

From: Colin Peirce [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday 28 March 2022 21:25
To: Development Plan
Subject: Submission to Draft Clare County Council Development Plan, Years 2023-29
Attachments: Clare Co Co Development Plan Submission - Mon 28 (1).pdf
Importance: High

Dear Sir/Madame,

Please find attached a submission from my neighbour Mr. Ryan regarding the draft Clare Co. Council development plan 2023-29.

I wholeheartedly agree with all of Mr. Ryan's points and that the proposal to site wind turbines on Woodcock Hill/Gallows Hill/Ballycar Hill is a very poor one which lacks both insight and foresight and would have devastating consequences for thousands of residents, the environment, wildlife and the broader community in Clare and Limerick.

We would ask that this decision be scrutinised and re-considered, and that possibly the national plan of offshore wind energy be considered and adhered to - the Clare coast being potentially an ideal site for same, the uplands at Woodcock and neighbouring hills being a potentially disastrous option.

I would appreciate a reply in acknowledgement of my e-mail and reservations as attached to this proposed development plan.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Peirce

[REDACTED]

CLARE CO CO
DEVELOPMENT PLAN SUBMISSION



WIND ENERGY

MARCH 2022

Gerry Ryan, [REDACTED]

INTRODUCTION

Clare County Council has deemed it suitable to designate the uplands known as Woodcock Hill, Gallows Hill and Ballycar Hill in South East Clare as “strategic wind turbine” areas. These uplands are surrounded by the densely populated areas of:

- Cratloe
- Bunratty
- Sixmilebridge
- Truagh
- Oatfield
- Meelick
- Parteen
- Ardnacrusha
- Shannon
- Limerick City

A conservative count shows that approximately 1,250 family homes lie inside or within 1 kilometer of this “Wind Turbine Zone”. These homes provide for family members totaling approximately 7,000 people. Within 5 kilometers lies Limerick City & Metropolitan area with a population of 162,000 people. Within 7 kilometers lies Shannon Town with a population in excess of 10,000 people. Sixmilebridge and Bunratty lie within 3.5 kilometers with populations of approximately 2,800 and 400 respectively.

A total number exceeding 182,000 Irish residents who will be expected to live under the shadow of monstrous Wind Turbines topping out at approximately 1,600 feet above sea level. To put that into perspective, more than half the height of Ireland’s highest mountain Carrauntoohil.

These areas are used extensively by local residents, residents from Limerick City, Shannon Town, Ennis and other areas of County Clare, for recreational purposes 7 days per week, 365 days per annum. The area is also home to countless animals, bird life and unique habitat. It is a gem in the crown of County Clare and must be protected.

Thankfully, no such wind turbine development has taken place to date, and **Clare County Council now has this unprecedented opportunity** to listen to and hear the local communities and **to take action to reverse this zoning decision**, and to instead protect these beautiful uplands, raised bogs and mountains for our future generations to enjoy and for the good of the ecology of the area.

ZONING DECISIONS

This zoning decision was taken in 2011 and again for the 2019 plan, without direct notification to the residents who will be directly affected within these areas and surroundings. Initial submissions by residents (Nov 2021) in these areas, relating to the new development plan for 2023 – 2029 have had no impact whatsoever, as the original document from 2011 has been included verbatim in the new proposed plan 2023-2029, despite many submissions from residents in the affected areas.

Residents meeting with planning representatives at the public consultation sessions relating to the new plan were informed that it was the residents' responsibility to keep themselves informed as to the plans of Clare County Council and to make themselves familiar with the plan itself. Given the sheer size and volume of the plan, its complexity and overwhelming reference to legal/statutory instruments and other technical jargon, this is a task that is beyond the capabilities of most everyday residents. Additionally, Clare County Council planning representatives informed residents that there was a legal obligation placed upon the council to **NOT** make any modifications to the wind turbine volume of the CDP, originally issued in 2011. However when asked were not able/willing to specify what law was being referred to.

Clare County Council and its Chief Executive claim, through their “**Rural directorate**”, as published on Clare Co Co website, that their aim is “**To put in place a process of engagement in a rural development strategy to deliver key projects that will improve the quality of life, social and economic wellbeing of people in County Clare.**”

It is clear that zoning the densely populated area surrounding Woodcock Hill, Gallows Hill & Ballycar Hill as strategic wind turbine area is in direct contravention to the above statement. To develop such large scale 178 meter high (584 feet agl (above ground level)) wind turbines in these areas will decimate and destroy rather than improving:

- the quality of life of the people
- the mental wellbeing of countless local residents
- the social and economic wellbeing of the people
- the protected and unique habitat, birdlife, wildlife, flora of the area

The exception to the above being the stakeholder groups who will benefit financially at the cost of all other residents and the environment.

