

OBSERVATION / OBJECTION

Ballyglass 110 kV Substation and Underground Grid Connection

An Coimisiún Pleanála Reference VA03.324491

Applicant Reeve Wave Limited

Submitted by Liam Mannix

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Formal observation / objection in respect of the above Strategic Infrastructure Development application. The detailed grounds of observation and photographic appendix follow.

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County Clare

1. Introduction

I wish to make a formal observation and objection in relation to the above proposed development, and particularly the proposal to route approximately 1.3 kilometres of the underground 110 kV cable along the L70382 local road through the Oakfield area.

I am a local resident and use this road on a daily basis. My concerns relate to the physical suitability and safety of this exceptionally narrow rural road for the proposed works; access for residents and emergency services; potential damage to mature roadside trees and their root systems; the consequent long-term public-safety implications; impacts on bats and other wildlife; the adequacy of route-specific ecological and arboricultural assessment; and the circumstances in which residents were previously repeatedly assured that the grid cable would not be routed along this road.

2. Road Width and Physical Suitability

The affected approximately 1.3 km section of the L70382 is an exceptionally narrow rural road. A representative measurement taken by residents shows a carriageway width of approximately 3.2-3.3 metres. This narrow character is replicated broadly along the affected stretch.

There is little or no conventional verge at numerous locations. Mature trees, old roadside banks, hedgerows and vegetation are immediately adjacent to the carriageway. The applicant proposes an underground cable trench approximately 1.3 metres deep. On a road of this width, conventional open-trench construction would occupy a substantial proportion of the available road space and warrants detailed site-specific assessment.

3. Emergency Access, Resident Access and Construction Safety

The road provides daily access to homes and farms. In the event of a medical emergency, fire or other serious incident, an ambulance, fire appliance or Garda vehicle must be capable of reaching properties without avoidable delay.

The applicant's documentation refers to traffic management and limiting the length of open excavation, but on a road of approximately 3.2-3.3 metres width even a short work zone can be significant once excavation, plant, personnel, spoil, ducting and safety barriers are present. The Commission should be satisfied before permission is granted that uninterrupted emergency and residential access can be maintained in practice, rather than leaving this fundamental matter to a later contractor traffic-management arrangement.

4. Mature Roadside Trees, Root Systems and Arboricultural Assessment

The photographs in Appendix A show numerous substantial mature trees, including mature native oak trees, forming part of a long-established roadside treeline and hedgerow system. Many grow immediately beside the carriageway and old roadside banks.

The proposed excavation depth is approximately 1.3 metres. A general ecological walkover is not equivalent to a tree-by-tree arboricultural assessment of the effects of deep excavation beside mature trees. I have been unable to identify in the application material a detailed arboricultural survey for this road section that records

the relevant trees, their condition and dimensions, establishes Root Protection Areas, and overlays the proposed trench alignment on those areas.

The Commission should require clear evidence demonstrating that the proposed trench can be constructed without unacceptable damage to significant roots or structural root systems. If conventional open trenching cannot achieve this, alternative construction techniques or an alternative route should be considered.

5. Tree Stability and Long-Term Public Safety

This is not only a tree-conservation issue. Large mature trees stand immediately beside, and in places overhang, a public road used daily by residents, pedestrians and vehicles. Damage or severance of significant anchoring roots can affect structural stability. Any resulting weakness may not become apparent immediately after construction.

In periods of high winds or storms, destabilisation of a large roadside tree could create a serious risk of property damage, injury or loss of life. The long-term structural safety of retained trees therefore requires proper arboricultural assessment before excavation is authorised.

6. Bats and the Function of the Roadside Corridor

Residents regularly observe bats flying along this road and around its mature trees and hedgerows at dusk and after dark. These are repeated first-hand observations.

The applicant's Ecological Impact Assessment recognises the importance of hedgerows and treelines for bat commuting and foraging and describes the surrounding landscape as having moderate-to-high suitability for bats. Detailed passive bat monitoring reported for the wider development was associated principally with the Phase 2 solar-array lands. The Commission should consider whether comparable route-specific bat survey effort has been undertaken along this approximately 1.3 km mature tree-lined cable corridor.

