

Observation - An Coimisiún Pleanála - Case reference: OA27.319864

Date: 29/07/2026

Observer Name: Patrick Wolohan

Observer Address: APT 10, St Marys Court, St Marys Road, Arklow, Co. Wicklow, Y14DP68

Reasons/Arguments against case

1. Water Quality (Public Health/ Flora & Fauna Health /Economic Consequences):

- The construction of the proposed development will cause significant disruption to the sandbank and will take course over an estimated 5 plus years.
- The Avoca river flows from Arklow out to the sandbank. This river has been subject to high levels of pollution throughout recent history with sources including the copper mines in Avoca and former fertiliser plant outside Arklow Town. Additionally, Arklow was without a wastewater treatment plant until recently which resulted in sewage being pumped directly into open.
- I believe that the information provided for this development does not adequately assess whether the sandbank contains contaminated sediment, particularly at deeper levels which will be disrupted by construction but not by current weather conditions etc, and if construction will result in this contaminated material coming loose and entering the sea water and being carried towards shore (which would make sense seeing as existing tides and currents transport higher level / surface level sand from the sand bank to the coast (but not the deeper layers which may contain said contaminated material).
- This could potentially result in poor water quality on the Wicklow coast for several years and the waters being unsafe for people to swim in. Does the applicant or the State have measures in place to provide for this and adequately police the area to ensure people are not endangering their health and are aware of the dangers as well as risks posed to animal and plant life.
- This potential closing off of the Wicklow and Wexford coastline could have severe economic consequences for businesses and communities that rely on the sea such as local caravan and camping parks, restaurants, surf schools, fishermen as well as the hundreds of thousands of people that would be deprived of swimming and availing of public beach and water amenities. This could results in loss of revenue and jobs and a reduction in quality of life at a minimum, nevermind the consequences of severe health issues posed by swimming in polluted waterways.

- The fact that these risks are not proved to exist by the applicant is, in my opinion, grounds for the development to be refused permission or at least delayed until they can study the matter and provide independently verified evidence that the development will not pose a threat to water quality during the construction phase (or thereafter) and that these risks could be avoided by developing turbines further out to sea in less risky developments as the mother company of the applicants (SSE) are already doing in other jurisdictions.

2. Inequal treatment between the applicant and the general public

- The applicant has had approximately 1 year to provide this further information.
- Even allowing for the disparity in the financial resources available to the applicant versus the average individual citizen, it is unfair that only an 8 week timeframe to analyse the further information. Given the size of the further information and the wide range of topics covered in it, it is unrealistic to expect an average individual to be able to sufficiently analyse it and avail of relevant technical expertise or learn such knowledge themselves in such a short timeframe.
- This appears to be in contravention of the Aarhus Convention which aims for individuals to be treated equally to larger corporate entities with regards to a range of areas including treatment in development processes and engagement.
- As such, I believe that it is only fair to extent the timeframe for further public observations to at least that which it took the applicant to submit the further information after being requested to do so.
- Additionally, it would be helpful for online, open access information / education on the development processes and topics covered in the further information and development application to be provided so as to allow the general public to make better informed decisions about proposed developments.