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Moanbaun  
Athenry  
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19 April 2026

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

**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

Case Reference: 324113

Dear Sir/Madam,

I write to submit an observation in respect of the above application.

I have a personal connection to Athenry, having grown up in the town and retaining property there. I therefore have a long-standing interest in its character, amenity, and wider setting.

I wish to make clear at the outset that I do not oppose Ireland's energy transition. The shift to renewable and flexible energy infrastructure is necessary, and I accept that it requires compromises and that development of this nature must be accommodated somewhere. My observations below are made in that context, and are concerned not with the principle of such development but with specific aspects of this application that I consider warrant careful scrutiny by An Coimisiún Pleanála.

### **1. Proximity to a Designated Heritage Town**

The proposed development at Pollnagroagh and Rathmorrissy townlands sits in close proximity to Athenry, a designated heritage town of national significance. The approach roads to Athenry form part of the town's character and setting, and large-scale industrial infrastructure of this nature — including turbine halls, ancillary plant, and associated lighting — would be visible from these approaches, fundamentally altering the visual gateway to the town. This is precisely the type of impact that heritage town designation is intended to guard against, and it is not clear that the Environmental Impact Assessment has treated this proximity with the weight it deserves.

### **2. Visual Impact on the Approach to the Town**

The proposed development would introduce a prominent industrial facility into an open rural landscape that currently forms part of the wider setting of Athenry. Given the flat topography of this part of east Galway, structures of this scale will be visible from significant distances along approach routes. The cumulative visual effect — including turbine buildings, pipework, fencing, security lighting, and access infrastructure — would represent a lasting and irreversible change to the rural and heritage character of this area. Landscaping and screening measures of the type typically proposed are unlikely to adequately mitigate impact of this scale and permanence.

### **3. Air Quality and Proximity to Schools and Residential Areas**

The site is situated in the vicinity of residential communities and, critically, in proximity to schools serving the Athenry area, including Lisheenkyle National School. Open-cycle gas turbines, by design, are less efficient and produce higher emissions per unit of energy generated than combined-cycle plant. The potential use of diesel as a backup or start-up fuel introduces additional pollutants including particulate matter and nitrogen oxides. During periods of peak operation — which may occur without advance notice — communities in the surrounding area, including children attending Lisheenkyle National School, would be exposed to elevated emissions. It is not evident that the assessment has adequately modelled or addressed the cumulative exposure risk to sensitive receptors of this kind in the immediate vicinity of the proposed site.

### **4. Absence of a Credible Decommissioning and Transition Strategy**

The application does not, to my knowledge, include a robust and binding commitment to decommissioning the facility in line with Ireland's climate obligations and the trajectory toward a decarbonised grid. An operational lifespan potentially extending to 2050 or beyond risks locking in fossil fuel dependency in a location that will be difficult and costly to remediate. No adequate provision appears to have been made for site restoration, and there is no clear mechanism to ensure the facility is phased out as renewables and storage capacity increase. This represents a significant failure of long-term planning and is at odds with national and EU climate policy.

For the reasons set out above, I respectfully ask that An Coimisiún Pleanála refuse planning permission for this application, or in the alternative, impose conditions that meaningfully address the heritage, environmental, and long-term planning concerns identified herein.

Yours faithfully,

Dr E. O'Dea