The draft CDP states that a circular issued in December 2013 be used as the basis for decisions to utilise outdated 2006 guidelines on wind turbines. It is clear that such guidelines are not fit for purpose given that they are now 16 years old and that such turbines are now 3+ times larger than in 2006. The adverse impact on local communities, habitat, fauna, birdlife will also be exponential.

LEGAL PROTECTION - WOODCOCK HILL BOG

The Woodcock Hill, Gallows Hill, Ballycar Hill area of Co. Clare, situated 5 kilometers north of Limerick City, is an idyllic rural setting which more than 1,200 families call home. Comprising a number of different areas such as Cratloe, Meelick, Ardnacrusha, Truagh, Oatfield, Sixmilebridge, Bunratty, Woodcock Hill, Derrymore and Stonepark and many more. The adjacent areas of Cratloe, Ardnacrusha, Parteen, Truagh, Sixmilebridge and others are also vibrant communities with close knit roots with the local area and wider landscape.

Over the years, the population of the area above has grown and now is a vibrant, active and close knit community with proud roots, traditions and stories. As mentioned more than 1,200 families live either in or within 1 kilometer of the wind turbine zoned area.

Woodcock Hill Bog (Gallows Hill) situated in the north of Meelick presents as a pristine peat bogland and is designated as an area of natural conservation. Indeed it is protected in law under S.I. No. 441/2005 - Natural Heritage Area (Woodcock Hill Bog NHA 002402) Order 2005.

Details can be seen at: <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2005/si/441/made/en/print>.

Additionally NPWS reports that the area is one of world renown.

See the description of Woodcock Hill Bog at

<https://www.npws.ie/sites/default/files/protected-sites/synopsis/SY002402.pdf> .

In particular it states:

*"North-west Europe contains some of the best - developed areas of blanket bog in the world" and "The current area of intact upland blanket bog in Ireland represents only a fraction of the original resource, due to the combined impacts of afforestation and overgrazing, **and intact examples are therefore extremely valuable for nature conservation. Their long-term survival requires sensitive management.**"*

It is incumbent (in fact legally required) on Clare Co Co to ensure that this globally unique area at Woodcock Hill Bog (and surrounding areas) is protected for future generations, wildlife, birdlife, flora and fauna.

This area and surrounding areas is also home to a diverse range of flora, fauna and wildlife including the protected Hen Harrier, Curlew, Bats, Barn Owl, Red Kite, Buzzard, Jay, Pheasant, Snipe, Deer, Hares, Badger, Stote, Pine Martin and Red Squirrel.

PLANNING REQUIREMENTS

For generations, Clare residents have been building their lives, livelihoods, families, traditions and homes under the auspices of Clare County Council planning department regulations and various County Clare Development plans.

All development applications from residents must abide by stringent rules on location, size, height, visual impact and many other requirements. It seems that such requirements are to be set aside to allow private companies build monstrous wind turbines in the heart of a densely populated area. All development must adhere to the planning laws and guidelines.

However in 2011, Clare County Council implemented a new CDP incorporating a provision for wind turbines in the areas of Cratloe, Meelick, Ballycar. This provision was implemented without any direct consultation with the local residents in the areas affected. The vast majority of residents were and still are totally unaware that such a provision was being planned.

The implementation in itself is a flawed process, as the stakeholders directly impacted by such a zoning, were not informed that such a dramatic and catastrophic decision was being made by the very council who are tasked with protecting communities such as Gallows Hill, Woodcock Hill and Ballycar Hill.

The current draft Clare CDP 2023-2029 refers to "2.5 Consultation" on page 24. It states "*Advertisements by Clare County Council in March 2009 seeking public submissions*" were undertaken, however it does not mention where these advertisements were published, nor for how long.

Additionally, the paragraph also states that a "A total of 36 submissions were received and the issues raised have informed the development of this Strategy". It is clear that such a small number of submissions proves that very few if any of the residents of the areas affected knew that such a plan to designate their local communities as "strategic" for wind turbines was being considered. It is incumbent on Clare County Council to ensure that its citizens are directly informed when such catastrophic decisions are being made about their communities.

