

TAIFEAD DE CRUINNIÚ SPEISIALTA CHOMHAIRLE CHONTAE CHILL
CHAINNIGH LE REACHTÁIL AR DÉ MÁIRT, 6ú BEALTAINÉ, 2025



MINUTES OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD
ON TUESDAY, 6TH MAY, 2025 AT 3.00 P.M.

Chair: Cllr. Michael McCarthy

Elected Members: *Council Chamber*

Cllrs. Tomás Breathnach, John Brennan, Jenny Catt Slattery, Mary Hilda Cavanagh, John Coonan, Fidelis Doherty, Maria Dollard, Pat Dunphy, Pat Fitzpatrick, Joe Malone, Eugene McGuinness, Seán Ó hArgáin, Joe Sheridan & Maurice Shortall.

MS Teams

Cllrs. Brian Cleere, Deirdre Cullen, Michael Delaney, Michael Doyle, David Fitzgerald, Ger Frisby, Joe Lyons & Andrew McGuinness.

Officials: Lar Power, Tim Butler, Martin Prendiville, Fiona Deegan, Ross, O'Shea, Denis Malone, Nicolaas Louw, Seamus Kavanagh & Margo Hayes

Apology: Cllr. Stephanie Doheny.

Cathaoirleach Cllr. Michael McCarthy opened the meeting and welcomed the Elected Members and members of the public. Cllr McCarthy congratulated KCLR on their 21st anniversary and wished then continued success.

He invited Tim Butler, Director of Services to outline how the meeting will proceed.

Mr. Tim Butler welcomed Denis and Ross from the Planning Department and stated that this meeting is being held to consider the Chief Executive Report on the SID Planning Application made by Rowanmere Limited [ABP-333069-25], for the construction of 12 Wind Turbines with ancillary infrastructure at Ballynalacken, Co. Kilkenny.

The legislation requires that the Chief Executive (CE) Report is presented to the Elected Members to give them the opportunity to express their views on the proposed development. The Elected Members can also decide to attach recommendations to the CE Report. Any recommendations must be passed by resolution of the Council in the normal way.

The CE Report is required under Section 37E of the Planning & Development Act 2000 as amended by Section 3 of the Planning & Development [Strategic Infrastructure] Act 2006 and had been circulated to the Members in advance of the meeting.

The CE Report along with a minute of the meeting setting out the views of the members and any resolution they passed will be sent to An Bord Pleanála for their consideration.

As the project is a SID – it is An Bord Pleanála [ABP] that will decide on the planning application.

There are 3 documents that form part of the submission to ABP:

- (i) CE Report as circulated to Members.
- (ii) Any recommendations that the Elected Members may consider appropriate to make on the proposed development by resolution at the meeting, and
- (iii) The record of the meeting as prepared by the Meetings Administrator.

The submission of these documents must be made to ABP before May 9th next. The public consultation period for the proposed development closed on Friday, May 9th at 5.30 p.m.

The Council was required by the Bord to make available the application documentation for public inspection; all submissions were made directly to the Bord. The Bord must have regard to all submissions received in making its decision on the proposal.

Mr. Denis Malone, Senior Planner gave a Powerpoint Presentation providing a summary of the CE Report. Details of the proposal including associated works which were outlined in the report. The location of the proposed development was highlighted setting out distances from nearby villages. A graphic of the location was presented. Mr Malones presentation outlined national and regional policies relevant to the proposal as well as an overview of the Environment Reports, the EIA Reports and the Natura Impact Report. Mr Malone provided the overall considered view as well as conditions that should be considered should permission be granted.

Cllr. Michael McCarthy thanked Mr. Tim Butler and Mr. Denis Malone for their contributions and comprehensive overview of the Strategic Infrastructure Development – at Ballynalacken, Co. Kilkenny.

In general, all Members welcomed and supported the Chief Executive Report and thanked the Chief Executive and Planning staff for their detailed consideration of the development at Ballynalacken, Co. Kilkenny. Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick thanked those in the public gallery their attendance. The Planning Section was complimented on the quality of the information provided to the Elected Members.

