

Letter of Observation

Offices of An Comisiun Pleanala,

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27/07/2026

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(also Stauntons caravan park, Brittas Bay)

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Arklow Bank Wind Park Phase 2

ACP Reference: ABP-319864-24

Dear Sir/Madam,

My family and I have frequented Brittas Bay since my father bought his first mobile home in Staunton's caravan park in the 1980s. We have grown up there. Birthdays, engagements, and baby showers have been celebrated there. Countless memories have been made with friends and family on the beach. Because of this, the news of a large industrial development along the coastline greatly concerns me. Make no mistake, my objection is not the wind turbines in general. I support renewable energy sources, and I acknowledge that Ireland needs offshore wind. However, I don't believe that the Arklow coast is an appropriate location for this project. In my opinion, the additional information provided by SSE Renewable Sure Partners Ltd does not adequately address the environmental or economic damages that this project could result in.

Therefore, I am urging the Commission to consider this project from the perspective of the residents who rely on the Arklow Bank for both their health and livelihood and who expect the developers to prove that irreversible harm will *not* occur before the project is approved.

The main issue regarding the project is the simplified model for this exceptionally dynamic landscape, which proposes 46 to 57 wind turbines deployed 6-15 kilometres from the shore. However, this model cannot predict the various factors that contribute to the long-term ecosystem, including storms, wave directions, and sea life. The effect on the sandbank's ecosystem is not simple enough to be summarised in 1 model; it requires a more detailed analysis. The SSE has already admitted "uncertainty" about the effects of these wind banks, so it is concerning to see the lack of heed given to the potential environmental or economic consequences.

In my view, I do not believe that the SSE has considered the environmental impacts the wind turbines could have. The wind turbines could cost the bay not only its picturesque image, but also its clean waters, calm shores, and diverse wildlife. There has been little consideration as to how the wind turbines may cause erosion, which would not only destroy nesting sites for

birds, crabs, and sea creatures alike, but would also inhibit the shore's ability to weather storms- increasing the risk of flooding. Arklow Bay's sand dunes would also be at risk of further damage. In recent years, efforts have been made to protect these sand dunes. They are a designated Special Area of Conservation and rules have been made to ensure their protected status: visitors are instructed to keep to the marked paths in order to avoid further erosion, and dogs are to be kept off the sand dunes from May to September. However, the Arklow Bank Phase 2 project could seriously undermine the efforts taken to preserve the sand dunes. Huge wind changes could cause severe erosion and destroy their unique ecosystems. It is also worth noting that Ireland is currently under investigation from the EU for extremely poor environmental conditions in the country, including failing to protect sandbanks, reefs, dolphins and seabirds- the same habitats that this wind farm will affect. So, it is understandable that the public are wary about a project that could be potentially catastrophic to Arklow Bank's ecosystem.

As well as that, damage to the beaches will not only affect the environment, but also the local economy. Wicklow and Wexford tourism earns 433 million euros each year. They provide a beautiful holiday destination not just to Irish families, but also international tourists, celebrities, and those wishing to retire to a scenic destination. Post Covid 19, many caravan parks now open year-round, allowing many residents to live by the coast for all seasons, not just summer. Many local restaurants, cafés, and shops rely on tourist season to support their families. The proposed wind turbines would attack not only our environment, but the livelihoods of those living and working in the surrounding area. While the SSE has offered 400 million in local benefits over the entire 35-year lifetime of the project, if the damages caused are in fact *not* insignificant, that money would barely cover 12 months of potential revenue. The heart of Ireland's tourism is built on scenic landscapes and local businesses- to undermine either of those would be to undermine the hard work of those in the tourist industry.

In conclusion, I urge the Commission to cancel the project. To me, it is clear that the coastline is too small to withstand a project of such magnitude without significant damage being done to the area. The coastline is a beloved part of Ireland's landscape. It has been the foundation for a strong sense of community and diverse wildlife in Wicklow and Wexford, and to see that compromised would be devastating to those who care about Ireland's ecosystem and local economy.