For Clare Co Co to claim it is the resident's responsibility to stay informed of planning strategy is disingenuous in the extreme. Simple everyday things like school runs, GAA, Rugby, Soccer, Grocery Shopping, Work and the countless other daily tasks and chores dictate that normal everyday residents simply do not have time to trawl through behemoth websites like Clare Co Co and An Bord Pleanala. Similarly a development plan consisting of hundreds of pages is impossible to decipher. Clare Co Co should work for these residents and should directly inform each and every household within 10 kilometers of the proposed zoning area of their plans.

OUTDATED GUIDELINES

Additionally, decisions taken at the time (2011), were based upon Wind Turbine guidelines from 2006. These same guidelines have been identified as being flawed and not fit for purpose in terms of noise, distance from dwellings and shadow flicker, detailed in "Planning Circular Letter, Circular PL 20-13 20 December 2013". This exact and outdated document being referenced as a baseline in the current Clare County Development Plan 2023-2029.

Private companies now seek to take advantage of these outdated guidelines to construct turbines that are now so large that they will be the dominant feature visible for up to 60 miles. If constructed, they will sit at approx 1,600 feet above sea level at their tips. More than half the height of Carrauntoohil, Ireland's highest mountain.

Publication of findings were due to be published in Quarter 1 2014, however this has not happened, the Clare CDP references a directive to utilise the existing Development Plan policies until the completion of the new policies. This in itself is folly, given that the guidelines date to 2006 (**16 years old**) and the reference in the Clare CDP draft refers to a document dated from 1996, "Wind Farm Development- Guidance for Planning Authorities Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government 1996"

It is clear that the guidelines are outdated, and as such any/all development plan decisions on designating any area as suitable for Wind Turbines should be reversed until the new guidelines are published. Any planning applications for wind farms should also be rejected until an updated set of guidelines and strategy is published.

Such plans should also be in line with the governments "off shore" strategy. Making decisions based upon outdated information, documents and guidelines opens such decisions to court based challenges. The taking of said court based challenges should not be forced upon the ordinary citizens of County Clare by the very council tasked to protect those very citizens.

OFF- SHORE WIND GOVERNMENT STRATEGY

The planning for and subsequent development of "on-shore" wind farms is also in direct conflict with the views of government who state clearly that strategically Ireland should pursue an "off-shore" wind energy strategy. The "Climate Action Plan 2019" is clear in it's goals that the future wind strategy is "off-shore".

The plan can be accessed at : <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ccb2e0-the-climate-action-plan-2019/>

Action 25 of that very document states "Action 25: Facilitate the development of Offshore Wind, including the connection of at least 3.5 GW of offshore wind, based on competitive auctions, to the grid by 2030. We will establish a top team to drive this ambition"

The above to include floating off shore wind farms where it is seen as having potential to not only provide for all of Ireland's domestic electricity requirements, but also to allow for export of surplus energy to other markets such as the UK and Europe.

County Clare is ideally placed to take advantage of the natural resource which sits on our west coast in the form of ocean winds over the North Atlantic ocean. Unrivalled opportunities exist here which would actually benefit all residents of not just Co Clare, but also the other residents of Ireland. Additionally, the impact of such off-shore farms would be minimal on all aspects of society, habitat and wildlife.

Youtube interview highlighting the potential for wind energy in The Shannon Estuary and off the Clare coast.

[Shannon estuary has 'huge potential' for offshore wind farms](#)



Ireland are already behind other countries like Scotland and Wales in the planning and construction of these off-shore floating wind farms. This is where Clare Co Co should be focusing it strategy.

Ad-hoc planning to cater for ad-hoc on-shore wind farms is counter productive, is detrimental to the communities within which they are constructed, damages the environment and destroys habitat for countless animals and birdlife.

It begs the question as to why Clare Co Co have explicitly said they do not intend to pursue off shore options presently?

Page 9 –Vol 6. Clare Wind Energy Strategy.

"This Wind Energy Strategy concentrates on on-shore wind energy developments within the functional area of Clare County Council. However, as other renewable technologies develop and become established, these will be recognised and may be reconsidered over the intended lifetime of the Strategy. Furthermore the Council will have regard to the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland's 'Offshore Renewable Energy Action Plan' upon publication"

AVIATION SAFETY

Independent scientific studies (REPORT: *Wind Farm Turbulence Impacts on General Aviation Airports*) have shown that wind turbines, located in the vicinity of airports and or aircraft flight paths, can have a detrimental impact on general aviation aircraft.

