

OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

David Curran
Pollnagroagh
Athenry
Galway
H65 D967

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

Date: 23 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 880m from the proposed site of the Cashla Peaker Plant (Athenry).

My name is David Curran, I am 38, born and raised in Pollnagroagh, Athenry. I am deeply concerned about the impact of the proposed Peaker Plant on myself and my close family who all live within very close proximity to the proposed site.

The area where the plant is proposed is in direct proximity to a thriving, tranquil and caring community. Growing up the quiet, rural setting was essential to our happy, healthy lives and only served to enhance our community and quality of life. My family live on a farm in very close proximity (850m) to the proposed site and there is no possible way that life as we know it would be changed forever. The health benefits provided by living outside of urban areas are not just physical but can be of huge benefit to mental health too, this would be completely destroyed by the impact of the massive construction and then operation of this plant. The potential disruption to daily life during the construction of the proposed plant is beyond anything that can be tolerated and would involve complete upheaval.

My family including my Brother, my sister in law and my two young nephews live in one of the closest proximity areas to the proposed plant. My elderly mother is also at very close proximity to the proposed plant. It is extremely worrying that the potential health impacts would have a detrimental effect on their lives and the social impacts of the disruption to the beautiful surrounding areas is terrifying. My sister and family including three children live within 10km of the proposed site and are regularly at their mother/grand mother's house which is within 880m of the site so would also be hugely affected. My nieces and nephews are involved in outdoor sports and the potential health impacts of the emissions from the proposed plant have been shown to be life limiting and have an impact on health and performance due to the pollutants and exposure. Their happiness and quality of life would be directly affected which is unacceptable.

The roads around the area cannot accommodate a large scale construction project, already in some areas there is only room for one car to pass on narrow sections. The roads themselves would be destroyed and the people living on these narrow roads would see their access limited and a constant level of traffic and noise during the construction. Already it can be a struggle to cycle or walk on the road as it is busy with normal levels of traffic so there is no way that the large scale construction traffic can also be accommodated.

I strongly encourage that this proposal is rejected based on the serious concerns detailed above and their impact on the lives of myself, my family, our community and our future.

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.

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.

Vulnerability to Diesel-Related Air Pollution

As a parent living in the area, I am particularly concerned about the potential impact of this proposed development on children's health. Children are particularly susceptible to the effects of air pollution because of their developing respiratory systems, elevated respiration rates, and greater exposure to outdoor environments. Although peaker plants do not function on a continuous basis, they can produce significantly elevated levels of output during initial start-up phases or times of peak energy demand. This may lead to brief yet significant emissions of pollutants, particularly when diesel fuel is utilised. These emissions contain fine particles and nitrogen oxides that can penetrate deep into the lungs, which may affect lung development and increase the risk of respiratory conditions such as asthma. Overall, this raises serious concerns about the health and wellbeing of children and whether these risks 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.

School Safety and Peak-Time Risks

As someone who lives locally and extensively uses this road, I am concerned about the proposed location of the site entrance on the L3103. This section of road is already extremely dangerous, as it is narrow, has no hard shoulder, and does not provide sufficient space for two heavy goods vehicles to pass safely. Visibility is also poor due to blind dips and sharp bends, meaning drivers often cannot see oncoming traffic in time, and introducing a site entrance at this location would significantly increase the risk to all road users.

There are strong concerns that adding traffic—particularly large vehicles—would worsen these existing hazards, especially near homes and schools during busy periods such as morning and afternoon times. The interaction between heavy goods vehicles, farm machinery, and everyday local traffic creates a higher risk of

accidents, particularly for children and other vulnerable road users. Overall, this is not a suitable location for this level of traffic, and the associated safety risks for the community are a critical concern.

Unsuitability of Rural Road Network

There are serious concerns about the proposed site entrance on the L3103, which is an exceptionally dangerous stretch of road where introducing an access point would create an unacceptable level of risk. The road is extremely narrow and cannot safely accommodate two heavy goods vehicles passing at the same time, there is no hard shoulder to allow for safe manoeuvring or recovery, and visibility is severely limited due to blind dips and sharp corners. These are significant existing hazards that already pose a real danger to road users, and the addition of a site entrance would further increase that risk.