There is also a distinct impact pathway that requires attention: a tree can remain standing yet suffer root damage from excavation. Measures dealing only with tree felling do not address the potential ecological and structural consequences of damage to retained trees.

7. White Owl / Barn Owl

Residents regularly catch sight of a white owl in the locality. I do not claim a definitive species identification, but its appearance is consistent with a Barn Owl. The applicant's ecological material itself records a historic Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) record within approximately 0.5 km of the proposed development. Current resident observations therefore warrant consideration when assessing whether the affected mature trees, hedgerows and adjoining farmland are currently used for roosting, nesting or foraging.

8. Hedgehogs, Squirrels and Other Wildlife

Hedgehogs are regularly observed by residents in this locality. The applicant's ecological material acknowledges records of hedgehog in the Clonlara area and accepts that hedgehogs may use hedgerows and treelines and that their presence cannot be ruled out.

Squirrels are also regularly observed in and around the mature trees, although residents have not positively identified them as red or grey squirrels. Taken together with the regular bat activity and white-owl observations, these sightings demonstrate active wildlife use of this established roadside corridor.

9. Adequacy of Route-Specific Ecological Assessment

I acknowledge that the applicant undertook a further ecological walkover of the proposed grid-connection route in February 2026. My concern is not that no survey occurred, but whether the nature and intensity of the survey were adequate for the impacts of the development now proposed.

A winter walkover does not by itself resolve questions concerning seasonal bat activity, tree root systems, arboricultural condition, structural stability, or the full ecological function of a mature continuous treeline and hedgerow corridor. The survey effort should be proportionate to the actual linear infrastructure proposed along this road.

10. Previous Assurances Regarding the Cable Route

When the solar development was originally being discussed with residents, Mr James Crowley, representing Reeve Wave Limited, called to us and discussed the development and proposed grid connection. We were explicitly advised that the cable would not be routed down our road.

The route explained to us was through lands associated with Hubert Galvin, Martin O'Neill and Liam Cusack, continuing towards the grid connection at Ardnacrusha. This was not understood as a one-off tentative suggestion. Residents were repeatedly led to understand that the cable would not be brought down this road.

That assurance materially affected how residents understood and responded to the earlier phases of the Ballyglass solar development. Had we been informed that the ultimate development would involve approximately 1.3 km of this narrow, mature tree-lined road being excavated for a 110 kV cable, our earlier submissions would have addressed road suitability, emergency access, tree roots and stability, public safety, bats, wildlife and cumulative impacts substantially more strongly.

11. Alternatives

The fact that a different route through agricultural lands was previously described to residents is relevant to the assessment of alternatives. The applicant should explain why that route was subsequently abandoned and why routing the cable along approximately 1.3 km of this exceptionally narrow, mature tree-lined public road is now considered preferable.

The Commission should satisfy itself that reasonable alternatives have been properly examined, particularly alternatives capable of avoiding or materially reducing impacts on residents, mature trees, wildlife habitat and the operation of the public road.

12. Relevant Statutory and Technical Framework

The following provisions and standards support the need for a rigorous assessment. They are not all of the same legal status: the legislation creates statutory obligations, while the technical documents provide recognised guidance and good-practice benchmarks.

- **Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended), sections 182A and 182B** - the statutory framework for electricity transmission infrastructure applications of this kind and their determination.
- **European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 (S.I. No. 477/2011), including Regulation 42 and Regulations 51-54** - relevant to Appropriate Assessment and the strict protection regime for Annex IV species, including bats.
- **Wildlife Act 1976 (as amended), including section 23 and the Fifth Schedule** - relevant to protected wild mammals.
- **Transport Infrastructure Ireland Publication GE-ENV-03002, Guidelines for the Protection and Preservation of Trees, Hedgerows and Scrub** - states that root damage or severance caused by excavation should be avoided because it can detrimentally affect both tree structural stability and the tree's ability to absorb water and nutrients; it refers to BS 5837:2012.