The report summary states: *"The results of this project support the findings in the literature search that the turbulence from a wind turbine can impact operations at a general aviation airport"*

The entire report can be viewed at: <https://rosap.ntl.bts.gov/view/dot/26908>

Additionally, the document states that the CAA (Civil Aviation Authority) in England also carried out a study relating to the effects of wind turbines and finds adverse impacts as below:

"In Chapter 2 of their report, they identified several impacts of wind farms on aviation. They report that Primary Surveillance Radar is adversely affected" and

"The wind turbine also affects the Secondary Surveillance Radar even though it does not rely on the reflections from an object." and

The CAA also conclude that wake turbulence downwind of the turbines is also detrimental to general aviation and states *"They found that very light aircrafts such as gliders, gyroplanes, microlights, etc. are more susceptible to the wake turbulence"*

Risk to Persons / Aircraft:

It is clear that the scientific research shows that wind turbines present a risk to general aviation, particularly when built so close to existing flight paths. In the interested of Health & Safety, **the only acceptable risk is 0 risk**. Therefore, Clare Co Co should immediately reverse its decision and should re-zone the area to ensure no turbines can be built.

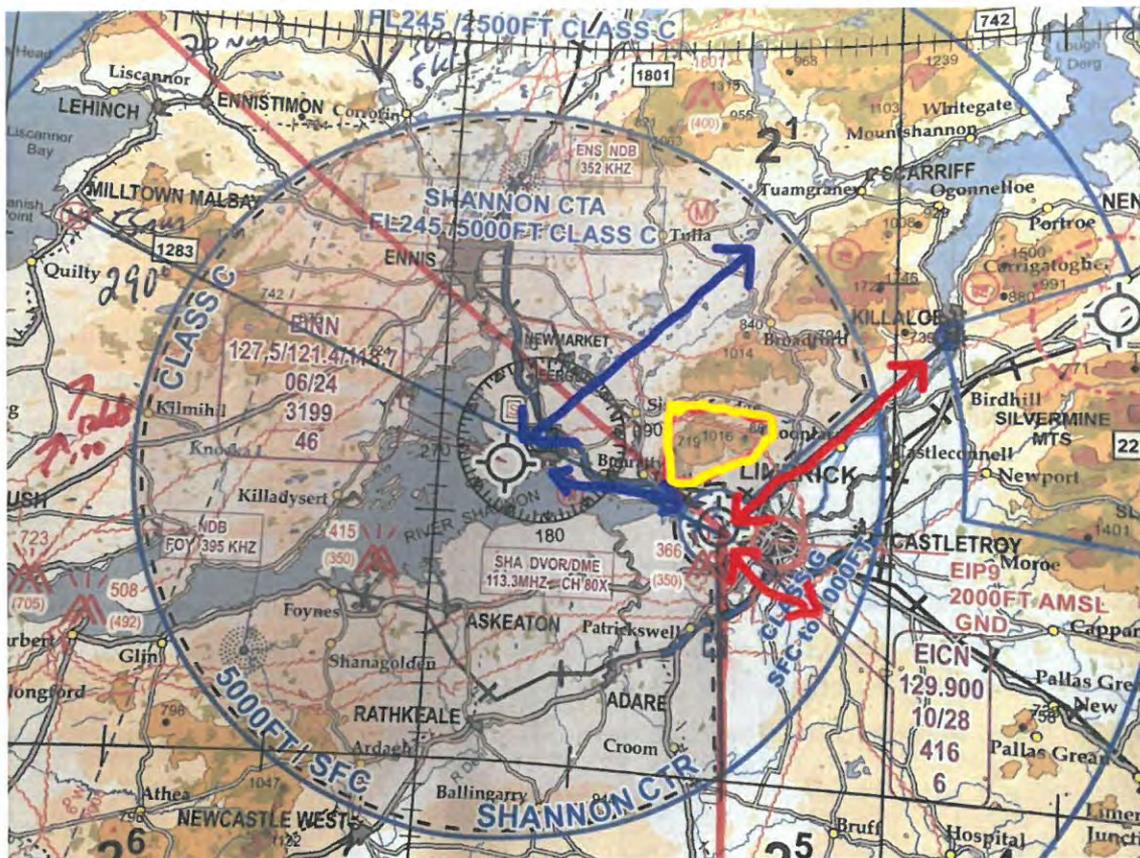
Ancient Flightpaths:

Coonagh Airfield (ICAO: EICN), situated in Coonagh Co Limerick, has been in existence for approx 75 years and is licensed by The Irish Aviation Authority (IAA). For 75 years, pilots from Coonagh have used the *"NE Flight Path"* to enter & exit Coonagh airfield during flight operations.

