

Submission no: 107 .

Planning Section,  
Clare County Council,  
New Road,  
Ennis,  
County Clare.

16 November, 2020



Re: Development Plan Review, 2022-2028

A chara,

Myself, Brigitte Sikkes-O'Dea, and our family Patrick, Frank and Fina O'Dea, wish to send in a submission to the draft County Development Plan 2022-2028. We live in a rural area in West Clare, are small farmers who work in a traditional and environmental way. It is quite impossible to make a living with that so we have additional income through tourism.

Our first and most important reason to lodge a submission, is the recent planning application for Cahermurphy II Windfarm. If this would be granted, it would have major negative impact on our way of life, our way of farming, our natural environment and biodiversity, on the quality of water of the Creegh river and the 2 streams running through our land. It could have a major negative impact on further development of Tourism possibilities at our farm, sound, flicker, views, all elements who are not in favour of tourists who love the natural unspoilt beauty and peacefulness of our farm. Our son and daughter whose future plans wish to continue this farm, which is for generations in the O'Dea family, are worried for the impact of industrial turbines. They would like to stay and make their living in West Clare. We need to protect our natural landscape and create long term jobs, not an industry where most profits will go away from this area.

We believe the concentration of wind turbines in this area is more than enough. It has wrecked our views and we do hear from tourists that they are not in favour. We are close to the WAW and these turbines are visible for very long distances. This area in Knocknahila/Cahermurphy/Cahercullen etc. should not be zoned for windturbines and all the area between here and the ocean should be free of industrial size turbines.

The whole complicated planning process, to submit objections, lack of strength in WiFi, did not help to submit an objection and to feel involved in the politics of a democratic process. It is very hard and for some people impossible to have their say. I and my daughter have spent a lot of time talking to neighbours, residents who are opposed to a windfarm here. You need a lot of expertise and support to be able to have your say. Yet the planners have enough money to hire in experts. This feels unfair and this could be improved by CCC. Also the guidelines for public consultation need to help local residents, there was not enough time and there were too many residents who knew nothing. Also it is not fair to expect we all have the level of education to deal with this. I am sad to hear, especially older people saying, there is nothing we can do about it!

We love the landscape, history, biodiversity of our blanket bogs. We would like full protection for what is left. Stop Coillte planting further mono cultures of Sitka spruce, no more windfarms as we see the problems for this special landscape. (Derrybrien and the recent landslides in Donegal) We like to see some reversal of sitka spruce plantation, proper management by Coillte, of protecting natural areas and biodiversity, instead of short term profitable decisions. Our natural landscape is one of our greatest assets for tourism, recreation. The trend in the future is eco tourism. With our populations in Ireland itself, but also abroad, increasingly in urban settings, we need to keep our country side attractive.

The Cahermurphy/Knocknahila/cahercullen, etc location where they are planning these windturbines, needs to be protected for the future. A proper management plan need to be made, where there is no place for wind turbines or more sitka spruce plantation. Instead it should be protected for nature. The environmental report from MCRE actually pleasantly surprised me with the high amount, nearly 20 birds on the red and amber list. I would like to see this area developed for light recreation, like the 12 o clock mountains. It would be an asset for both locals and tourists in Midwest Clare. There would be wonderful opportunities for walkways, cycle paths and bridle ways, which could be extended towards Ennis. The only area for walks away from cars is Kilrush, Lissycasey and the beach.

I moved to live here more than 20 years ago from Holland. Our country has a very high population. Yet with careful planning they managed to keep rural areas relatively empty, it always surprises me when I go back to visit. I can see how new housing developments are attached to villages, with plenty of green in between. Not estates as we see in Ireland, more mixed housing, for families, single people, older people. Play area for children nearby, walkways for near residents, cycle ways. I would advise you to send Clare County Planners to a trip to the Netherlands. Why make mistakes when we can learn from others. I Think there are lost opportunities in not having footpaths and cycle ways along rivers. It creates a green belt for nature at the same time.

County Clare has an enormous network of small single lane rural roads. I think the maximum speed of 80 km p h should be drastically lowered. Also from my experience in Holland is that many of those roads the council encourages only local traffic use, lowering speed, putting in speed humps, signs only local traffic. It will reduce damage to surface, increase safety, bicycle/walking use. And I have seen reversal in Holland even more than 20 years ago, when they took up the tarmac surface of a road to turn it into sand and gravel surface, with a speed limit of 30km. That works!

It is shameful how much rubbish gets thrown out of cars. We know it, as a few times a year we walk our road and fill bags with mostly plastic bottles, aluminium cans, cups and wrappers of fast food. Education was the key in Holland. You would be ashamed to do that. At the parking area at Dough more beach there is not even a bin.

And my last submission on local roads in County Clare; The council needs to forbid the use of weed killers on the verges, outside people's homes, but sometimes quit extensive on further roadsides. This is absolutely ridiculous that this is allowed to happen. It is ugly, all going yellow and brown. But most important, our roadside verges contain the most diversity of wildflowers, insects, habitats for birds and mammals. By now I think the county council itself has reduced this practise, but an immediate stop needs to be put in place, as these are not even areas that people own, roadsides are from the council so please, do take responsibility for allowing this to continue.

Rural Ireland needs better broadband. Our only option is through the phone line with eircom. We have tried everything. In the lockdown it proved insufficient for my daughter to keep up with education. Also the tourists we deal with need better Wi-Fi.

The old bridges should be protected structures, I am thinking of the bridge over Creegh River in Creegh and the one in Cloonwhite North in particular.

Rural transport need to be improved. Villages need green areas, park benches. The gravel CCC area in Creegh could be used as a small park, additional to the well area already there.

We need encouragements for people to grow their own food, and more possibilities to trade in local produced food. Clare county council need to make more edible choices for planting greens, like apple trees, berry bushes, instead of ornamental, make the choice for native flowers. I think we need more local markets, allotments, in towns, but also villages. This is not just for local food production, it's also for people physical and emotional well-being.

Yours sincerely,

Brigitte Sikkes

Patrick O'Dea

Frank O'Dea

Fina O'Dea