- **BS 5837:2012, Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations** - the recognised arboricultural standard underpinning Root Protection Area assessment.
- **Uisce Éireann water-infrastructure Codes of Practice, including the IW-CDS/CDS-5020 series** - while not a legal standard governing this electricity cable, these provide a useful Irish utility-sector benchmark showing the importance of controlled excavation and arboricultural precautions close to established trees.
- **NPWS Bat Mitigation Guidelines for Ireland, Irish Wildlife Manuals No. 134 (2022)** - relevant national guidance where bats are known or suspected to occur.

Of particular relevance, TII GE-ENV-03002 expressly warns that excavation-related root damage or severance can adversely affect the structural stability of a tree. Given the photographs showing mature trees immediately beside this road, the absence of a clearly identified tree-by-tree Root Protection Area assessment is a material matter for the Commission to examine.

The Uisce Éireann material is cited only as corroborating utility-sector good practice, not as a claim that an Uisce Éireann code is legally binding on Reeve Wave's electricity development.

13. Photographic Evidence

Appendix A contains photographs taken along the affected road. They are a representative selection rather than an inventory of every tree. The photographs principally document approximately half a kilometre, while residents report that the same narrow, mature tree-lined character continues broadly along the approximately 1.3 km section proposed for the cable.

The photographs show the restricted carriageway, mature trees immediately adjoining the road, established roadside banks and hedgerows, extensive tree canopy and the limited separation between the carriageway and vegetation. They should be considered together with the measured carriageway width of approximately 3.2-3.3 metres and the proposed trench depth of approximately 1.3 metres.

14. Conclusion

I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála give substantial consideration to these concerns before determining the application. In particular, the Commission should be satisfied on the basis of adequate site-specific evidence that the proposed works can be carried out safely on this road; that emergency and residential access can be maintained; that mature tree Root Protection Areas and structural stability are adequately protected; that route-specific bat and wildlife impacts are properly assessed; and that reasonable alternatives have been properly considered.

This is an established residential rural road used every day by the people who live here. The proposal involves considerably more than simply placing an underground cable beneath an existing road. It has the potential to affect road access, mature trees and their root systems, wildlife habitat and the long-term safety of people using the road.

References

1. An Coimisiún Pleanála, Case VA03.324491, Ballyglass 110 kV Substation and Underground Grid Connection.
2. Transport Infrastructure Ireland, GE-ENV-03002, Guidelines for the Protection and Preservation of Trees, Hedgerows and Scrub.
3. BS 5837:2012, Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations.
4. European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011, S.I. No. 477/2011.
5. Wildlife Act 1976, as amended.
6. NPWS, Irish Wildlife Manuals No. 134 (2022), Bat Mitigation Guidelines for Ireland.

7. Uisce Éireann, Water Infrastructure Codes of Practice, IW-CDS/CDS-5020 series (cited as a utility-sector technical benchmark).

APPENDIX A - PHOTOGRAPHIC RECORD

A concise selection of photographs showing the physical constraints of the affected L70382 road corridor, the proximity of mature trees to the carriageway, and representative tree species. These photographs document only part of the approximately 1.3 km affected road and are not intended as a complete tree inventory.

Planning and Development Act 2000 as Amended.
Notice of Direct Planning Application to An Coimisiún Pleanála in respect of a Strategic Infrastructure Development.
County Clare (Clare County Council)

In accordance with section 182A of the Planning and Development Acts (as amended) Reeve Wave Ltd. gives notice that it proposes to seek the approval of An Coimisiún Pleanála for a period of 10 years for development at Ballyglass, Blackwater, Castiebarr, Lakyle, Mountcatherine, Oakfield, Parkroe, Reanabrone, Rosmadda West and Ruanard (townlands), Ardnacrusha, County Clare.

The proposed development will consist of the provision of the following:

A 110 kilovolt (kV) Air-Insulated Switchgear (AIS) electrical substation, including 2 no. single-storey control buildings with staff welfare facilities, underground wastewater storage tank, all associated electrical plant, cabling, equipment and apparatus, and security fencing, within a substation compound with a total footprint of approximately 0.8 ha; 5.6 kilometre (km) 110kV underground cabling route, with 4.75km following the public road corridor and 0.85km along new proposed access track across agricultural grassland and private access tracks (including joint bays, communication and earth sheath link chambers and all ancillary works along the route); 1 no. temporary construction compound (including offices and staff welfare facilities); temporary construction and operational access from a new entrance from the L70382; Spoil management, landscaping and earthworks; Site drainage; All ancillary works and apparatus.

