14 October 2026

Darragh O'Brien TD
Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment
Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment
Tom Johnson House
Haddington Road
Dublin 4, D04 K7X4

By email:
Minister.OBrien@decc.gov.ie;
darragh.obrien@oireachtas.ie

Re: Your attendance at the launch of Power Capital Renewable Energy's RESS 2 solar portfolio, Mainscourt Solar Farm, Ballyboughal, September 2026

Dear Minister,

We are writing on behalf of AMASS following your attendance in September at the launch of Power Capital Renewable Energy's (PCRE) 290 MW RESS 2 solar portfolio at Mainscourt Solar Farm, Ballyboughal. PCRE's announcement of the launch says it welcomed you, public representatives and "members of the local community" to celebrate, and it tagged the post #CommunityBenefits.

AMASS was formed in July 2025 in response to PCRE's proposed Bellville Solar Farm in East Galway, lodged in the name of Heron Solar Limited as planning application 26/61362. We represent more than 1,000 residents of Abbeyknockmoy, Monivea, Ballyglunin and the adjoining townlands.

On 30 September 2026, within weeks of the Mainscourt launch, Galway County Council refused permission for that application, giving 11 reasons. They include that:

- the Council was not satisfied that the applicant had sufficient legal interest in the land, or that all necessary legal consents had been demonstrated;
- adverse effects on the integrity of Lough Corrib Special Area of Conservation could not be excluded;
- the archaeological assessment was deficient and incomplete, having regard to the submission of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage;
- the proposal was premature, given uncertainty over its grid connection and substation;
- there was no evidence of consultation with ESB or EirGrid on the overhead lines crossing the site.

We do not ask you to comment on that application, which remains open to appeal to An Coimisiún Pleanála. We write because the refusal confirms, in a statutory decision, much of what our community has said for more than a year about how this developer operates. When a Minister appears at a developer's commercial launch, the public reasonably reads it as an endorsement of that company. We believe you should have the full picture.

Our previous correspondence

This is not the first time AMASS has written to you. On 23 August 2025 we wrote to you about the public safety, groundwater and insurance risks of the battery energy storage system proposed as part of the Bellville project. We asked for a written acknowledgement within 10 working days and a meeting with AMASS representatives. On 25 August 2025 your parliamentary office told us that our letter had been redirected to your department office "for attention and reply".

The reply we received came from the office of the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage, James Browne TD. His office acknowledged our correspondence on 25 August 2025 and replied substantively on 23 September 2025 (ref. HPLG-MBO-02887-2025). That reply confirmed that there were no specific planning guidelines for solar energy development, and that guidelines, including public consultation requirements, were at an early scoping stage. It also noted that the Land Use Review, which is to inform Government decisions on renewable energy, is the responsibility of your department together with the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

More than a year later, to our knowledge, no solar planning guidelines have been published and there are still no statutory standards for how developers consult the communities affected by their projects. In that gap, a developer's own conduct is the only standard communities have. That is why PCRE's record matters.

PCRE's engagement with our community

1. PCRE's first public consultation event, on 26 June 2025, was poorly advertised and poorly attended. At a Council meeting in July 2025 the Cathaoirleach said fewer than 10 people had been consulted beforehand, while around 250 people attended a community meeting on the proposal.
2. A second, in-person consultation was promised but never held. PCRE cancelled its planned consultation in August 2025 and in June 2026 moved to an online-only process. PCRE has cited concern for staff safety as a reason for not engaging in person.
3. From August 2025 AMASS put four questions to PCRE on project scope, notification procedures and community benefit. After more than two months of correspondence we had no substantive answers and AMASS ended that correspondence on 24 October 2025.
4. The applicant, Heron Solar Limited, was not named in PCRE's consultation material. PCRE's online consultation room was taken down on 12 August 2026, five days after the application was lodged.
5. PCRE's chief executive, Justin Brown, described opposition as a "noisy minority" (Irish Times). By then more than 1,250 people had signed our petition.
6. PCRE promotes a Community Benefit Fund for the project. That fund is simply the mandatory RESS contribution of €2/MWh, and it would be paid for only 15 years. On a project with a stated operational life of 40 years, the community would receive nothing for the remaining 25.

