



An
Bord
Pleanála

Inspector's Report ACP-323874-25

Development	220kV substation and 220kV grid connection and all associated works
Location	Lands at Rathmorrissy and Polinagroagh, Moonbawn, Castlelambert, Knocknacreeva, Caraunduff, Chaherbriskaun, Liseenkyk East, Cashla townlands, Co. Galway
Planning Authority	Galway County Council
Type of Application	Pre-application consultation under section 37B of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended
Prospective Applicant	Bord Gáis Energy
Inspector	Philip Davis

1. Introduction

This application, made under S.182B and S.182E of the 2000 Act, as amended, is for electrical apparatus (220kV substation and 220kV grid connection) associated with a proposed 330MW Open Cycle Gas Turbine Plant. The latter plant was deemed Strategic Infrastructure Development under ACP Ref no.: **ABP-320975-25**. When this Gas Turbine Plant was submitted for a decision, it was stated by the prospective applicant that the associated infrastructure would be subject to a separate planning application. They now request that the associated infrastructure be deemed Strategic Infrastructure Development so it can be submitted to ACP as a single integrated development.

The prospective applicant requested a pre-application consultation meeting in its original letter, but in subsequent correspondence ACP confirmed that this would not be required as all relevant technical details had been covered in previous meetings held on the 20th January 2025 and 28th May 2025 for ABP-320975-25.

2. Site Location & Description

The site in question is a linear feature extending from the proposed site for the Open Cycle Gas Plant in Rathmorrissy and Polinagroagh, 3km west of Athenry in County Galway. It primarily runs along the existing minor road network, terminating at a major electrical transformer station in Cashla approximately 4km west of the proposed Gas Turbine Site.

The overall landscape is typical of east Galway, with undulating grazing land over karst, with agricultural fields bounded by stone walls and ditches/hedges. The M6 and M17 junction is the most prominent local feature, with the area otherwise served by third class roads with many individual dwellings scattered along the minor road network.

The site extends in total over 8 km between the site for the proposed Cushla Open Cycle Gas Turbine Plant and the Cushla 220 kV substation. It primarily runs along the minor road network but includes some elements of farmland and crosses both the M17 and M6 motorways along existing infrastructure routes (overpasses).

3. Proposed Development

The proposed development consists of a 220kV AIS substation and a 220Kv grid connection of approximately 8.1 km underground from the proposed Cashla Peaker Plant site (at the north-east quadrant of the M17 and M6 junction) to the existing Cashla 220kV station. This is to facilitate a development on the Cashla Peaker Plant site which consists of the following elements (which the Commission has confirmed can be submitted as a SID development). This latter development includes the following elements:

- A 300 MW Open Cycle Gas Turbine (OCGT) plant primarily fuelled by natural gas, with a secondary diesel generator
- One emissions stack with a proposed height of 40-50 metres
- One 220-kV electrical transformer
- Secondary fuel (diesel) storage and transfer facilities.
- Workshop, stores, carpark and administrative buildings.
- Above ground gas installation (AGI).
- Ancillary grid connection infrastructure, and
- Ancillary infrastructure including internal roads, external lighting, security fencing, etc
- Associated landscaping.

The combined development is intended to operate as a peaking plant with low annual use to provide power during periods of high demand and low renewable generation availability and the current submission is for the connection with the national grid.

4. Prospective Applicant's Case

The Prospective Applicant's case, as outlined in the cover letter received by the Commission on the 5th November 2025 can be summarised as follows:

- The proposed electrical infrastructure is part of a proposed development for which the Commission has already accepted is Strategic Infrastructure and

falls within the scope of section 37B and the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended

5. Relevant Precedents

There are no relevant planning history or precedents on file for the proposed development.

6. Legislative provisions

6.1 Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended

The Seventh Schedule of the 2000 Act as amended lists the classes of infrastructure development which, if considered by the Board (Commission) to be strategic infrastructure development, would require direct application for permission to the Board (Commission) instead of the local planning authority. This list includes under 'Energy Infrastructure':

1. Development comprising for the purposes of any of the following:

A thermal power station or other combustion installation with a total energy output of 300 megawatts or more.

An industrial installation for the production of electricity, steam or hot water with a heat output of 300 megawatts or more.

Section 182A of the act outlines the legislative provisions for electricity transmission lines to be subject to a direct application to the Commission. Section 182A(9) sets out in relation to the meaning of electricity infrastructure under the Act:

- a) A high voltage line where the voltage would be 110 kilovolts or more or*
- b) An interconnector, whether ownership of the interconnector will be vested in the undertaker or not.*

7. Consultation Meeting

Two pre-application consultation meetings were held with the prospective applicant on the 20th January 2025 and 28th May 2025 for the Gas Turbine at Cashla. The meeting records relating to this development proposal and the presentations made by the applicant to the Board's representatives are attached to the file **ABP-320975-25**. The prospective applicant was advised by the Commission that as the details of the interconnector had been discussed during these meetings, no consultation meetings were required for this application.