The development subject to this application forms part of grid connection and access arrangements which will facilitate the connection of the permitted Ballyglass Solar Array Phase 1 (Clare County Council Reference P22-591 and An Coimisiún Pleanála Reference ABP-316043-23) and Phase 2 (Clare County Council Reference P24-60485 and An Coimisiún Pleanála Reference PL-500253-CE-25) to the national grid.

This application is accompanied by a Natura Impact Statement (NIS).

The planning application and the NIS may be inspected free of charge or purchased on payment of a specified fee (which fee shall not exceed the reasonable cost of making such copy) during public opening hours for a period of seven weeks commencing 11th August 2026 at the following locations:

- The offices of An Coimisiún Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1, D01V902.
- The offices of Clare County Council, Áras Contae an Chláir, New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare, V95 DX2.

The application may also be viewed on the following website: ballyglassgridplanning.com

Submissions or observations may be made in writing to An Coimisiún Pleanála (the Commission) 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1, D01V902, or online at www.pleanala.ie, during the above-mentioned period of seven weeks relating to -

- (i) the implications of the proposed development for proper planning and sustainable development of the area concerned, and
- (ii) the likely effects on the environment of the proposed development, if carried out, and
- (iii) the likely effects of the proposed development on a European site, if carried out

Any submissions/observations must be accompanied by a fee of €50 (except for certain prescribed bodies) and must be received by An Coimisiún Pleanála not later than 5.30 p.m. on the 29th September 2026 and must also include the following information:

- The name of the person making the submission or observation, the name of the person acting on his/her behalf, if any, and the address to which any correspondence relating to the application should be sent;
- The subject matter of the submission/observation; and
- The reasons, considerations and arguments on which the submission or observation is based in full (Article 217 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, refers)

Any submissions or observations which do not comply with the above requirements cannot be considered by the Commission. The Commission may at its absolute discretion hold an oral hearing on the application. (refer to 'A Guide to Public Participation in Strategic Infrastructure Development' at www.pleanala.ie)

The Commission may in respect of an application for permission/approval decide to:-

1. grant the permission, or
2. make such modifications to the proposed development as it specifies in its decision and grant permission/approval in respect of the proposed development as so modified, or
3. grant permission/approval in respect of part of the proposed development with or without specified modifications of it of the foregoing kind, and
4. refuse to grant the permission/approval

Any enquiries relating to the application process should be directed to the Strategic Infrastructure Development Section of An Coimisiún Pleanála (Tel: 01 856 6100).

A person may question the validity of any such decision by the Commission by way of an application for judicial review, under Order 64 of the Rules of the Superior Courts (S.I. No. 35 of 1964, as amended), in accordance with section 50 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended. Practical information on the review mechanism can be accessed under the heading Information on Cases / Weekly Info. Judicial review of planning decisions on the Commission's website can be accessed on the Citizens Information Service website: www.citizensinformation.ie

Signed

Agent: Connor Farrell, HW Planning, 5 Joyce House, Barrack Square, Ballinacorney, Cork, P21 6P64

Date: 10th August 2026 02nd July 2026

Photograph 1. Site notice for the proposed development, included once for context.



Photograph 2. Road-width measurement at a representative point. The affected road is approximately 3.2-3.3 metres wide at the measured location, and its narrow character is broadly replicated along the approximately 1.3 km cable section.



Photograph 3. Representative view showing the very narrow carriageway with mature hedgerows and trees immediately adjoining both sides and little or no usable verge.



