

Residents speak of fears about Straboy wind farm impact

DECLAN MAGEE

News Reporter

A young mother broke down while giving evidence to the oral hearing on the Straboy wind farm as she described the concerns she has for her children's health if the project goes ahead.

Belinda Boyle, whose home will be 625 metres from the nearest turbine, told the oral hearing that health risks associated with wind farms are of "grave concern" to her and her young family. One of two peat disposal areas in the planned project will be 100 metres behind their home.

Originally from Australia, where she met her husband, she moved to Glenties to raise their family where he was brought up. "Don't allow the developer and local landowners to line their pockets to the detriment of a whole community of innocent residents," she said. The development threatens the valuation of their homes, their health and the beautiful countryside, she said. "My children are too young to have a voice, so I act on their behalf as I plead with you to put a stop to this development," she said.

Stobhan Browne, a nurse and mother of three, said her home would be 770 metres from one of the turbines. She said Donegal County Council had failed in its moral duty



The heavy duty power lines on the outskirts of Glenties. Photo Brian McDaid, 15106d110

to strike a fair balance between conflicting interests in the project. If the project goes ahead her family will be forced to leave their home, she said. "It is within our responsibility as parents to protect our children from developing health-related disorders secondary to high levels of wind induced noise," she said.

Local GP Dr. Michael Cooke, said people in the community felt marginalised and abandoned and had a feeling of social injustice. People felt Donegal County Council have let them down, he said. "They feel totally insecure before we even know the result of this thing," he said. "This is

going to be a disaster for the area as far as I am concerned. This is a negative step in the terms of the development of our community. Three young families have said that if this development gets the go ahead, they will emigrate," he said. "If you have doubts that this causes harm, put the people first," he told An Bord Pleanála senior inspector Kevin Moore. "They are more important than money, they are more important than wind energy."

had failed to adequately assess the effects of the proposed development on the environment. Anne Marie McDermott from Stranalong, whose house is 1km from the proposed wind farm, said the safety of the wind farms had not been properly tested. "If there is one shred, one tiny shred of doubt as to the safety of the children and the parents in our community, this wind farm should not be built at this site," she said.

Joseph Brennan of Shalloghan, Finntown, who maintains a Red Grouse sanctuary at Cro na mBraonáin, stressed that the Donegal County Development Plan protects the location of the sanctuary. Lorcan O'Toole of the Golden Eagle Trust, said a proper breeding bird survey was not carried out as part of the EIS.

Clr John Campbell, a teacher at St Columba's Comprehensive in the town, questioned why the developer had not carried out a public consultation. He said there was no community dividend in the project and most of the profits will leave the area.

Michael McGeehan, a local coach operator, said the impact of the wind farm at Straboy combination with the wind farm at Maas, would be "overwhelming for tourists wishing to experience the natural scenic beauty of the area".

Declan Magee
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