

OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

Ann Dempsey
Ballynageeragh
Craughwell
Galway
H91EH7X

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902

Date: 18 April 2026

Re: Observation to the proposed development of open-cycle gas turbine (OCGT) and generator with ancillary equipment.

Location: Pollnagroagh and Rathmorrissy (Townlands), Athenry, Co. Galway

Applicant: Bord Gáis Energy Limited

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Ann Dempsey and I am strongly opposed to this development on the following grounds. I own a small farm of land which I have always used to grow organic vegetables, for myself and my children. I have always considered it the best way to keep my family healthy. The ground is pristine and I have never used pesticides to get rid of weeds. I have dedicated a lot of my time to keep the soil fertile and keep it free from contaminates. One day I want my children to enjoy the fruits and nutrition from this land, when they settle back in Ireland long term. My concern is that despite my best efforts this land will be polluted beyond my control by this development and the air pollution associated with it.

As I harvest the rainwater for my vegetables, there is a strong possibility that this water will be contaminated by the emissions from this plant. What's more because I live in a karst area, and this development is proposed to be built on a karst area, the likelihood of groundwater pollution on my farm is significant.

High-Intensity Emissions and Diesel Impacts

I am concerned about the potential impact of air pollution from this proposed development. Pollutants such as nitrogen oxides (NOx) and fine particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10) are known to damage air quality, irritate the lungs, and contribute to long-term harm to both human health and the environment. Although the plant would not operate continuously, it may run at extremely high output when required, leading to short but intense bursts of pollution, particularly during start-up and peak demand periods. The possible use of diesel during these times is especially worrying, as it produces higher levels of harmful emissions, including nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, and particulate matter.

These pollutants can penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream, increasing the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular illness, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children, older people, and those with existing health conditions. Fine particulate matter can also travel long distances and accumulate over time, meaning the impacts may extend beyond the immediate area and persist in the long term. In summary, I have reservations regarding the thoroughness of the assessment of these emissions. This issue presents significant implications for public health and environmental protection, especially in relation to EU air quality standards established by Directive 2008/50/EC.

Cumulative Health Impacts Over Time

I have serious concerns about how this proposed peaker plant would operate over time. Although it would run intermittently, it would do so at extremely high intensity, and the potential use of diesel adds to these concerns, as it could result in repeated short-term spikes in air pollution. While individual emission events may be brief, the fact that they could occur repeatedly over many years—potentially up to 2050—raises concerns about ongoing exposure and cumulative health impacts.

Pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and fine particulate matter are known to worsen asthma, trigger respiratory symptoms, and contribute to long-term conditions including chronic respiratory and cardiovascular disease. This is particularly concerning for nearby residents, especially vulnerable groups such as children, older people, and those with existing health conditions. There is still uncertainty regarding whether the lasting and cumulative effects of these emissions have been fully studied, which leads to real concerns that continued exposure during the development's lifetime could affect public health and wellbeing in the future.

Unsuitability of Site Due to Environmental Sensitivity

I do not believe this site is suitable for this type of development. The area is environmentally sensitive, with a strong reliance on clean groundwater and agricultural land, both of which are essential to the local community. Introducing a development involving diesel storage and industrial processes, potentially operating until at least 2050, brings significant long-term risks to water quality, soil health, and surrounding land uses.

These effects are not temporary or easily controlled, and once harm is done, it can be extremely challenging—sometimes even impossible—to completely fix. Because of uncertainty and the risk of permanent environmental damage, it's best to proceed with caution. In summary, there are significant concerns about whether this development is suitable for this area.

Protection of Agricultural Livelihoods

Farmers work diligently within stringent environmental guidelines and uphold rigorous standards of environmental stewardship, fully recognising the importance of these obligations. There is concern that an industrial development of this nature—particularly one involving diesel use and long-term emissions, potentially until 2050—could introduce risks that undermine that work by affecting land quality and increasing environmental pressures. This situation presents significant challenges for farmers, who should not face

penalties for problems caused by factors beyond their control. There are concerns that agricultural risks remain overlooked and the development may affect local farming long-term.

Emergency Response and Adequacy of Assessment

There are serious concerns about the lack of clear information on emergency response planning for this proposed development, including how a major incident would be managed, evacuation procedures, coordination with local emergency services, and the overall effectiveness of any response. This is particularly concerning in a rural area where the road network is already limited and constrained, which could make access and evacuation more difficult in an emergency and increase risks to nearby residents. When considered alongside the absence of detailed worst-case scenario analysis, it is not clear that risks to human health and safety have been reduced to an acceptable level, creating significant concern about the preparedness of the development to respond to a major incident.

Cumulative Visual Impact of Industrial Infrastructure

It is noted that the visual impact of the proposed development appears to have been evaluated independently, rather than within the context of its overall effects. The project includes multiple elements, such as plant structures, fuel storage areas, electrical infrastructure, security fencing, lighting, and access roads, which together would create a substantial industrial presence within a rural setting. The cumulative visual impact of these components does not appear to have been fully assessed, and as a result, the overall level of visual intrusion may be significantly greater than that identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment.

Conflict with National and EU Climate Targets

There are serious concerns regarding Ireland's legally binding obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, as well as wider EU climate frameworks. The continued development of gas-fired generation, including peaker plants, will result in additional carbon dioxide emissions over the lifetime of the project, raising questions about alignment with national carbon budgets and emissions reduction targets. In this context, there is concern that the proposal may undermine the State's ability to meet its climate commitments and transition to a low-carbon energy system.

Lack of Clear, Accessible, and Effective Communication

There are concerns that community engagement in relation to this project has been insufficient and ineffective. Many residents did not receive any direct communication or notification about the proposed development, and while some individuals report receiving a flyer or attending an information event, the material provided was highly technical and difficult to understand without specialist knowledge. This limits meaningful public participation, as effective consultation requires information to be accessible, clearly explained, and actively communicated to all affected members of the community. In this case, the complexity and level of technical detail in the documentation creates a barrier to understanding, meaning that many people cannot fully assess the potential impacts of the development.

Over-Reliance on Mitigation Measures and Uncertainty of Outcomes

There are concerns that the Environmental Impact Assessment relies heavily on mitigation measures to reduce environmental impacts. However, mitigation does not eliminate impacts, and its effectiveness over time is uncertain, particularly over the long operational lifespan of the development, potentially extending to at least 2050. There is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that these measures will perform as predicted under

real-world conditions. This creates uncertainty as to whether impacts will remain within acceptable limits, particularly in relation to emissions, noise, and overall environmental protection.

Conclusion

This proposal presents important concerns regarding people, public health, agriculture, and the surrounding environment. Because the documentation is complex and community engagement has been limited, many individuals have found it challenging to take part in the decision-making process. Communities should not face uncertain or potentially substantial environmental risks. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that planning permission be refused.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann Dempsey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Name: Ann Dempsey

Date: 18 April 2026