

Daniel O'Connor

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From: Martin Byrne <martinbyrne47@gmail.com>
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To: Appeals2
Subject: Objection to Meenbog Wind Farm Development

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Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to express my strongest possible objection to the Meenbog Wind Farm development.

I do not support the construction, continuation, expansion or further development of this wind farm. My position is that the Meenbog Wind Farm project should be **stopped and abandoned altogether**.

This is not an objection to renewable energy in principle. It is an objection to the suitability of Meenbog as a location for a major wind-energy development, particularly given the site's environmental history and the serious concerns that have already arisen.

1. The catastrophic peat slide

The events at Meenbog in November 2020 demonstrate the serious environmental risks associated with construction at this location.

Approximately **86,240 cubic metres of peat** moved during the major peat-slide event, with approximately **65,740 cubic metres leaving the affected area and entering the Shruhangerve Stream and Mourne Beg River**. The consequences extended beyond the immediate construction site and into a wider cross-border river system.

There had also been two earlier peat slides in June 2020.

This is an extraordinary amount of material to have moved during the development of a wind farm and should not be dismissed as an isolated or insignificant construction problem.

2. Major pollution and damage to the water environment

The peat-slide event resulted in significant pollution of local watercourses.

The Shruhengarve Stream and Mourne Beg River form part of the wider Foyle catchment, an environmentally important river system supporting protected habitats and species.

The fact that material from the construction site travelled through the river system demonstrates that the environmental consequences of development at Meenbog are capable of extending far beyond the site boundary.

3. The protection of wildlife must come before industrial development

Meenbog is located in an upland environment supporting important wildlife and habitats.

Protected species, including **hen harrier**, require suitable habitat and sufficient undisturbed areas for feeding, breeding and movement. Wind-energy infrastructure can result in habitat loss, fragmentation and displacement of birds and other wildlife.

The wider ecological consequences of roads, turbines, hard-standing areas, grid infrastructure and associated construction must therefore be taken seriously.

We should not sacrifice important wildlife habitat and natural landscapes in order to place industrial infrastructure in an unsuitable location.

4. Serious planning and legal concerns

The development has also been subject to significant legal and planning difficulties.

The High Court found that the development was unauthorised because of material deviations from the permitted development, with the case involving **25 material deviations**.

The Court subsequently prohibited further development.

These are not minor administrative matters. Planning permission exists to ensure that major developments are constructed in accordance with what has actually been assessed and approved.

5. The development has already demonstrated that the consequences can be far-reaching

The Meenbog peat-slide demonstrates precisely why the location should not be treated as an ordinary wind-farm site.

When an environmental incident can release tens of thousands of cubic metres of peat into a river system and create consequences extending across a national border, the potential risks cannot simply be treated as acceptable collateral damage.

The local environment, waterways, wildlife and communities deserve better protection.

6. Renewable energy does not justify every location

Ireland needs renewable energy, but that does not mean that every location is suitable for industrial-scale wind development.

Renewable energy should be developed in locations where environmental, ecological, landscape and planning considerations can be properly respected.

The climate argument cannot be used to override environmental protection.

7. The local landscape matters

The upland landscape around Meenbog is not simply an empty space available for industrialisation.

The construction of turbines, access roads, substations, grid infrastructure and associated works permanently alters the character of the landscape.

Local people should not be expected to accept the industrialisation of their surrounding environment where there are serious environmental and planning concerns.

8. The precautionary principle

Given the history of peat instability, the major 2020 peat-slide, pollution of watercourses, impacts on the wider catchment, concerns regarding protected wildlife and the significant planning and legal difficulties surrounding the development, there is a compelling case for rejecting the project entirely.

The appropriate response is not to repeatedly attempt to make the project acceptable after serious problems have already occurred.

The appropriate response is to recognise that **Meenbog is an unsuitable location for this development.**

9. Our position

We therefore strongly request that the Meenbog Wind Farm development be **refused and abandoned in its entirety.**

We do not support:

- Further construction;
- Further turbine development;
- Further grid infrastructure associated with the wind farm;
- Expansion of the existing development;
- Additional industrial infrastructure at the site;
- Or the continuation of the Meenbog Wind Farm project in its current or substantially similar form.

We believe the environmental, ecological, planning, landscape and public-interest concerns associated with Meenbog are too serious to justify the development.

The 2020 peat-slide should serve as a warning rather than something that is simply remediated and forgotten.

Meenbog should be stopped. The surrounding landscape, waterways, wildlife and local community should not be required to carry the environmental cost of this development.

We respectfully ask that the Meenbog Wind Farm project be rejected and that this location be protected from further industrial wind-energy development.

Kind Regards,

Martin Byrne

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