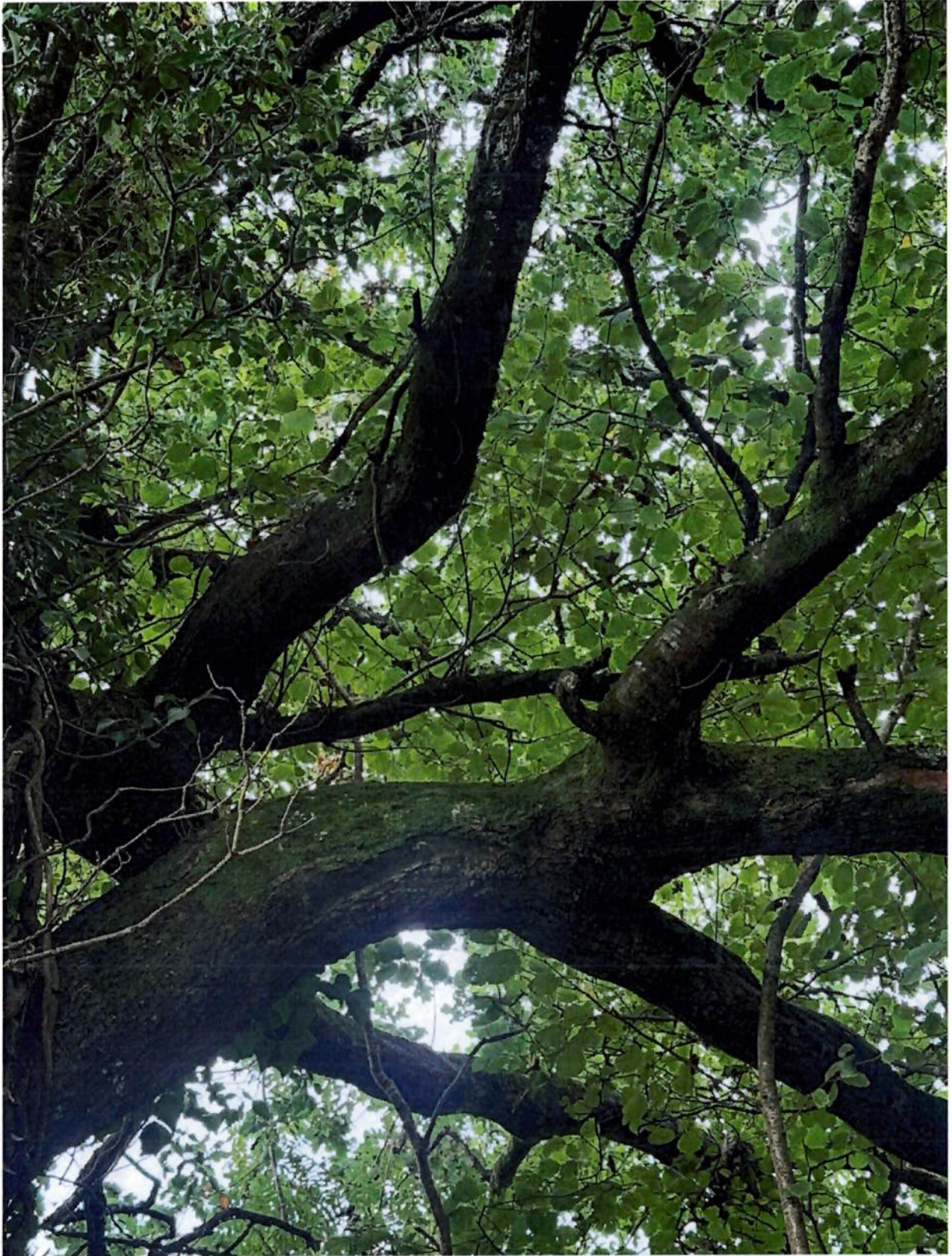
Photograph 4. Dense mature tree and hedgerow canopy enclosing the carriageway, illustrating the constrained nature of the proposed trench corridor.



Photograph 5. Representative section showing mature roadside vegetation and trees rising directly from the roadside bank, immediately adjacent to the carriageway.



Photograph 6. Large mature roadside tree forming part of the established treeline immediately adjoining the proposed cable corridor.



Photograph 7. *Mature tree canopy and substantial limbs over the road, relevant to the concern regarding root disturbance, structural stability and long-term public safety.*



Photograph 8. Close view of oak foliage beside the affected road, supporting the identification of mature oak within the roadside treeline.



Photograph 9. Close view of a different established hedgerow/tree species within the affected corridor, illustrating that the roadside vegetation is a mixed mature habitat rather than a uniform hedge.