Specific contributions were made as follows:

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick

- Noted that circa. twenty years ago, a previous windfarm application at this location was rejected by Kilkenny County Council and was upheld by An Bord Pleanála.
- The visual impact would be significant, the development unsightly and would detract from scenic area.
- Concerns about the infrastructure during construction with increased risk for communities and workers.
- Increased risk of accidents in the N78 and traffic congestion.
- The local community have expressed genuine concerns on this development and on the impact on their way of life.
- Welcomed the CE report stating that the application is not suitable.
- Requests that An Bord Pleanála would hold an oral hearing to hear the concerns of the local community in the local hall.
- His concerns are expressed on his own behalf and on behalf of the party (Fianna Fail).
- There is proposed substation, despite there being another substation only a short distance away. The specific area proposed for the substation is subject to flooding.

Cllr. Pat Fitzpatrick proposed that Kilkenny County Council support the Chief Executive's Report and that the Elected Members request An Bord Pleanála to reject the development in its entirety as proposed. Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh seconded this proposal.

Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh

- Enquired as to the purpose of the oral hearing.
- Thanked the planning section for the detailed report and welcomed their findings and recommendations.
- Baffled by an application for wind turbines of this height (155M) when in the past Kilkenny County Council refused turbines of 80M with that decision upheld.
- Understand that there is political unrest, wars and an energy crisis but this does not justify this sort of development
- The Local Community are petrified for their health, landscape, roads and the effects of flicker
- The proposal to cut 19 acres of forest cut down is inappropriate

Cllr. John Brennan

- Not against renewable energy but inappropriate to these particular areas as it would bring serious and long-lasting risks to environment. This is an area of huge tourism potential and from this site, one can see 9 counties.
- Contamination to ground water and to protected species would be a possibility.
- As the largest proposed anywhere in the County, noise and shadow flickering would be an issue.
- Considering the development of solar and offshore wind, there will be no need for these wind farms in the future which in time will become obsolete.
- As someone living near the area, very much against it going ahead as it will destroy a natural amenity area.

Cllr. Eugene McGuinness

- This is area of natural beauty and because of this the proposal should not proceed.
- As a result of such applications, Communities become divided as incentives offered by large companies.
- Risk that it would destroy the area.
- An Bord Pleanála must listen of the Local Authority as our views are well informed, and evidence based.
- Fear that some if this technology will be dumped in Ireland, unlike areas of central Europe, we do not have large land masses in Kilkenny suitable for this scale of development.
- Local Communities should have their views taken on board and be heard.

Cllr. Maurice Shorthall

- Against this development and is aware that in the past a smaller windfarm development in this area was refused (by KCC and ABP).
- Finds it insulting that external bodies try to come in and 'rule the roost'.
- As a member of Kilkenny Tourism board, he feels that this sector would be impacted.
- As a resident of Castlecomer - the town will be turned into a building site during construction.
- No consultation has taken place with the business community.
- Potential adverse health impacts have not taken in to account.
- Barrack St, Castlecomer is an area of high traffic with over 600 students attending the school.
- The devaluation of people's home is worrying factor.
- Wind energy is better suited offshore developments.
- Regarding the mission statement of Kilkenny County Council, if this goes ahead, we have no control over our own mission statement.

Cllr. Tomás Breathnach

- This application is for one turbine with an effective height of 142.5 m and for eleven other turbines with an effective height of 155m. The line of the proposed turbines runs effectively parallel to Cromwell's Road. All around one will see an area of outstanding beauty. In each view turbines on an industrial scale can be seen in the distances.
- The High Amenity value has been recognized in the CDP adopted by Kilkenny County Council, including its current plan for 2021 to 2027. It is of note that Planning Application 03/662 for less turbines at lower heights was refused on the rationale of the need to protect an Area of High Amenity from a proposal with undue prominence, obtrusiveness and interference. An Bord Pleanála concurred with this view when the decision was appealed.
- Planning Application 05/81 for less turbines and lower heights was refused because the turbines would be unduly prominent, visually intrusive and prejudicial to the natural beauty of the area and would interfere with the character of the landscape. Nothing in this application would warrant any less protection of the environment.
- Kilkenny County Council has not been provided with details of any undertakings or guidance from Eirgrid on the transfer of grid connecting ducting.