There are also concerns regarding the suitability of local roads for this type of traffic. Rural roads are not built to support continuous industrial activity, and when heavy trucks, farm equipment, and regular local vehicles share these routes, it often leads to difficult and dangerous traffic conditions. The introduction of additional industrial traffic, including construction vehicles and diesel deliveries, would further increase the risk and make these roads more dangerous for all users.

Proximity and Worst-Case Scenario Risks

There are serious concerns about the location of this proposed development, given its proximity to residential homes, agricultural land, and local infrastructure. In this context, even a low-probability event could have serious consequences for public safety, property, and the local rural economy. While such incidents may be unlikely, the potential impact of events such as fire, explosion, or fuel-related incidents could be significant, particularly given how close the development is to where people live and work. The Environmental Impact Assessment does not clearly demonstrate that worst-case scenarios have been fully examined, with limited detail on potential fire spread, explosion impact zones, and fuel ignition risks. Without this information, the true scale and severity of potential impacts remain unclear, giving rise to significant concern about the level of risk associated with the development.

Landscape Character and Policy Conflict

There are serious concerns that the proposed development would represent a significant industrial intrusion into a rural landscape characterised by agricultural land use and dispersed residential development. The scale, height, and industrial nature of the plant—including buildings, stacks, lighting, and fuel storage—would fundamentally alter the character of the area, introducing a visually dominant feature into what is currently a quiet rural setting. This type of development does not appear consistent with the existing landscape, nor does the area have the capacity to absorb such change without significant adverse effects. These concerns are particularly relevant in the context of the Galway County Development Plan, specifically Policies LCM1, LCM2, and LCM3, which seek to protect landscape character, recognise landscape sensitivity, and ensure that development is appropriate to its setting.

Lock-in of Fossil Fuel Infrastructure

There are serious concerns that the proposed development represents new fossil fuel infrastructure with a long operational lifespan, potentially extending to at least 2050, which risks locking in carbon-intensive energy generation at a time when national and EU policy require rapid decarbonisation. Investment in gas-fired infrastructure of this nature may delay or displace the development of renewable energy and energy storage solutions, leading to continued reliance on fossil fuels over the long term. Overall, there is concern that the proposal is not aligned with current climate objectives and may undermine the transition to a low-carbon energy system.

Failure to Meet Aarhus Convention Standards

There are concerns that the consultation process for this development does not meet the standards set out under the Aarhus Convention, which provides for the public's right to access environmental information and to participate effectively in environmental decision-making. This requires not only that information is made available, but that it is understandable, accessible, and provided in a timely manner. In this case, the complexity of the Environmental Impact Assessment documentation, combined with limited direct communication, appears to have restricted meaningful public participation. This raises serious concerns regarding transparency, accessibility, and the overall effectiveness of public engagement in the decision-making process.

Lack of Transparency, Inclusiveness, and Early Engagement

There are concerns that consultation in relation to this development has not been clear, inclusive, or effective. For a project of this scale and potential impact, there should have been proactive, transparent, and early engagement with the local community, including clear communication, accessible information, and adequate time for people to understand and respond to the proposal. The lack of meaningful engagement raises issues around fairness, transparency, and the overall integrity of the planning process, and creates concern that communities may be placed at a disadvantage due to inaccessible information and limited consultation.

Diesel Use Not Fully Assessed or Limited

Diesel is used beyond emergencies, including routine tests and operations. This leads to extra emissions, odours, and environmental risks not fully covered by the Environmental Impact Assessment. The frequency and impact of diesel use are unclear, making the total environmental effect uncertain.

Conclusion

Due to the concerns mentioned—such as uncertainty about how often operations will occur, overall environmental impacts, and risks related to diesel use—this project is not viewed as proper or sustainable development. There has also been insufficient consideration of the possibility that the actual impacts could be greater than those evaluated. Therefore, we respectfully ask that approval for this application be refused.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Curran'. The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial 'D' and a cursive 'Curran'.

Name: David Curran

Date: 23 April 2026