

OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

Brian & Catriona Mitchell

No 6 Cluain Ri

Athenry

Galway

H65W402

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála

64 Marlborough Street

Dublin 1

D01 V902

Date: 24 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 residence is 4.33km from the proposed site of the Cashla Peaker Plant (Athenry).

We moved to Athenry 15 years ago as it was always a town we loved to visit with its old-style buildings and heritage sites. I (Brian) work in Athenry at a local family butcher and have huge concerns regarding this proposed peaker plant as I will be not just be living close to it, but also working within close proximity of this Power Plant. Living and working in the area, I was shocked to hear 10 weeks after the May (2025) open events that there was a proposal of such a plant for the area, in fact, I was in Spain on a family holiday when I met a local from Athenry who informed me about this and asked me my opinion, the local was visibly concerns about such a power plant coming to Athenry. We were shocked to hear of such a development, I couldn't understand how I hadn't heard about it as I work front facing in an extremely busy butchers and nobody appeared to have raised a question or concern about it.

We have a young family also and give use huge concerns and anxiety for their health as both our children have asthma. We fear for their health and also the additional health bills we will be faced with the emissions, in order for them to live healthy lives. But our children are also in local clubs, (GAA etc) and this gives us additional concern as the GAA club is located less than 2.5 km from this proposed site. We have read that

exposure to such fumes from fossil fuel power plants whilst exercising can put developing children (Teenagers) at greater risk due to gasping on their lungs. Our daughter also has allergies, and this gives us further concerns, not just on the air quality, but also the danger of the precious water in the area being contaminated from the enormous diesel that is planned to be stored onsite. What if there is a leak? Finally, our grandparents spend a lot of time at our home to visit their grandchildren and have concerns for their health as they are in an elderly vulnerable category.

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.

Long-Term Accumulation of Pollutants and Chemical Residues

I am particularly concerned about the risk of pollution to soil and groundwater from this proposed development. The inclusion of diesel storage tanks, hardstanding areas, drainage systems, and other infrastructure increases the likelihood that pollutants could gradually enter the ground over time, potentially up to 2050. Substances such as hydrocarbons from diesel and gas, along with other chemical residues, may build up slowly, particularly where there are repeated small leaks, routine operational losses, or occasional spills, with impacts accumulating over time.

What is especially worrying is that this type of pollution may not be immediately visible but could result in long-term damage to groundwater quality and soil health. This has implications not only for environmental protection but also for local agriculture, which depends on clean soil and water. Overall, there is significant concern that these long-term and cumulative risks have not been fully addressed and could have lasting consequences for the local environment and livelihoods.

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.

Cumulative Impact on Child's Development

As a parent in the area, I am concerned about the impact of fine particulate matter over time. These pollutants can travel long distances and accumulate, meaning children may be exposed not only during peak pollution events but also through ongoing low-level exposure. The cumulative effect of this is particularly worrying, as repeated exposure during key stages of growth and development could have lasting impacts on lung development and overall health. From a community perspective, this raises serious concerns about the long-term safety of this development for children, and it is not clear that these cumulative impacts have been fully considered.

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.

Lack of Worst-Case Assessment

The Environmental Impact Assessment bases its findings on expected operating scenarios instead of evaluating the worst-case possibilities. Because the plant's operation will depend on electricity demand, it's unclear how often or how intensely it might run. This uncertainty also applies to diesel usage, which could produce higher emissions than those estimated. Without a thorough assessment of the most severe potential impacts, it is impossible to guarantee that major environmental effects will not happen.

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,

Brian & Catriona Mitchell

Name: Brian & Catriona Mitchell

Date: 24 April 2026