

ABP320705-24 PROPOSE INDUSTRIAL WINDFARM KNOCKSHANVO.

**Name: Sender Martina Dempsey, Cahernalee, Kiltullagh,
Athnery, Co Galway**

Email address: info@bellacasa.ie

Dear Sirs

This is my submission for case: ABP3020705-24

Visual Effects on Residential Receptors

The planning application states that the area has a low population density. However, the primary reason for this is that Clare County Council has historically been very restrictive in granting planning permission for one-off rural housing in this area. It seems contradictory that local families face significant barriers to building or extending homes on their own land, while an application is being made for a major industrial wind farm on the highest point of the landscape.

With proposed changes to national planning policy, more local people may in future be permitted to build homes in this area. The long-term visual impact of this development should therefore be assessed not only against the current population but also against the likely future residential development of the area.

As full-time organic farmers living and farming within 1 km of the proposed development, we experienced first-hand how difficult it was to obtain planning permission to renovate and extend our own cottage on family land. The contrast between the restrictions placed on local residents and the scale of industrial development now proposed raises important questions about fairness and consistency in planning policy.

The Environmental Impact Assessment places considerable emphasis on existing mature boundary vegetation and forestry as visual screening. However, this screening cannot be regarded as permanent. Large areas of Coillte's commercial forestry in this locality are scheduled for clear-felling within the next decade. In addition, recent severe storms, including Storm Éowyn, have demonstrated how vulnerable forestry is to extensive wind damage. Anyone travelling through the area can see the widespread loss of trees and the ongoing clearance work following recent storms.

Once forestry is harvested or damaged, these industrial-scale turbines will become highly prominent features on the skyline, dominating views across the surrounding countryside and permanently altering the natural landscape.

For this reason, visualisations that depict the turbines surrounded by mature forestry are misleading. They present a temporary landscape rather than the long-term reality that residents will experience over the operational lifetime of the wind farm.

Public Consultation and Community Engagement

Despite our home and farmland being located within 1 km of the proposed development, we were not contacted directly by Future Energy or by its community liaison officers regarding this project.

After we contacted the company ourselves, community liaison officers Christy O'Dea and Kevin Donnellan visited our property to discuss our concerns. During that meeting, the principal reassurance offered to us was that we were "lucky the turbines were behind us and not in front of us."

This statement did little to address the legitimate concerns we raised regarding the visual impact, landscape character, and long-term effects of living so close to an industrial wind farm. Instead, it appeared to acknowledge that the turbines would have a significant visual impact, while suggesting that our situation could have been worse.

Future Energy's office is based in Dublin rather than in County Clare, and the company has no permanent local office serving the affected communities. For a development of this scale, with significant and long-lasting impacts on local residents, the landscape, and the wider community, a permanent local presence would be expected to facilitate ongoing communication, accountability, and community engagement.

These experienced community liaison officers will retire or move on to other projects once the planning process is complete. Their contact numbers may eventually become obsolete, leaving local residents without the established relationships that were presented during the consultation process. Given that this development could operate for decades, meaningful long-term community engagement should not depend on individuals whose involvement is temporary.

Dust and Air Pollution

I visited the Yellow River Wind Farm construction site in Co Offaly to observe the development and its potential impacts first-hand. During my visit, I was shocked by the amount of dust on the local roads. The level of airborne dust was so significant that I had to keep the windows of my car closed while travelling through the area.

I visited the site after 7.00 pm and remained in the area for several hours. Construction activity was still ongoing, with the site remaining open and busy well into the evening.

I also observed numerous construction vehicles and private vehicles entering and leaving the site. Many of these vehicles displayed foreign registration plates, suggesting that a proportion of the construction workforce may be travelling from outside Ireland rather than being locally based.

During my visit, I witnessed several construction vehicles being driven at excessive speed on narrow rural roads. I also observed dangerous overtaking manoeuvres, with little apparent regard for the safety of other road users or for the local community. Increased construction traffic associated with a project of this scale has the potential to create additional safety risks, particularly on rural roads that are also used by local residents, farmers, pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, and school transport.

My observations raise concerns about the effectiveness of dust control measures, traffic management, and contractor supervision during the construction phase. These issues should be carefully considered when assessing the likely impacts of the proposed Knockshanvo Wind Farm on neighbouring communities.

Hen Harrier

We have been informed by a neighbouring landowner that they were approached regarding measures to relocate Hen Harriers from their existing habitat to another area, with financial compensation being offered. If this information is correct, it raises serious questions about the effectiveness and appropriateness of such mitigation measures.

It is unclear how relocating Hen Harriers would work in practice. Hen Harriers are protected wild birds with established breeding and foraging territories. Their behaviour and habitat requirements cannot simply be transferred from one location to another, and it is difficult to understand how such a proposal could successfully replace a natural habitat that has developed over many years.

We live close to the proposed industrial wind farm and have regularly heard Hen Harriers in the surrounding area. Their presence forms part of the natural environment and biodiversity that makes this landscape unique.