Oakwood South

1. On 16 March 2026 the Council issued Enforcement Notice EN25/202 against Kings Valley Farm Limited, the landowner, for unauthorised land clearance, an access track and stone crushing at Oakwood South, within the zone of notification of Recorded Monument GA058-078. The National Monuments Service told the Council it became aware of the works only after they had taken place. Kings Valley Farm Limited consented to Heron Solar Limited applying for permission on these lands for a solar farm and battery energy storage site.
2. On 2 April 2026 a PCRE spokesperson told the Irish Independent: "I can confirm that this matter has no connection to Power Capital, nor to any current or future plans of the company."
3. On 29 June 2026 PCRE's Planning Manager wrote to the Council's enforcement section that he was "about to submit a planning application for a solar farm that includes all or some of the land" subject to EN25/202. The Council replied that the notice covers the total area of the folio, not only the area around the monument.

4. On 10 August 2026, three days after lodgement, PCRE told the Tuam Herald that the Oakwood South folio was being dropped. The lodged site location plan still shows Oakwood South lands within the red-line boundary.

What our community has had to do

Because meaningful consultation was not available to us, residents have carried the burden themselves, as volunteers and at their own expense:

- After PCRE cancelled its consultation, AMASS held its own information evening in Monivea in August 2025, and a public meeting at the local community centre on 12 July 2026.
- Residents had five weeks to work through 98 application documents. Families spent more than €30,000 on expert advice to prepare their submissions.
- Some 375 submissions and objections were lodged, including a 178-page technical report from AMASS. A 35-page clarification from the applicant was lodged on the final day and published only after submissions had closed.
- Seven public representatives (a Senator, three TDs and three councillors) raised concerns on the record about the application.
- Four residents have brought Section 160 proceedings in the Circuit Court over the works at Oakwood South. The trial is listed for 25 February 2027.

The campaign has also come at a personal cost. In September 2025 community signs opposing the project were pulled down and destroyed, including signs handmade by local children. On Christmas Day 2025, up to six signs were removed in Abbeyknockmoy, one from a private garden, and, as reported in the Connacht Tribune, the Gardaí opened an investigation. We make no allegation as to who was responsible. We mention these incidents because they show what this process has done to a rural community that had no say in how it began.

What we are asking of you

PCRE's RESS 2 portfolio is supported by a state scheme under your department. Without reference to the Bellville application, we ask you to:

1. Confirm whether you or your officials were briefed on PCRE's community engagement record before you agreed to attend the Mainscourt launch.
2. Set out your department's position on minimum, enforceable standards of community consultation for utility-scale solar developers, particularly those supported through RESS. Denmark, for example, provides statutory compensation for loss of property value and a community acquisition option under its Renewable Energy Act (VE-loven). Ireland has no comparable framework. You have said you entered politics to "develop practical solutions that deliver real results" for communities; enforceable consultation standards would be one. We would also welcome an update on the solar planning guidelines and the Land Use Review referred to in the Housing Minister's reply of September 2025.
3. Confirm that the department does not regard a developer's success in a RESS auction, or a Ministerial appearance at its launch, as evidence of community acceptance of its other projects.
4. Set out what conditions on developer conduct, including community engagement, attach to RESS support, and whether a developer's conduct on its other projects in Ireland is taken into account when assessing eligibility for future support schemes.

The communities living beside these developments are not opposed to renewable energy. We are asking for the honest, direct engagement that national policy promises and that, in our experience, PCRE has not provided.

AMASS has sought a meeting with you since August 2025. You have met the company and celebrated its projects. We ask you to meet a small delegation from AMASS within the next 21 days. This is not a request for any planning commitment or for intervention in a live application. It is a request for equal access.

You have met the company. Now meet the community.

You have said that family and community remain at the heart of everything you do. We ask that the families and community of Abbeyknockmoy and Monivea be given the same consideration.

We would be grateful for your reply, and we are happy to provide copies of the correspondence and documents referred to above.

Yours sincerely,

Brendan Cronin

Brendan Cronin
Chairman, AMASS

News Jul 18 2025

Public meeting in Monivea over solar farm development

GBFM News



A public meeting will take place in Monivea this evening over plans for a large scale solar farm in the area.

Known as the Belville Solar Farm, it would be spread across a number of sites in townlands to the north and west of Monivea.

Some local campaigners claim the project would have a negative impact on the local environment and community - and an online petition has drawn more than 250 signatures.

News | Jul 22 2025

Proposed Monivea solar farm described as "disaster" at council meeting

GBFM News



A proposed large-scale solar farm planned in the Monivea area has been described as a "disaster" at a meeting at County Hall.