8. Assessment

The definition of 'strategic infrastructure' for the purposes of Sections 37A and 37B of the 2000 Act, as revised, includes:

—A thermal power station or other combustion installation with a total energy output of 300 megawatts or more.

—An industrial installation for the production of electricity, steam or hot water with a heat output of 300 megawatts or more.

—An industrial installation for carrying gas, steam or hot water with a potential heat output of 300 megawatts or more, or transmission of electrical energy by overhead cables, where the voltage would be 220 kilovolts or more, but excluding any proposed development referred to in section 182A(1).

Section 182A of the Planning and Development Act (as amended) includes under subsection (9) in clarifying the meaning of 'electrical transmission':

- c) A high voltage line where the voltage would be 110 kilovolts or more or,*
- d) An interconnector, whether ownership of the interconnector will be vested in the undertaker or not.*

The proposal is stated to be a development for the purpose of connecting the 334 MW Open Cycle Gas Turbine station, which the Commission has already decided constitutes strategic infrastructure development (under Section 37). The Board had

received a request on the 3rd October 2024 from the prospective applicant, Bord Gáis Energy, to enter into pre-application consultations under Section 37B of the Planning and Development Act, 2000, as amended ('2000 Act'), in relation to the proposed development of a 300MW Open Cycle Gas Turbine Plant on lands at Rathmorrissy/Polinagroagh, County Galway. Two pre-application consultation meetings were held with the prospective applicant on the 20th January 2025 and 28th May 2025. Records of the two meetings are on file Ref. Rev. ABP-320975-25. While not part of the application, issues regarding the proposed connection to the Cushla 220kV transformer were part of the consultations.

It was decided by the Commission that the proposed Gas Turbine is necessary to fulfil regional economic developments that require energy security in line with the Climate Action Plan 2025, the RSES, and related national policy on energy security and securing a low carbon energy future ('Energy Security in Ireland 2030' (published 14 November 2023, updated 12 June 2025, and 'Ireland's Transition to a Low Carbon Energy Future 2015-2030 White Paper, published 19 June 2020). It was subsequently decided on the 19th August 2025 that it constitutes strategic infrastructure for the purposes of the Act.

Notwithstanding its policy context, the question put to the Commission now is whether it is strategic infrastructure for the purposes of Section 182E of the 2000 Act, as amended. The prospective applicant has submitted this under S.182E, although it could be argued that as ancillary infrastructure to the 330 MW gas plant, it could be argued that it falls within S.37, but it seems more appropriate to decide it under S.182A as, in itself, it constitutes 'electrical transmission' under S.182A(9).

On the basis that it is a necessary part of the overall Cushla Gas Turbine development and clearly ancillary to this development, I conclude that it falls within the scope of S.182A.

In conclusion, therefore, I recommend that *An Coimisiún* issues a determination that the proposed 8.1km underground 220kV connector and associated infrastructure falls within the scope of section 182A of the 2000 Act, as amended, and that a planning application should be made directly to the Coimisiún.

A list of prescribed bodies is set out in Appendix 1.

9. Recommendation

I recommend that the prospective applicant, Bord Gáis Energy, be informed that:

The proposed 220kV substation, 220kV grid connection, and all associated works on lands at Rathmorrissy, Pollinagroagh, Moanbaun, Castlelambert, Knocknacreeva, Caraunduff, Caherbriskaun, Lisheenkyle East, Barreetspark and Cashla townlands in Athenry, County Galway, as set out in the plans and particulars received by An Coimisiún Pleanála on the 24th October 2025 falls within the scope of section 182A and the Seventh Schedule of the Planning and Development Act 2000, as amended, and that a planning application should therefore be made directly to An Coimisiún Pleanála.

I confirm that this report represents my professional planning assessment, judgement and opinion on the matter assigned to me and that no person has influenced or sought to influence, directly or indirectly, the exercise of my professional judgement in an improper or inappropriate way.



Philip Davis

Senior Planning Inspector

Date: 21st January 2026

Appendix 1: Prescribed Bodies

The following is a list of prescribed bodies considered relevant by the Coimisiún:

- Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage
- Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications
- Galway County Council
- Commission for the Regulation of Utilities
- Transport Infrastructure Ireland
- Uisce Éireann
- Inland Fisheries Ireland
- Office of Public Works
- An Taisce
- Heritage Council
- An Chomhairle Ealaíon
- Fáilte Ireland
- HSE

Further notifications should also be made, where deemed appropriate.