James O'Connor TD
Teachta Dála, Cork East
84 North Main Street
Youghal, Co. Cork

3 November 2026

Strategic Infrastructure Division
An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902

Re: Observation on Case Ref. 324632 – Proposed substation, Greenhills Solar Farm, near Killeagh, Co. Cork

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to make an observation on the above application in my capacity as a TD for Cork East. I have serious concerns about the suitability of this site, given the history of flooding in the surrounding area and, in particular, the risk to the village of Inch, which lies in close proximity to the proposed development.

Flooding in Inch during Storm Babet

On 18 October 2023, Storm Babet brought roughly a month's rainfall in 24 hours to East Cork, falling on ground that was already saturated. Inch was among the communities badly affected. The community hall and St Patrick's Catholic Church, which serves the parish of Killeagh–Inch, suffered substantial flood damage, as did residential homes nearby. These buildings are the focal points of community life in the parish.

The link between the site and Inch

The flooding in Inch was driven by tributaries of the River Tourig flowing from the higher ground where this development is proposed. During the storm, these streams carried water down into the river beside the community hall, the church and local homes. Any development on these lands that increases or speeds up surface water runoff will therefore add directly to the flood risk faced by this community.

A substation of this kind requires a substantial compound of hardstanding, access roads and drainage works, all of which reduce the ability of the ground to absorb rainfall. It is also designed to serve a solar farm of around 250 MW, which will bring its own access tracks, equipment bases and changes to how the land is managed. Taken together, these works could materially change how water leaves these lands during periods of intense rainfall.

What I am asking the Commission to do

I respectfully ask the Commission to:

1. Require a site-specific flood risk assessment, in line with The Planning System and Flood Risk Management Guidelines (2009), that covers the catchment downstream of the site, including Inch, and that tests the proposal against rainfall of the intensity experienced during Storm Babet.

2. Require a full surface water management plan showing that runoff from the site will not exceed greenfield rates, with attenuation sized for extreme events and an allowance for climate change.
3. Require clear controls on runoff, silt and soil compaction during construction, when the risk to downstream watercourses is often greatest.
4. Assess this substation together with the solar farm it is designed to serve, so that their combined effect on flood risk is considered rather than each part in isolation.
5. Seek the views of the Office of Public Works and Cork County Council's drainage engineers on the downstream flood risk to Inch.
6. Refuse permission if the applicant cannot demonstrate that the development will not increase flood risk to Inch or to other communities downstream.

The people of Inch have already seen the damage that flooding can do to their homes, their church and their community hall. They deserve certainty that a development of this scale will not add to that risk. I would be grateful if the Commission would give these concerns full weight in its assessment, and I would welcome being kept informed of the progress of this application.

Yours sincerely,

James O'Connor TD
Cork East

cc: Planning Department, Cork County Council, County Hall, Carrigrohane Road, Cork, T12 R2NC