Councillors have no role in the decision-making process, but many took aim at elements of secrecy and mystery that allegedly tend to surround such projects.

This solar farm project would be spread across hundreds of acres in various parcels to the north and west of Monivea.

A planning application will go directly to An Coimisiún Pleanála later this year - and Galway County Council will have no role in the decision-making process.

News

Residents 'spooked' over Ireland's biggest solar farm



By Francis Farragher
Newsroom Journalist

Published 24th Jul 2025, 06:00 BST



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LOCAL residents in a North Galway village have been 'spooked' by recently revealed proposals to build the biggest ever solar farm in the country covering an area of between 700 and 900 acres.

Dublin based Power Capital Renewable Energy are planning to construct the giant solar energy electricity generating farm in the Abbeyknockmoy and

Irish Independent

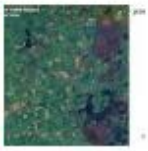
Plans to build Ireland's largest solar farm in Galway sparks local opposition

Locals have expressed concerns about the size and environmental impact of Bellville Solar Farm



A stock image of a solar farm.







Joseph Murray
Digital Journalist

29 Jul 2025 9:11 AM

Residents in a Galway townland have expressed concerns about a proposal to construct Ireland's largest ever solar farm in the region.

Irish Independent

Galway County Council refuse freedom of information request surrounding plans to build Ireland's largest solar farm



FOI request from member of the public refused for "commercial sensitivity".

Joseph Murray, **Emma F. Smith**

1 Aug 2025 10:45 AM

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Galway County Council has refused a freedom of information (FOI) request for further records of the Bellville solar farm.

The request, sent in June by a member of the public, requested access to "all records of pre-planning consultations, reports, or associated documentation" pertaining to Power Capital Renewable Energy Ltd.

This included maps of redline boundaries around the development and any feedback given by the developer.

News

Local TD calls out proposers of major solar farm near Monivea over lack of consultation

By Editorial Team

Published 1st Sep 2025, 08:50 BST



This article first appeared on Galway Bay FM

Galway East TD Albert Dolan has called out the proposers of a major solar farm development near Monivea.

Power Capital Renewable Energy is looking to construct the farm at Belleville – between Monivea and Abbeyknockmoy.

Irish Independent

Concerns over major Galway solar farm project as public consultation process delayed



Power Capital plans to develop a solar farm between Monivea and Abbeyknockmoy. Photo: stock image.



Erika Sassone
Digital Journalist, West

3 Sep 2025 6:40 AM

Concerns have been raised around the controversial Bellville Solar Farm in Galway, with one local TD highlighting a number of issue on the public consultation process so far.

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Dolan calls out proposers of Belleville Solar Farm over public consultation process

Galway Advertiser, Thu, Sep 04, 2025



Aerial view of Bann Road Solar Farm Rasharkin Village Co Antrim

Fianna Fáil TD for Galway East, Albert Dolan has expressed serious concern over the failure of the project proposers to properly engage with the local community in relation to the proposed Belleville Solar Farm development.

Despite the scale of the project, concerns have been raised by local residents that only a handful of households

NEWS SPORT LISTEN WIN | EVENTS GALWAY LIFE DEATH

News | Sep 05 2025

Developer behind Monivea solar farm "committed" to second public consultation

GBFM News



The developer behind a planned major solar farm near Monivea says it's "committed" to community engagement and will hold another public consultation.

A public consultation on the Belleville Solar Farm was held in June - but locals claim it falls far short of the engagement they need and deserve.

Power Capital Renewable Energy is looking to construct the farm at Belleville, between Monivea and Abbeyknockmoy.

It would be spread across hundreds of acres in various parcels to the north and west of Monivea.

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News

Solar farm protest billboards ripped down



By Francis Farragher
Newsroom Journalist

Published 30th Dec 2025, 06:01 BST



A GARDA investigation has been launched into the vandalising and removal of anti-solar farm signs in the Abbeyknockmoy area – on Christmas Day.

Up to six signs were damaged and removed by one – or possibly two men – between 12.30pm and 2.30pm on Christmas Day.

All Sections

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By Francis Farragher
Newsroom Journalist

Published 1st Mar 2026, 06:00 BST



Solar farm...local concerns over prospective development.

OVER 100 people turned out for a meeting in Abbeyknockmoy last weekend to highlight growing environmental, health and safety concerns, amid proposals to construct one of the country's biggest solar farms in their local area.