It is deeply concerning that the natural habitat of a protected species could be disturbed or degraded to facilitate a commercial wind energy development. The long-term effectiveness of any proposed mitigation or compensation measures should be subject to rigorous independent assessment. Avoiding damage to existing habitat should take precedence over attempting to compensate for habitat loss after it has occurred.

The planning authority should carefully consider whether the proposed development could adversely affect the Hen Harrier population and whether the proposed mitigation measures are supported by robust scientific evidence and are capable of protecting this protected species throughout the lifetime of the development.

Property Devaluation

The assessment of property values within the planning application relies on studies that are outdated and, in my view, are not directly applicable to Ireland.

One of the principal studies referenced originates from the United States. The housing market, planning system, population density, and rural landscape in the USA are fundamentally different from those in Ireland. It is therefore questionable whether

conclusions drawn from that study can be relied upon to assess the impact of this proposed development on rural Irish properties.

The application also refers to research undertaken in Scotland. Again, the study is dated, and Scotland's geography, settlement patterns, planning framework, and property market differ significantly from those in County Clare. These differences limit the relevance of such evidence to the Irish context.

Since 2014, the Irish property market has changed dramatically. Property values in many parts of the country have increased substantially, with some areas experiencing increases of 50% or more. The planning authority should therefore question whether studies based on older market conditions accurately reflect the current value of rural homes and farms or the potential financial impact on property owners today.

For many rural families, their home is their single largest financial asset, often representing a lifetime of work and investment. Any potential reduction in property value is therefore a significant planning consideration and should not be dismissed on the basis of outdated or overseas research.

The planning authority should require robust, up-to-date evidence based on the Irish property market before concluding that this proposed industrial wind farm will have no significant impact on residential property values. Reliance on outdated international studies does not provide sufficient reassurance for homeowners and farmers whose properties are located close to the proposed development.

As decision-makers, I respectfully ask the planning authority to consider a simple question: **Would you choose to purchase or build your family home within one kilometre of a large industrial wind farm?** If that question cannot be answered with confidence, then the potential effect on property values and residential amenity deserves much greater consideration.

Noise and Vibration

During 2025, I visited several large industrial wind farms in County Offaly, both during the day and at night, to experience first-hand their visual impact, operational noise, and the effect of aviation warning lights on the surrounding landscape.

I would strongly encourage planners from Clare County Council and members of An Coimisiún Pleanála to visit operational wind farms on several occasions, including during the evening and at night, and to speak directly with residents who live within approximately 1 km of these developments. First-hand experience of living beside an operational industrial wind farm provides valuable insight that cannot be fully appreciated through reports and computer-generated visualisations alone.

The proposed Knockshanvo Wind Farm differs from many existing developments because it is located on an elevated ridgeline. This means the turbines will be visible over a much wider area and will fundamentally alter the character of East Clare's natural, unspoilt landscape. Land of this quality is a finite resource, and once it is industrialised, the change is effectively permanent for future generations.

From my own visits to operational wind farms, I found the turbine noise to be continuous. The constant "whooshing" sound was clearly audible and created a persistent background noise that I found impossible to ignore. Combined with the scale of the turbines, which tower over nearby homes and farmland, the overall effect was overwhelming.

During my visits, I spoke directly with several residents living within approximately 1 km of operational wind farms. Although each person's experience is unique, many described similar concerns, including:

- Continuous turbine noise throughout the day and night.
- Difficulty sleeping, with many reporting that the noise appears more noticeable during quieter night-time conditions.
- Negative impacts on their wellbeing and quality of life.
- Division within the local community between those who benefit financially and those who do not.
- Concerns regarding the devaluation of their homes and the difficulty of relocating, as reduced property values make it harder to purchase another home elsewhere.
- A lack of transparency and accountability when concerns were raised.
- No compensation for neighbouring homeowners who experience the impacts but do not host turbines on their land.

Many residents expressed the view that those receiving lease payments or other financial benefits from hosting turbines gain financially, while neighbouring landowners and homeowners who experience the visual, noise, and amenity impacts receive no comparable benefit or compensation.

During my visit, one farmer spoke positively about having turbines located on his land. While I respect his opinion and acknowledge that hosting landowners receive financial benefits, it also highlighted the imbalance experienced by neighbouring residents who receive no financial return yet must live with the long-term impacts of the development.

These conversations reinforced the importance of ensuring that the planning authority carefully considers not only compliance with noise limits but also the cumulative effects on residential amenity, quality of life, community cohesion, and the lived experience of those who will be most affected throughout the operational lifetime of the proposed development.

The applicant states that the proposed wind farm has been designed in accordance with current standards and best practice guidance. However, the principal guidance relied upon is based on the **Wind Energy Development Guidelines 2006**, which remain the statutory planning guidelines, despite a review process and draft revisions being published in 2019–2020.

