OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

Conor Burke and Sheila Burke

Castlelambert

Athenry

Galway

H65A259

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála

64 Marlborough Street

Dublin 1

D01 V902

Date: 16 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 930m from the proposed site of the Cashla Peaker Plant (Athenry).

To whom it may concern,
My name is Conor Burke and my wife's name is Sheila Burke. I am 35 years old, my wife is 33 years old. We live in Castlelambert, Athenry. We were married in April 2025. I am a teaching principal of a primary school in Dunmore Co. Galway, my wife is a physiotherapist in Portiuncla Hospital in Ballinasloe, Co. Galway.
We moved into our newly built house in February this year, I grew up 4 kilometres from this site. I went to college in Dublin and worked there for 8 years but Athenry has always been my home. This is the best place in the country to grow up. We have amazing people, land, schools, sports facilities and community spirit.
We bought our site in April 2024 and completed this self-build in February this year. It was a massive project in building our forever home. Our home has a heat recovery and air to water system as is required in all modern homes. These are significant costs in a new home. We wish for a better and greener environment locally and globally for generations to come and we are happy to invest in this, we are putting solar panels on our home also. The use of fossil fuels in powering a Peaker plant less than one kilometre from our home is a slap in the face to anyone who now follows these planning guidelines that are focused on creating a 'greener

future'. I cannot see how such a pollution risk can be placed so close to a populated area for our generation and the next. There is no benefit from this project to our great community.
This proposed development is something we did not expect when building our home. We have grave concerns around the health and safety risks of living less than 1km from the proposed Peaker Plant. We also have concerns around the road in front of our house being closed and torn up for the cable that will connect the Peaker Plant to the Coshla power station. As it stands; two cars currently cannot pass each other on this road. It is wholly unsuitable for such works to be carried out no matter the mitigation in place.
We are both active and healthy people. I have played hurling for Athenry for 28 years and continue to do so. I plan on being involved in a coaching capacity also in the decades to come. My wife has played camogie all of her life and continues to do so. We wish for our family to be able to participate in sports in the future in our community. We have both continued to represent our local hurling team and have done so since the age of 6 years old. We hope to continue playing in our beautiful green fields in clean air. The evidence of respiratory illnesses associated with living close to Peaker Plant is a frightening prospect for young people and their children. We are expecting our first child in July 2026. Who will be held responsible if this happens to us or our children?
We both understand the need for 'energy security' for our country. However, energy security should not trump the health of an entire community for generations to come. What good is energy security to an ailing community? The location is completely unsuitable for this proposed project.

Human Health & Air Pollution

High-Intensity Emissions and Diesel Impacts

Air pollutants, including nitrogen oxides (NOx) and fine particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10), are well established as contributors to respiratory irritation, reduced air quality, and long-term environmental degradation. A peaker plant operates intermittently but at very high output during periods of peak electricity demand, resulting in concentrated bursts of emissions, particularly during start-up and ramp-up phases. Where diesel is used as a backup fuel or during start-up, emission levels may be significantly higher, as diesel combustion produces elevated levels of nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, particulate matter, and other combustion-related pollutants compared to gas. These pollutants can penetrate deep into the lungs and bloodstream, contributing to respiratory and cardiovascular illness. Vulnerable groups, including children, older people, and individuals with pre-existing respiratory conditions, are particularly at risk. Fine particulate matter can travel significant distances and accumulate over time, extending the area and duration of exposure. This creates a risk of both immediate and long-term health impacts and raises concerns under Directive 2008/50/EC on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe.

Children & Health

Exposure During Daily Activities and School Times

Children living or attending school near the site may be exposed to elevated air pollution during peak operation periods, which may coincide with times when children are outdoors, including school drop-off, break times, and after-school activities. During physical activity, children breathe more rapidly, increasing their intake of pollutants. This raises concerns about repeated exposure to harmful emissions during critical stages of development.

Local Roads, Safety & Schools

Unsuitability of Rural Road Network

The proposed site entrance is located on an exceptionally dangerous section of the L3103. Establishing an access point at this specific location introduces an unacceptable level of risk due to several compounding hazards:

- Severely Restricted Width: The road is currently too narrow to safely permit two Heavy Goods Vehicles to pass simultaneously.
- Absence of a Hard Shoulder: There is no safe refuge or margin for error for manoeuvring vehicles.
- Critically Poor Visibility: The immediate area is affected by blind dips and blind corners, severely compromising driver sightlines.

These immediate dangers constitute a severe threat to public safety and require urgent and mandatory remediation.

In addition to these existing hazards, local roads are not designed to accommodate sustained industrial traffic. The interaction between heavy goods vehicles, farm machinery, and everyday residential traffic creates a complex and potentially dangerous road environment. The introduction of additional industrial traffic, including diesel deliveries and construction vehicles, further compounds these risks.

Climate Impact

Lock-in of Fossil Fuel Infrastructure

The proposed development represents new fossil fuel infrastructure with an operational lifespan extending to at least 2050. This risks locking in carbon-intensive energy generation at a time when national and EU policy require rapid decarbonisation. Investment in gas-fired infrastructure may delay or displace the development of renewable energy and storage solutions, creating long-term dependency on fossil fuels that is not consistent with climate objectives.

Lack of Worst-Case Assessment

The Environmental Impact Assessment relies on assumed operational scenarios rather than assessing worst-case conditions. Given that the plant will operate in response to electricity demand, there is no certainty regarding how frequently or intensively it will operate. This includes diesel use, which may result in higher emissions than those modelled. In the absence of a robust worst-case assessment, it cannot be concluded that significant environmental impacts will not occur.

Conclusion

This proposal raises real and valid concerns for people, public health, agriculture, and the local environment. The complexity of the documentation and limitations in community engagement have made it difficult for the public to fully participate in the decision-making process. Communities should not be exposed to uncertain and potentially significant environmental impacts. I strongly urge that planning permission is not granted.

Yours Sincerely,

Name: Conor Burke and Sheila Burke
Date: 16 April 2026