Irish Independent

Enforcement notice issued following 'unauthorised works' on Galway land shown in solar farm project



Heavy machinery at site. Site inspection photos from Galway County Council.



Emma F. Smith

2 Apr 2026 5:30 AM

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An enforcement notice has been issued by Galway County Council for what it considers is unauthorised development works in Abbeyknockmoy, Co Galway.

The Tuam Herald

solar energy

Galway
Louis O'Hara TD

Neha Kumari

Published: Sat 13 Jun 2026, 11:15 AM



Solar energy is gaining popularity and a sun farm is shown here.

In-person consultation needed for Belville solar farm project

Call for communication with community

THE company proposing a largescale solar farm in Abbeyknockmoy and Monivea areas may not facilitate a second in-person public consultation.

The Bellville Solar Farm project proposed last year by Power Capital Renewable

News Jun 17 2026

Local TD slams company behind Monivea solar project for not honouring public consultation commitment

GBFM News



Local TD Louis O'Hara has slammed the company behind the Monivea-Abbeyknockmoy solar project over what he says is a failure to honour its public consultation commitment.

He has been reacting to indications from Power Capital Renewable Energy that they won't be holding a second in-person public consultation with the community.

The Belville Solar Farm would be spread across a number of sites in townlands to the north and west of Monivea, covering around 1,000 acres.

Concerns in the community relate to the scale of the project, its proximity to local residences and the safety of the battery storage unit.

The Tuam Herald

solar farm

AMASS

Louis O'Hara TD

Neha Kumari

Published: Fri 10 Jul 2026, 9:30 AM



ONE of the site layouts on display in the virtual consultation room.

Locals demand in-person consultation and transparency

Online consultation criticised

AN action group campaigning against a planned largescale solar farm in North Galway has hit out at what it feels is a lack of transparency about the massive development.

Members of the Abbeyknockmoy and Monivea Against Solar Sprawl (AMASS) group have claimed that the newly launched public consultation for the Bellville

Irish Independent

Uncertainty in Galway over whether enforcement notice site will feature in major solar farm project



A stock image of a solar farm.



Emma F. Smith
Local Democracy Reporter

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31 Jul 2026 11:40 AM

Uncertainty remains in Galway over whether a planning application for what could become Ireland's largest solar farm will include land subject to enforcement notice.

Recent email correspondence revealed Power Capital Renewable Energy (PCRE) is "about to" submit a planning application for the Belleville Solar Farm, a project comprising up to 258.1 hectares of solar panels and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) in Abbeyknockmoy and Monivea.

The Tuam Herald

solar farm

Abbeyknockmoy village
AMASS
Monivea village

Neha Kumari

Published: Mon 10 Aug 2026, 1:15 PM



Land under enforcement notice not to be included in solar farm plans

THE company proposing a large-scale solar farm in Abbeyknockmoy and Monivea has decided to remove land facing an enforcement notice from the project.

Power Capitals Renewable Energy (PCRE) is proposing to build the Belville Solar Farm on almost 900 acres of land. During a pre-application public consultation, the company had revealed a map showcasing the potential land folios that would be part of the project.

This map also included a folio of land in the Oakwood South area, that was subject to an enforcement notice issued by Galway County Council regarding alleged unauthorised works carried out on the land earlier this year.

In response to a query raised by The Tuam Herald, PCRE have now clarified that the land folio will be dropped out of the project proposal.

NEWS SPORT LISTEN WIN | EVENTS GALWAY LIFE DEATH N

News Aug 11 2026

Community seeks clarification on land included in plans for major solar farm in Monivea-Abbeyknockmoy

GBFM News



The community campaign against the plans for a major solar farm in the Monivea-Abbeyknockmoy area want clarification on the inclusion of a folio of land that was under Galway county council enforcement

The land in the Oakwood South area was subject to an enforcement notice regarding alleged unauthorised works carried out earlier this year.

Power Capital Renewable Energy's Belville Solar Farm would be spread across a number of sites in townlands to the north and west of Monivea, covering around 1,000 acres.

Concerns in the community relate to the scale of the project, its proximity to local residences and

News | Aug 19 2026

Local Senator questions validity of Monivea solar farm project

GBFM News



A local senator is questioning the validity of a large-scale solar farm project planned near Monivea.

Earlier this month, Heron Solar Ltd lodged a planning application for the thousand acre project between Monivea and Abbeyknockmoy, which has faced significant local opposition.

The project, commonly known as the Belville Solar Farm, is now with county planners for consideration, and any member of the public is free to make a submission.

