Community consultation: the committee's email and Blackthorn's reply

2 October 2026 – 13 October 2026

The committee questioned the consultation timetable and requested missing information and residents' feedback. Read its original email alongside Blackthorn's reply.

The Blackthorn staff member's name and contact details, copied email headers and standard footers are omitted. The committee's original email and Blackthorn's reply are reproduced below.

What the committee asked

The committee's email raised four main points:

- Some drawings were issued before the public event. Site notices followed 35 hours after it, and the application was submitted seven days later. The committee questioned whether consultation could influence what was submitted.
- It asked for the views from homes, property cross-section drawings and clarification about two-storey homes in the glare assessment that residents had requested.
- It requested a copy of feedback from the event, reconsideration of the application's validity and a full written response.
- It highlighted the scale of the proposal and the need to review more than 2,000 pages within 35 days.

What Blackthorn answered

- Blackthorn described its leaflet deliveries and contacts with local representatives, schools and groups. It disputed the description of attendance as minimal, saying approximately 100 people attended.
- It said it followed up residents' queries and considered them before submission. It directed the committee to the Community Engagement Statement's appendices for a record of queries.
- It said Galway County Council would decide the application's validity and that it would continue responding to queries.

What the reply does not answer

How consultation influenced the application

The reply says queries were considered, but identifies no resulting changes and does not address the committee's concerns about the consultation timetable or 35-day reading window.

The information residents requested

It does not say whether the requested views from homes, cross-section drawings and two-storey glare clarification were supplied, or where they can be found.

A copy of the event feedback

It points to a record of queries but does not provide the requested feedback copy or confirm that the record contains all feedback received.

Reconsidering the application

It refers the validity question to the Council, without saying whether Blackthorn will reconsider its own application.

Email 1 of 2 · 2 October 2026 at 15:46

The committee questions consultation and requests information

From: The Executive Committee, Lackagh Knockdoe Solar Action Group
To: Blackthorn Solar Farm

2 October 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Galway County Council Planning Application Reference 2661567

We'd like to take this opportunity to introduce ourselves as the Lackagh Knockdoe Solar Action Group.

We write in connection with the above application, submitted to Galway County Council on 16 September 2026.

The sequence of events

On 31 August 2026, an information leaflet was delivered to properties in the area. Residents within close proximity of the proposed development did not receive the leaflet, including households on the Cahernashilleeny road, immediately adjoining Land Parcel 2.

On 9 September 2026, a public information event was held at Turloughmore GAA Club with minimal attendance due to lack of advertisement and subsequent lack of event & application as a whole, concluding at 8pm. Attendees were informed that the application would be submitted at the end of September or in October.

Only 35 hours after the public information event, by the morning of 11 September 2026, statutory site notices had been erected.

Only 7 days after the public information event, the application was received by the planning authority on 16 September 2026.

What the application documents show about that sequence

The drainage details and swept path analysis accompanying the application were issued for planning on 4 September 2026, five days before the public information event of 9 September. The site layout drawings are dated September 2026 without a day, and the Site Location Map – Landownership is dated 14 September 2026.

Appendix 5 of the Planning and Environmental Statement records that residents at the event of 9 September requested photomontages from private dwellings and from first-floor windows, cross sections from individual properties, and clarification on the treatment of two-storey dwellings in the Glint and Glare Assessment. The Natura Impact Statement, Ecological Impact Assessment, Flood Risk Assessment, Archaeological Impact Assessment and Construction Traffic Management Plan were each finalised between 11 and 15 September 2026, after those requests were made. The application as lodged contains none of the material requested.

The scale of what is proposed

The application comprises approximately 93 hectares of solar arrays, 18 transformer stations, two site entrances, underground cabling within the R354 public road, and a stated operational life of 40 years, with a 10-year permission sought. It is accompanied by approximately 140

documents, including a 204-page Natura Impact Statement, a 304-page Ecological Impact Assessment, a 184-page Surface Water Management Plan and a Glint and Glare Assessment running to several hundred pages across its appendices, totalling over 2,000 pages across the application for a contractual existence of almost a half century.

Members of the public have 35 days in which to read that material and respond.

The request

A development of this scale and duration warrants consultation capable of influencing what is submitted. What took place could not have done so, because the drawings were already issued for planning before the event was held.

We therefore ask, due to the evident lack of public consultation prior to the submission of the application, we request that Blackthorn Ltd re-consider the validity of the application. Furthermore, we request that the information previously requested by residents on 9 September 2026 be made available. We also request a copy of the feedback that Blackthorn received at the consultation evening held on 9th September.

We request a full written response.

Regards,

The Executive Committee

Lackagh Knockdoe Solar Action Group

Grúpa Gníomhaíochta Gréine Leacach Cnoc Tua

Email 2 of 2 · 13 October 2026 at 11:57

Blackthorn replies to the committee

From: Blackthorn Solar Farm
To: The Executive Committee, Lackagh Knockdoe Solar Action Group

13 October 2026

Galway County Council Planning Application Reference 2661567

Dear Committee,

Thank you for your correspondence regarding the above planning application.

Community engagement process

The project team undertook community engagement before submitting the planning application to provide information about the proposed development and give local community members an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback.

We contacted public representatives from the Oranmore-Athenry Municipal District and TDs representing Galway West by email on 28 August 2026. We then hand-delivered project information leaflets to local properties on 31 August and 1 September 2026. We also notified local schools, clubs, and community organisations on 1 September. Approximately 100 local community members attended the event throughout the evening. Based on our experience with similar events, we would not characterise this attendance as minimal.

Following the event, the applicant followed up with attendees who had requested further information about their individual properties and provided their contact details and Eircode. The applicant considered queries received during the pre-application engagement process as part of preparing and finalising the planning application, which was submitted on 16 September.

The appendices to the Community Engagement Statement submitted as part of the planning application include a record of these queries. Names, addresses and contact details have been redacted from this record to protect individuals' personal data in accordance with data protection requirements.

We have been made aware that two properties on the Cahernashilleeny Road may not have received a leaflet directly. However, residents from both properties attended the public information event held on 9 September 2026. The Community Liaison Officer has also corresponded with these individuals by email regarding the proposed development.

Planning process and next steps

As the planning authority, Galway County Council validates and determines the planning application, including consideration of compliance with statutory planning requirements. Accordingly, Galway County Council will consider the validity of this application in accordance with the applicable requirements.

We encourage all interested members of the public to review the application documentation and, if they wish, participate in the statutory planning process by making a submission to Galway County Council within the applicable timeframe.

The applicant has continued to respond to queries since submitting the application and remains committed to engaging constructively with the local community throughout the planning process.

Kind regards,

Community Liaison Officer

BayWa r.e. Ireland Limited