This flight path runs from Coonagh along the southern edge of Woodcock Hill, Gallows Hill and Ballycar Hill, via Ardnacrusha and beyond to areas like Killaloe, Lough Derg, Keeper Hill and Moylussa.

Pilots are required to maintain a maximum height of 1,000 AMSL until clear of the Shannon Control Zone.

See image below. The area highlighted in yellow indicates the so called "Strategic Turbine Zone" on Woodcock Hill/ Ballycar Hill. The 2 red lines show the flight path taken by aircraft from Coonagh Airfield. The purple lines show commercial traffic flight paths to Shannon International airport.



As shown above, it is clear that positioning such wind turbines in the proposed area will have a dramatic and catastrophic effect on the safe operation of any light aircraft that may be caught in the downwind wake turbulence from said turbines.

The image below shows both "Near" and "Far" wake turbulence as it moves downwind. Also, as referenced earlier, the turbulent effect can impact light aircraft as far downwind as 3.12 miles. Such a distance from any turbines would mean that this ancient and traditional flight path as used by hundreds of pilots in thousands of flights over the years would now present a danger to flight operations, aircraft and the safety of people on board.

Air law dictates that general aviation is not permitted to overfly urban areas (such as the suburbs of Limerick City) unless flying at least 1,500 above the highest obstacle in the area and also high enough to glide to a safe landing area in the event of engine failure. None of this is possible given the maximum height permitted is 1,000 AGL (above ground level). Additionally, P9 (Prohibited Area 9 – Limerick Prison) also prohibits flight over that area.



Above shows the impact that "Near" and "Far" wake turbulence will have downwind of wind turbines.

In the Clare Co Co Development Plan, Volume 6 – Wind Energy Strategy, Page 49 – Section 6.10 it states:

6.10 Aviation Safety and Navigation

- **Applicants are advised to consult with the Irish Aviation Authority in relation to interference with airport navigational aids.**

It is incredible to think that an item relating to the health & safety of persons and aircraft merits simply one line in a development plan that runs to thousands of pages. Said line directing applicants to consult a 3rd party (IAA). No mention whatever about other aviation stakeholders like commercial traffic & passengers who utilise the primary and secondary radar at Shannon and that situated on Gallows Hill, and those pilots and members of Coonagh and many other airfields around Ireland who use this flight path every day.

It is incumbent on Clare Co Co to ensure that, at very minimum, in-depth and detailed scientific research be carried out to ensure that the risk level to general aviation aircraft, using the airspace adjacent to such proposed turbines, is 0. **Again, the only acceptable risk is 0 risk.**

HEN HARRIER ANNEX I – PROTECTED BIRD SPECIES

The Woodcock Hill, Gallows Hill, Ballycar Hill area of Co. Clare, is unique in many aspects as shown above. However, its uniqueness continues to deliver in the form of a preferred habitat for one of Europe's most endangered birds of prey, The Hen Harrier.

The Hen Harrier is in decline and its habitat is in decline due to human developments, including the construction of wind turbines.

The Hen Harrier Threat Response Plan (HHTRP), which in accordance with the legal requirements of Regulation 39 of S.I. No. 477/2011 aims to 'cease, avoid, reverse, reduce, eliminate or prevent threats to the Hen Harrier'.

See full SI at: <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2011/si/477/made/en/print>

Given the shortage of habitat available to such magnificent birds, it seems totally illogical to even consider the construction of ad-hoc wind farms that will be detrimental to the wellbeing of the Hen Harrier and other species. Indeed it may very well be argued that to do so would be in direct contravention of several Statutory Instruments relating to the protection of habitat (Woodcock Hill Bog and European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) 2011).

An Bord Pleanála have also recently found against an application for wind turbines specifically due to the presence of Hen Harrier in the area proposed.

Clare Co Co should take all necessary steps to ensure these birds are protected and to conserve such a beautiful landscape for generations to come.

Allowing such development in the area of Woodcock Hill, Gallows Hill, Ballycar Hill will destroy for ever the habitat of these spectacular birds.

ENVIRONMENTAL DAMAGE

There are many examples of just how damaging the construction of wind farms can be to the environment and indeed its population and wildlife. We have seen, in recent weeks, a final decision taken on an environmental disaster that has spanned 20 years. Namely, Derrybrien Windfarm in Co Galway. The entire wind farm is now to be removed.