The planning authority should consider whether guidance developed almost twenty years ago is sufficient for modern industrial wind turbines, which are significantly larger and more

powerful than those envisaged when the 2006 Guidelines were introduced. Draft revised guidelines proposed stronger provisions on matters such as noise assessment, setbacks, low-frequency noise, amplitude modulation, and community protection, recognising that these issues required further attention.

It is also important to consider the experience of communities already living beside operational industrial wind farms. In County Offaly, residents have made numerous complaints over several years regarding turbine noise, sleep disturbance, and compliance with planning conditions. Public reports show that these complaints have resulted in ongoing investigations and have prompted calls from Offaly County Council for the Government to update the national Wind Energy Development Guidelines, with councillors describing the current 2006 guidance as outdated.

Rather than relying solely on technical modelling and predicted compliance, the planning authority should also examine the real-life experience of residents living near existing industrial wind farms. Their experiences provide valuable evidence of the long-term impacts that may not be fully reflected in environmental assessments prepared before construction.

Overall Conclusion

In my opinion, this proposed industrial wind farm should not proceed.

The energy from this proposed wind farm will not be consistent and will need backup from fossil fuel energy to provide a constant supply – THIS WILL RESULT IN HIGHER ENERGY COST.

Ireland's long-term renewable energy strategy should prioritise the most appropriate locations for large-scale wind energy while minimising impacts on rural communities, protected landscapes, biodiversity, and residential amenity. Offshore wind has the potential to generate substantially more electricity from stronger and more consistent wind resources, while avoiding many of the direct impacts experienced by people living beside large onshore industrial wind farms.

The principal advantage of onshore wind over offshore wind is that it is generally less expensive to construct. However, lower construction costs should not outweigh the long-term impacts on rural communities, family farms, protected habitats, landscape character, and the wellbeing of those who live in these areas every day.

The financial benefits of this development will primarily accrue to the developer and participating landowners, while neighbouring homeowners and farmers who do not host turbines may experience the visual, environmental, and amenity impacts without receiving any direct benefit or compensation. This creates an imbalance that should be carefully considered by the planning authority.

East Clare is recognised for its natural beauty, peaceful rural character, and agricultural heritage. Once an industrial wind farm of this scale is constructed on this landscape, the change will be irreversible for the lifetime of the development and will fundamentally alter the character of the area for future generations.

If effective and enforceable safeguards are not put in place, there is a significant risk of ongoing disputes and legal challenges from homeowners and farmers in East Clare who believe their residential amenity, property, livelihoods, or quality of our lives have been adversely affected by the development.

Who Benefits and Who Bears the Impacts?

Our home and organic farm are located within 1 kilometre of the proposed industrial wind farm. If this development proceeds, we and our neighbours will experience its visual, environmental, and amenity impacts every day for decades.

The proposed development is being promoted by Future Energy, a joint venture between Coillte and ESB. Coillte is a commercial semi-state company owned by the people of Ireland and manages commercial forestry, timber production, and recreational lands. ESB is also a commercial semi-state company and is one of Ireland's largest energy businesses, generating significant annual revenues and profits. (€636 million profit in 2025)

While renewable energy plays an important role in Ireland's future, this particular development appears to place a disproportionate burden on one rural community while the financial benefits are shared elsewhere.

The greatest financial beneficiaries of this project are likely to include:

- The developer and its shareholders.
- Coillte as the landowner.
- Landowners who receive lease payments for turbines, roads, and electricity infrastructure.
- Clare County Council
- Contractors involved in the construction and operation of the project. (Seems to over sea workers brought in to complete the project)
- Businesses purchasing the electricity generated.
- Future investors or owners should the project be sold during its operational lifetime.

By contrast, neighbouring homeowners and farmers who do not host turbines on their land may experience the permanent visual impact, noise, shadow flicker, traffic, and changes to the character of the landscape without receiving any direct financial benefit or compensation.

This project is presented as a green energy development, but it will also involve the permanent industrialisation of a peaceful rural landscape. It will require extensive infrastructure, new access roads, excavation, concrete foundations, forestry clearance, and large industrial structures that will dominate the skyline for many kilometres. These are real and lasting environmental impacts that should not be overlooked.

The question that must be asked is whether it is fair for East Clare to bear these permanent impacts while the principal economic benefits are realised elsewhere.

The proposed Community Benefit Fund should not be viewed as adequate compensation for the long-term impacts on neighbouring residents. Community funds do not compensate individual homeowners for the loss of residential amenity, potential impacts on property

values, or changes to their quality of life. There should be complete transparency regarding how such funds are administered, who decides how they are allocated, and how conflicts of interest are avoided.

Planning decisions should not be based solely on economic return. They must also protect rural communities, the landscape, biodiversity, and the rights of people who live and work in the area. In this case, I believe the balance between public benefit and the impacts on the local community has not been achieved, and for these reasons I respectfully request that planning permission for the proposed Knockshanvo Wind Farm be refused.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that Clare County Council and An Coimisiún Pleanála refuse planning permission for the proposed Knockshanvo Wind Farm.

Sincerely

Martina Dempsey

info@bellacasa.ie