So far, the only one on file is from Portumna-based Fianna Fail Senator Anne Rabbitte, who's asking for what she terms a 'validity and completeness review'.

Irish Independent

Concern over 'piecemeal' Galway solar farm application as questions emerge on full project scope



Stock image



Emma F. Smith
Local Democracy Reporter

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20 Aug 2026 5:30 AM

Concerns have been raised over a major solar farm planning application in Co Galway, with local representatives questioning whether the documents lodged with Galway County Council clearly reflect the full scope of the project.

News | Sep 10 2026

Hundreds of submissions against Monivea solar farm

GBFM News



David Nevin 10th September 2026

Hundreds of submissions have been lodged with Galway County Council against a planned large-scale solar farm near Monivea that has faced significant and increasingly organised local opposition.

In early August, Heron Solar Ltd lodged a planning application for the thousand acre project on various land parcels between Monivea and Abbeyknockmoy, around 15km north of Athenry.

It's better known to some as the Belville Solar Farm and it's now under active consideration at the planning department at County Hall, but today is the deadline for submissions.

News Sep 30 2026

Planning permission for Belleville solar farm refused outright by Galway County Council

GBFM News



James Varley 30th September 2026

Planning permission for the Belleville Solar Farm has been refused outright by Galway County Council.

The major project, which was proposed to be located between Monivea and Abbeyknockmoy, is "contrary to proper planning policies", according to an e-mail circulated by the county council.

One public consultation event took place, but there was criticism that affected not all affected residents were invited, while a second meeting did not go ahead.

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Irish Independent

‘Disingenuous at best’ —Over 350 submissions made on controversial Galway solar farm project



Stock image of a solar farm



Emma F. Smith
Local Democracy Reporter

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1 Oct 2026 5:30 AM

The application for what could be one of Ireland’s largest solar farms has garnered almost record-breaking submission numbers from concerned Galway residents.

The Belleville Solar Farm development, lodged to Galway County Council by Power Capital Renewable Energy (PCRE), has passed the 45-day application completion checkpoint, confirming the application will proceed to a decision on the 259-hectare development

Plans for controversial Galway solar farm refused over 'deficient and incomplete' information



Solar farm. © Regnum Renewables



Emma F. Smith
Local Democracy Reporter

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1 Oct 2026 4:40 PM

Planning permission for one of Ireland's largest solar farm has been refused by Galway County Council after planners found significant shortcomings in the project submitted by the developer.

Galway County Council planning offices refused plans for the 239-hectare Belleville Solar Farm in Abbeyknockmoy and Monivea on September 30. The project was lodged by Power Capital Renewable Energy under the applicant name Heron Solar this summer.

Galway County Council refuses permission for solar farm

Updated / Wednesday, 30 Sep 2026 20:26



Any appeal against the decision will have to be made within a four-week period (Stock image)



By Pat McGrath
Western Correspondent

Galway County Council has refused permission for a 239-hectare solar farm near the villages of Monivea and Abbeyknockmoy.

Tuam Herald

solar farm

AMASS
PCRE
Abbeyknockmoy village

Neha Kumari

Published: Thu 8 Oct 2026, 10:08 AM



SOLAR Farm was proposed on almost 600 acres of land.

Plans for large-scale solar farm refused by Galway County Council

Community group welcome decision

GALWAY County Council refused planning permission last week for a large-scale solar farm spanning almost 600 acres.

Heron Solar Ltd, a subsidiary of PCRE (Power Capitals Renewable Energy), sought planning permission for the development of a solar farm with an operational lifespan of 40 years in Ballyglunin, Abbeyknockmoy and Monivea in townlands including Lissaniska, Oakwood South, Cahernaglass, Ryehill Demesne, and Carrowmore.

The proposal attracted significant interest and opposition, with more than 300 submissions lodged by residents, community groups, and public representatives.



POWERCAPITAL
renewable energy

Community engagement remains central to Power Capital Renewable Energy's project development approach

Ireland

Power Capital Renewable Energy continues to place community consultation and engagement at the centre of its renewable energy project development process.

Across its portfolio of solar projects, the company engages with local communities from early-stage development through planning, construction and ongoing operation. This approach ensures that local considerations are reflected in project design and that communities are kept informed as projects progress.

Community engagement initiatives include public information events, direct stakeholder engagement and the provision of clear, accessible project information. Where projects proceed to operation, community benefit