- Concerns about the Traffic Management proposals. A significant amount of the local road network would seem not to have adequate capacity for the project in terms of widths, drainage, two-way movements, junctions, strengths, traffic management, signage etc. Castlecomer is to be a gateway to access to the proposed wind-farm. My understanding is that 5,000 lorries will pass through the town during the construction phase.
- Concerns expressed about the potential impact of noise and vibration during the construction and operational phases of the development. This is particularly the case for traffic, piling and blasting.
- Bridges across the local road network unsuitable and inadequate for the amount of traffic and potential loads involved. Their heritage value should not be placed at risk.
- Lack of clarity on the set-back distances, where they apply from in some instances, the range between 500m and 620m in others and the impact of declines and inclines on perceived distances.
- Wind Energy Guidelines 2006 are outdated, and the draft guidelines have not been officially adopted. It is unfair on local communities who look to these guidelines for understanding and advice.
- There are 72 sensitive receptors within the area potentially affected by shadow flicker (1170m). According to the EIAR 43 will be exceed the daily guidance and 2 will experience shadow flicker above the yearly guidance of 30 hours per year.
- A local worry is that local people will become reluctant to apply for permissions to live in the area as a result of the proposal.
- The CDP recognizes that developments may require an upland but seeks to ensure that adverse effects are residual and minimal. Such is not the case with this proposal. The impact is disproportionate and excessive. Ballynalacken is a sensitive upland area where the proposal before us is totally inappropriate.

Cllr. Maria Dollard

- Reiterates that we are in the middle of a climate crisis and running out of time, we need to stop burning fossil fuels, summer rainfall will decrease while annual rainfall will increase.
- We have more intense storms and heatwaves and hundreds of people are dying across the World with impacts on biodiversity, plants and human health.
- People in Kilkenny are contributing in individual way; we produce 75 megawatts of wind energy and between 50 and 75 of Solar.
- We have 11,000 micro generation sources (e.g. solar panels) and 1,500 generation sources.
- As regards previous application having been rejected, the world has changed massively, and we are now in a different place.
- She complimented the Council Executive on a well written report which brings great clarity to a complex topic.
- She said it's a very disappointing application which may impact on houses already granted planning permission but not yet build within 2 kilometres.
- There is a negative Impact on visual amenity argument cannot apply in every planning application but in this particular case, she feels there is a case to be answered.
- The application is poor and agrees with the CE report that this development should not be granted.

Cllr. Joe Malone

- He got involved with Castlebanny and he had to listen to local people.
- Wind turbines should be offshore.
- People who moved out to rural areas will wants to move back into the City.
- He hoped that we as a Council will be listened to.
- He thanked the public who are in attendance for taking the time out to come in.

- Very informative process for us and welcomed the public present at the meeting. It strengthens the argument for live streaming of meetings.
- It is obvious that this is very deficient application
- That there is a catalogue of unanswered questions in unacceptable
- One of reasons turbines are higher turbines is that one turbine can replace 2-3 lower-level turbines.
- Draft National Wind Turbine Guidelines 2019 must be finalised and adopted. Without Guidelines both An Bord Pleanála and the Local Authorities are in an Invidious position
- As a member of the board of Trail Kilkenny, he is aware that this is an area of exceptional beauty and a great place to view
- Need to be careful of creating precedence as Kilkenny cannot end up in a position from a policy perspective where we say no windfarms can be delivered,
- Agrees with Cllr. Dollard in the seriousness of climate issues, it concerns our children and grandchildren so we need to 'step up to the plate'
- Can't adopt a position where all we accept is 'offshore' or solar
- Disappointed that the grants for solar (SEAI) and EVs are being cut, there are people who can't afford those facilities without assistance.
- A sensible approach is required but this application is deficient and needs to be revisited

Cllr. McCarthy thanked all the Members for their contributions, he thanked Lar Power CE, Tim Butler, Denis Malone and Ross O'Shea of the Planning Section thanked the members and thanked those in the public gallery.

Members agreed with this.

1. It was proposed by Cllr Pat Fitzpatrick, seconded by Cllr. Mary Hilda Cavanagh


"that Kilkenny County Council support the Chief Executive's Report and that the Elected Members request An Bord Pleanála to reject the development in its entirety as proposed."

Members all agreed. There was no Member dissenting in relation to this resolution.

Cllr. Michael McCarthy thanked all who contributed to the discussions today. He also thanked the public for their engagement.

The meeting then concluded.

SIGNED:


Cathaoirleach