It is well known that this development, by a private company, has cost the Irish tax payer millions of Euro in EU fines and has placed the health and safety of residents in the area at serious risk. There are many reports of the potentially deadly landslides that have occurred during the construction phase of what can only be described as a disaster.

Woodcock Hill is comprised of raised blanket bog, and has for millennia, existed in equilibrium with the local landscape. Drainage, that has taken many thousands of years to find a sustainable balance, can be altered and destroyed in an instant through adverse development such as that required for wind turbines.

Countless kilometers of road, altered drainage patterns, saturation of bogland and forestry due to those altered drainage patterns all contribute to form a real and present danger of landslide which in turns endangers life (human, animal, bird) and also destroys habitat and the environment.

Given the evidence of disaster and the chronicle of proof available, Clare Co Co must decide to learn from the mistakes of the past, and should re-zone the area to ensure no such development of wind turbines can take place. To do otherwise leaves Clare Co Co potentially liable in the event of such issues.

County Clare families living on the slopes of Gallows Hill, Woodcock Hill and Ballycar Hill have the right to live without the fear of a landslide from above. Residents are entitled to quiet enjoyment of their homes.

Other catastrophic and dangerous landslides have also been widely reported as below:

Derrybrien Co. Galway (YouTube Article)

[The Politics of Peat](#)



Meenbog Donegal (YouTube Article)

[Fears Donegal landslide has devastated EU-protected site](#)



Drumkeerin Co. Leitrim (YouTube Article)

[Windfarm Landslide Drumkeerin Co. Leitrim](#)



DISRUPTION

The construction of these wind farms also incurs a high cost on local communities in terms of disruption to normal daily life, noise pollution, light pollution, traffic congestion, infrastructure and environmental damage etc.

The hills upon which this zoning has been set consists of narrow country roads and lanes where it is difficult for even 2 cars to pass without contact. Therefore it has to be assumed that any works to be done will be preceded with the removal and destruction of hedgerows, road margins / verges etc. All of these play a vitally important role in providing wildlife with habitat to feed, reproduce and live.

Real World Example:

As a real world example, I was caught behind a convoy delivering the tower bases for a wind turbine on the evening of Wednesday March 15th 2022. I was first car behind the convoy which consisted of 3 oversized trucks, many support vehicles and emergency services in the form of An Garda Siochana.

The journey for me was short, it commenced at the Coonagh Roundabout at the start of the dual carriageway to Ennis and ended at the Meelick Roundabout, a total distance of 1.55 kilometers (according to Google Maps). The speed limit is 60 KPH and the journey would normally take 1 minute and 33 seconds. However it took over 15 minutes to travel just that small distance, and this was using a dual carriageway.

The trucks were having issues navigating the roundabouts, street signs had to be removed, and traffic chaos ensued behind the convoy. No doubt the disruption carried on for many hours as the convoy inched towards its destination.

This is what lies ahead for residents of Co Clare and instead of lasting for 1 minute and 30 seconds, it will go on for years.

It will destroy our community.

SUMMARY

Clare Co Co must listen to the population of Co Clare and must take notice to the voices of concern, must acknowledge the physical danger and the destruction of habitat which will be caused by the development of wind turbines on Gallows Hill, Woodcock Hill and Ballycar Hill.

Clare Co Co must:

- Reverse its decision and remove the Wind Farm zoning from these beautiful mountains.
- Halt/refuse any applications for wind turbine development under the current Clare Co Co development plan.
- Place the needs of thousands of local Clare residents ahead of desire of private companies to make profit.
- Place the needs of exceptional habitat and wildlife ahead of desire of private companies to make profit.
- Acknowledge that **0 risk is the only acceptable risk** in relation to:
 - Landslides
 - Aviation Safety
- Learn from past disasters (Derrybrien, Meenbog, Dumkeerin) and do not allow private companies to destroy our environment.
- Acknowledge that the government strategy for "Off-Shore" wind energy should also be the No 1 priority for Clare Co Co starting today.
- Ensure that Woodcock Hill Bog and its surrounding areas are protected as per the legislation in place.
- Protect the Hen Harrier and other species such as bats from wind turbines.
- Recognise the devastating impact the construction of wind turbines will have on local residents due to noise, flicker, destruction of visual amenity, and enjoyment of homes and gardens.
- Stand up and do the right thing for the people of Cratloe, Meelick, Ballycar, Woodcock Hill, Parteen, Ardnacrusa, Bunratty, Oatfield, Truagh, Sixmilebridge and countless others who will be affected.