



Submission No. 144

Submissions for Clare County Development Plan

Introduction

Many towns and villages in west Clare have been absolutely decimated in the last two decades. Family owned grocery, hardware, clothing shops have closed, post offices have closed, family owned pubs have closed and the heart and soul of once vibrant communities is dying before our eyes. For example in Mullagh village alone over the past 15 years, the following family run grocery shops have closed; Killeen's, Sexton's, O'Brien's, Casey's, Kelly's, Markham's, the post office is closed, the petrol/diesel filling station is closed and five of the six pubs in the village are now permanently closed. This story from one village in west Clare is replicated throughout the county.

In recent years, any investment that had come is in the form of unwelcome, non-native forestation and towering wind turbines in our once peaceful and picturesque landscape.

No more forestry

Many of our small green fields which once tended to cows and calves and a host of native birds, flora and fauna are now planted with dense spruce trees blocking light, vegetation habitation and further isolating our rural communities.

We think of woods and forests as green lungs, peaceful spaces, brimming with wildlife. Unfortunately the new woodland rising across Ireland is an ecological dead zone. Sitka spruce plantations, hectare upon hectare of them, now cover what was once nature-rich farmland. Dense blocks of these non-native coniferous trees smother the landscape, driving out wonderful and endangered wildlife such as [hen harriers](#) and curlews, birds that could be extinct in Ireland within the decade.

No more wind turbines

Their visual appearance and noise dominate an otherwise peaceful landscape. Referring to a live planning application where approval is sought for phase two of a three phase development; 10 x 170 metre high wind turbine are proposed and some to be positioned within 700m distance of our home.



For reference Liberty Hall is 59 metres, this image shows what a 170 metre turbine looks like 700 metres from Liberty Hall. Our home and our neighbour's homes would be overshadowed and very negatively impacted. Elderly relatives with medical conditions, are already extremely stressed by the prospect of this unwelcome development.

This can trap people (many elderly) in houses that are afflicted by the visual, and noise disturbances cause by turbines. This can lead to loss of sleep and to further health complications.

They cause property devaluation.

They are capable of causing immense harm to local wildlife and ecology. The foundations of wind turbine structures require the removal of huge quantities of earth, in the case of Clohanmore /Kockhallia, ecologically important peat which will be replaced by many tons of carbon-emitting concrete. Also more concrete is used in the construction of the access roads created to permit heavy industrial machinery such as cranes and digging equipment across landscapes that have never been disturbed. This can alter local water courses and their chemistry. Turbine blades cause harm to birds and bats. Studies show that harm to birds varies between locations. One study of three wind farms in Belgium showed the average turbine caused the deaths of around 25 birds per year. Another study showed that one turbine caused as many as 125 bird deaths a year.

Investment in rural water schemes

Rural water schemes regardless of their composition desperately need investment. It is unacceptable that many households in Clohanmore and elsewhere within this locality are regularly without tap water. Again last Christmas when family gathering were being planned, we were filling water tanks and buckets to flush toilets and praying for the return of the water. Because there was no response from officials in Irish Water or Clare County Council Offices, locals again spend time and money to identify and repair leaks. These are third living conditions and unacceptable in this so called modern Ireland. Investment is urgently in rural water schemes in west Clare.

Investment in Roads

A 21st century feature of many roads in west Clare is the line of grass growing in the middle of the road, overgrown hedges and margins, pot holes and recesses etc.,. Investment is needed.

Investment in Public transport

Is it possible to examine the feasibility of a regular rural bus service? When was the last time, if ever, the population of west Clare were surveyed about the services, including transport, they would like to see in their communities?

Investment in indigenous industries to support locals and tourist

Sustainable tourism is key and daily day trippers on coaches from Dublin and elsewhere outside the county does not qualify. Clare County Council must introduce measures to deliver a decline in this practise. Incentivising local stays either through arrivals at Shannon airport or elsewhere in the country and limiting/controlling daily visitors ether via permits or a suitable alternative should be considered.

Investments;

- Revive the west Clare rail line as a green way
- Support craft/indigenous industries, food producers, music makers etc.,
- Support local outdoor markets
- Begin a campaign to get Clare diaspora to bring philanthropic investment to the County.

Ann Duggan Murray

