OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

Brian Farrell

Ballygarraun North

Athenry

Galway

H65HX89

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála

64 Marlborough Street

Dublin 1

D01 V902

Date: 19 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,

I am writing to formally object to the proposed Peaker Plant development in Athenry. Having been born in this town 43 years ago, I have witnessed its positive evolution firsthand. Seven years ago, I chose to build my family home here, investing significantly in a sustainable future by installing 22 solar panels to reduce my family's carbon footprint.

My objection is based on the following concerns regarding the suitability of this development:

Proximity to High-Density Residential Areas: Athenry is one of the fastest-growing towns in Ireland. Placing a fossil-fuel-burning plant in such close proximity to a surging population—including multiple schools and young families—contradicts safe urban planning principles.

Public Health Impacts: The potential for increased air pollution and particulate matter is a grave concern. A development that risks the long-term respiratory health of children and adults is incompatible with the residential nature of the surrounding area.

Contradiction of Green Initiatives: As a resident who has invested in renewable energy (solar), I find the introduction of a Peaker Plant to be a step backward for the town's environmental heritage and Ireland's broader climate commitments.

Site Suitability: While the national grid requires stability, such intensive industrial developments should be located in low-density, industrial-zoned areas far from major population centers to mitigate noise and air quality issues.

Athenry has a rich heritage and a bright future as a residential hub. I urge the planners to protect this growth and the health of its citizens by refusing permission for this development at this location.

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 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.

Increased Heavy Traffic and Diesel Transport Risks

As someone who lives locally and uses this road, I am concerned about road safety in relation to the proposed entrance on the L3103. This stretch of road is already extremely narrow, with no hard shoulder, making it difficult for two heavy goods vehicles to pass safely and leaving no margin for error. Visibility is also poor due to blind dips and sharp bends, meaning drivers often cannot see oncoming traffic in time. The proposed development would increase traffic levels, including heavy goods vehicles, construction traffic, and fuel deliveries such as diesel tankers, all of which require space and clear sightlines that this road does not provide.

Given that these rural roads are used by residents, farm machinery, and school-related traffic, the addition of significant industrial traffic would increase the risk of accidents and create a more hazardous environment. Overall, there is strong concern that the existing road infrastructure is not suitable for this level of traffic and that the associated safety risks have not been adequately addressed.

Underestimation of Operational Emissions

There are concerns that the Environmental Impact Assessment may underestimate the emissions associated with the proposed development by relying on assumed operating patterns. As a demand-led facility, the plant may operate more frequently or for longer periods than predicted, particularly during times of pressure on the energy system. This creates uncertainty around the total level of greenhouse gas emissions over the lifetime of the project and raises concerns that the full climate impact of the development has not been adequately assessed.

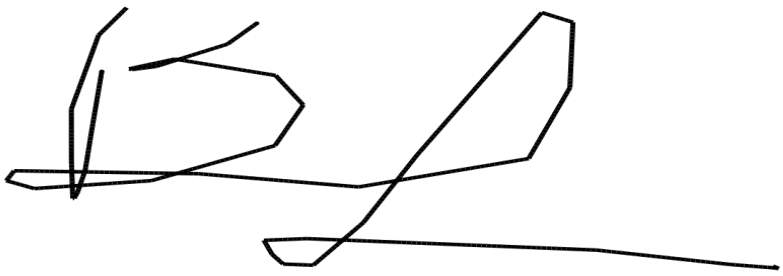
Failure to Properly Assess Cumulative and Long-Term Impacts

There are concerns that the Environmental Impact Assessment does not adequately assess cumulative impacts, including the combined effects of emissions, noise, traffic, diesel use, and ongoing environmental disturbance over time. These impacts may interact and intensify, particularly during peak operational periods, yet this interaction has not been fully examined. The long-term nature of the development, potentially extending to at least 2050, further increases the importance of understanding these cumulative effects. Without a comprehensive assessment, it is difficult to fully understand the overall environmental burden of the project, and this represents a significant gap in the evaluation.

Conclusion

The proposal raises important concerns about environmental protection, public health, agriculture, road safety, and community welfare. Due to uncertainties regarding how often operations would occur, diesel usage, and overall impacts, this development cannot be considered acceptable. A thorough and cautious assessment is needed to ensure that significant environmental effects are avoided, but such an evaluation has not been conducted. Therefore, I recommend that approval for this development be refused.

Yours Sincerely,



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