 13,000 m² of hardstand — is the single largest impermeable area in the entire project, and its effect on drainage and flooding of neighbouring farmland has not been properly assessed. The drainage design is based on a ten-year storm, which is not adequate for infrastructure intended to last thirty-five years in a region that experienced severe flooding in 2009–2010 and 2015–2016. There is no assessment of the impact on neighbouring farmers' land, their livelihood, or their insurance costs. The community around Mayo Abbey is still significantly agriculture-based, and increased flood risk on farmland goes directly to the sustainability of that community.

This is part of a wider project that should be assessed as a whole. The substation is one part of the applicant's "Cunlaghfadda Green Energy Project," which also includes a wind farm (refused by Mayo County Council) and a battery storage facility. No single assessment considers the whole development. The substation's own environmental documents are copies of the wind farm's, carrying the same report numbers — despite the Commission's own inspector warning the applicant at pre-application stage not to replicate the wind-farm EIAR.

For these reasons I respectfully request that this application be refused.

Mary Mc Namara