

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS AT SPECIAL MEETING OF LIMERICK CITY AND COUNTY COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DOORADOYLE, AND ONLINE, ON THURSDAY, 27th NOVEMBER, 2025, AT 4.00 P.M.

PRESENT IN THE CHAIR:

Leas Príomh Chomhairleoir Councillor M. Collins.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Moran.

Councillors, Butler, Carey, Collins (B), Collins (M), Conway, Hartigan (S), Hartigan (T), Kiely, Kilcoyne, McSweeney, O'Donoghue, O'Hanlon, O'Sullivan (O), O'Sullivan (T), Pond, Reale, Ruddle, Ryan (E), Scanlan, Sheahan (J), Stokes, Teefy and Teskey.

OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE:

Director General (Dr. P. Daly), Deputy Director General and Director, Corporate Services, HR and Organisational Development (Mr. J. Delaney), Director, Finance, Investment and Governance including DACs and Shareholder Unit (Mr. M. White), Director, Housing (Mr. V. Murray), Economic, Tourism, Culture, Property and Corporate Buildings (Mr. S. Lenihan), Director, Transportation, Mobility and Public Realm (Ms. P. Liddy), Director of Regeneration, Community, Sport and Rural Development (Mr. B. McCarthy), Director, Planning and Ryder Cup (Mr. S. Duclot), Meetings Administrator (Ms. C. Farrell), Administrative Officer, Corporate Services, Governance and Customer Services (Ms. A. Foley), A/Senior Executive Planner, Planning and Place-Making (Ms. J. Collins), A/Senior Planner, Planning and Place-Making (Mr B. Henn), Senior Staff Officer, Planning and Place-Making (Ms. V. Cullen).

Apologies for their inability to attend the Meeting were received from Councillors Ryan (M) and Slattery.

1. Strategic Infrastructure Development

The Members were advised that the Council was being asked to consider the circulated Director General's report dated 21st November 2025, which was prepared in accordance with Section 37E of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) following on from the submission of a Strategic Infrastructure Development (SID) to An Coimisiún Pleanála, known as the Ballinlee Wind Farm.

The A/Senior Executive Planner, with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, updated the Members on the Director General's Report. The Members thanked the Planning Department for their work on this Strategic Infrastructure Development application.

The Members made the following comments in relation to the proposed Strategic Infrastructure Development:

Land Use

- Members expressed a view that this development of the Wind Farm is not aligned to the current Limerick Development Plan 2022 – 2028
- Members noted concerns in relation to the impact of the 'Preferred Areas' for windfarm development set out in Map 9.1 Wind Energy Locations of the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028, which covers a large area of central County Limerick, and potential conflict with updates of this map as part of the ongoing revision of the current Limerick Development Plan.
- Members queried the 'Preferred Areas' Map, Map 9.1 'Wind Energy Locations' of the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028, conflicts with the policies/objectives of the plan and it is noted that the Plan states where any conflict or ambiguity arises between the written text and supporting maps, the written text shall take precedence.
- Members questioned the impact of the volume and density of a 17 turbine development and the effects on the natural drainage system in the area.
- Concerns were raised in terms of potential impact of the grid connection along the public road e.g. future development along the route, provision of new entrances for residential, commercial and business developments.
- It was noted that proposals are currently working off 2006 Wind Energy Guidelines which are outdated. 80m was the maximum height for wind turbines in 2006, modern turbines are significantly higher, current proposal 150/160m.
- Members recommended that the proposal and future proposals are considered in terms of the 'Ireland Atlas Wind Map' [SEAI].
- It was noted the forthcoming National Territory Map for Renewable Electricity is underway and could include revisions that would be pertinent to the application.
- It was suggested that the Department of Agriculture should be consulted on the effects on agriculture in the area.
- Windfarm development should be sited on land not suitable for farming/housing.

Community Impact, Residential and Visual Amenity

- Members highlighted that there are approximately 42 homes within a 1.5km radius of the proposed site and raised concerns in relation to the impact of noise and shadow flicker on households and quality of life.
- Members queried the potential negative impact of the proposal in terms of future planning applications for rural housing in the area by local households.
- It was noted that there have been studies on the impact of noise and shadow flicker on wildlife but affects on people with medical and sensory issues and that the Wind Energy Guidelines do not take these into account e.g. autism. Members suggested that the HSE should be consulted.
- In relation to the impact of infrasound from proposed development Members referenced a study on safe distances by Professor Ken Masterson.

- Members raised concerns that the automated shut down system on turbines in the event of shadow flicker were subject to delays i.e. would not shut down immediately which could lead to further exceedances of shadow flicker limits.
- Members considered that the visual impact was understated for the turbines' height.
- Members expressed concerns on the impact of the development on local heritage sites and tourist offerings, especially Lough Gur, the stone circle and Knock Áine.
 - It was noted that the submission has only one Lough Gur viewpoint photomontage (Viewpoint 19), and this was taken from behind a tree. Further viewpoints are required to assess potential impact on this protected area.
 - The sacred site of Knock Áine and viewpoints at Knock Aine were not considered in the submission.

Water and Flooding

- Concerns were raised in relation to recent flood events in the area and it was considered that the submitted Flood Risk Assessment should be updated.
- Members questioned the impact of the excavations for turbines and concrete bases on water seepage and on drainage and flooding in the area.
- Concerns were raised in relation to safety and water displacement by the proposed permanent deposition areas.

Road Safety and Construction

- Concern was expressed that additional construction traffic for an extended period will exacerbate traffic issues in the area; it was noted that the road for entrance and exit to the site is a very busy road and that there are historic bridges along the route which would be impacted.
- The risk of driver distraction due to the height and location of the wind turbines was raised.
- Members queried plans and licensing for the disposal of soil and subsoil from excavations.

Archaeology and Ecology

- Raised concerns with EIAR, it was noted that the submitted archaeological report, bat surveys and bird surveys were insufficient.
- Concerns in relation to potential biodiversity issues were outlined.
- Members raised the potential impacts on the Golden Vale's assets of tourism, natural beauty, equine farming, cattle farming and crop farming.

Accident and Emergencies

- Members were concerned that specialist Fire and Emergency Services training could be required for any construction and post construction incidents; this would have cost implications for the Local Authority.

Community Engagement

- Members expressed concerns in relation to the level of public consultation and considered that meaningful engagement had not taken place with the local community.

General

- Members highlighted mapping errors on submitted documentation e.g. towns and villages are not shown on the submitted maps giving the impression that no towns/villages exist in the area surrounding the proposed site.
- Members highlighted the lack of emphasis on the important sites at Lough Gur and Knock Áine in the submitted documentation.
- Members considered the proposal is not 'broadly supported by the Limerick Development Plan 2022-2028' as stated in the Director General's Report.

The Elected Members stated that they were not in favour of the application and recommended refusal of the proposed development. They requested that the Director General's report was amended on this basis.

On the proposal of Councillor O'Donoghue and seconded by Councillor Teefy, it was agreed that all observations outlined today would be appended to the Director General's report.

In reply to Members' queries, the A/Senior Executive Planner noted the Members comments would be included in the Director General's Report as an addendum. It was noted that the planning decision would rest with An Coimisiún Pleanála. Members were advised that the Planning Department would circulate a deadline for submissions and append any further submissions from Members to the report.

The Director General acknowledged Members' concerns and stated he would seek legal advice on progressing the Members' request to make alterations to the Director General's report.

This concluded the Meeting.

Signed:

Príomh Chomhairleoir

Date:
