

# OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

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

Date: 18 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,**

We are a family of four with two school age children, 5 and 8, who both currently attend primary school in Lisheenkyle National School (3km from the proposed peaker site). Our children will go on to attend secondary school in Athenry which is just over 2km from the site. My family and I made a conscious decision to move from an urban area to Athenry so that we could raise our children in a safe, clean, and healthy rural environment, with access to outdoor space, sport, and community life. Our key objections to the development include:

## **1. Air pollution, health and Impact on children**

The proposed plant is permitted to operate until 2050, meaning it will affect the health of our family. Children are particularly vulnerable to air pollution. Emissions from a gas and diesel-fired plant — including nitrogen oxides and particulate matter — are known to impact lung development and long-term health. This represents a long-term and cumulative risk for us and for our children.

## **2. Increased exposure to air pollution through sport and exercise**

My children are actively involved in local sports, including soccer, hurling, and camogie. My husband is also involved in the local athletic club. Sport and outdoor activity are central to our family life and to the wider Athenry community.

During exercise, both children and adults breathe more deeply and at a faster rate, increasing the

amount of air — and therefore pollutants — they inhale. This means that exposure risks are significantly higher during physical activity.

It is deeply concerning that a development could introduce pollution into an environment where families are actively encouraged to exercise and participate in sport.

### **3. Loss of the rural environment we chose**

We moved to Athenry to leave behind the pollution and industrialisation of an urban area.

We chose this town for:

- Clean air
- A safe environment
- A strong community for raising children

The introduction of a fossil fuel industrial facility undermines those values and changes the character of the area in a fundamental way.

### **4. Concerns about water contamination**

We are very concerned about the potential for water contamination arising from this development.

The proposal includes fuel storage and long-term industrial activity, which creates risks such as:

- Accidental spills or leaks of diesel or other substances
- Contaminated runoff during construction
- Long-term risks to groundwater and local water supplies

Our family relies on clean water for drinking, cooking, and everyday use. In addition, my husband is involved in gardening, where clean soil and water are essential.

Any risk to water quality is particularly serious for children, who are more vulnerable to contaminants. It also affects the wider community, including homes, schools, and sports facilities. The EIAR does not provide sufficient reassurance that local water supplies will be fully protected over the lifetime of the development.

### **5. Inadequate community engagement**

The community engagement process was unclear and insufficient and did not present enough time or opportunity for engagement or research. The information provided was vague and did not clearly explain the potential health, environmental, or long-term impacts for the local community.

For a development of this scale, there should have been meaningful engagement that allowed residents to be fully informed. As a parent and member of the Athenry community, I am deeply concerned about the long-term impact this development will have on children, families, and the local environment. We chose to live in Athenry to provide a healthy and safe environment for our children. This proposal puts that at risk.

## **Human Health & Air Pollution**

### **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 raises concerns about ongoing exposure and cumulative health impacts. The EIAR does not provide sufficient information or research in the impact on air quality and pollution.

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.

## **Water & Groundwater**

### **Risk of Groundwater Contamination from Fuel Storage and Handling**

I am concerned about the risks of soil and groundwater contamination from the proposed peaker plant. The development would involve the storage and handling of fuels such as diesel, along with lubricating oils and other chemicals, all of which could pose a risk to the surrounding environment. There is a real possibility that these substances could leak, spill, or enter the ground through surface runoff over the long lifetime of the facility, potentially up to 2050, and even small but repeated incidents could lead to a gradual build-up of pollution in soil and groundwater.

This is particularly worrying because once groundwater becomes contaminated, it is extremely difficult and costly to remediate, and the impacts can persist for decades. It raises serious concerns about the long-term protection of local water resources and the surrounding environment. There remains uncertainty about whether these risks have been adequately managed, raising substantial worries that the project might cause permanent damage to water quality. This would violate the obligations under EU Directive 2000/60/EC, which mandates the protection of water bodies and prohibits their deterioration.

## **Children & Health**

### **Exposure During Daily Activities and School Times**

As a parent in the area, I am concerned that children living nearby or attending local schools will be exposed to higher levels of air pollution when the plant is operating at peak times, particularly when they are outdoors during school drop-off, break times, and after-school activities. During physical activity, children breathe more rapidly, increasing their intake of pollutants and making them more vulnerable to harmful effects. What is especially worrying is the potential for repeated exposure during key stages of development, which could have lasting impacts on their health and wellbeing. Overall, this raises serious concerns as to whether these risks have been fully considered.

## **Visual Impact & Landscape**

### **Impact on Residential Amenity and Long-Term Visual Change**

There are concerns that the proposed development will be clearly visible from surrounding homes, roads, and farmland, resulting in a permanent change to the visual environment. This has the potential to impact residential amenity, reduce enjoyment of the area, and alter the overall character of the landscape, with a large and visually prominent industrial facility introduced into what is currently a rural setting. Given the long operational lifespan of the development, potentially extending to at least 2050, these impacts would be long-lasting and not easily mitigated. The addition of industrial structures, lighting, and ongoing activity represents a significant and enduring change that requires careful consideration.

## **Climate Impact**

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. We object to this proposal as it is not aligned with current climate objectives and with forward thinking governance. Given the climate crisis, emphasis should be placed on low-carbon and renewable options instead of investing in a furthering dependence on fossil fuels; this proposal could delay the shift toward a more sustainable energy system.

The continued development of gas-fired generators, including peaker plants, will result in additional carbon dioxide emissions over the lifetime of the project, raising questions about alignment with national carbon budgets and emissions reduction targets. In this context, there is concern that the proposal may undermine the State's ability to meet its climate commitments and transition to a low-carbon energy system.

## **Community Engagement**

### **Ineffective Engagement and Limited Opportunity to Participate**

There are concerns that, while documentation has been made available, the approach to community engagement has not ensured meaningful or effective participation. Many residents were not directly informed of the development, and engagement appears to have relied on passive methods rather than proactive outreach. Opportunities to engage were limited and may not have reached all affected individuals, particularly those without the time, resources, or technical background to interpret the material. Effective consultation requires early, inclusive, and accessible engagement with the community, and it does not appear that this standard has been met.

## **Planning & Assessment**

### **Complexity of EIA and Barriers to Public Understanding**

There are concerns that, while the development is presented within a single Environmental Impact Assessment Report, the scale, volume, and complexity of the documentation make it extremely difficult for the public to understand the impacts of the project as a whole. The high level of technical detail, combined with the way the information is structured, creates a significant barrier to meaningful engagement.

### **Failure to Properly Assess Cumulative and Long-Term Impacts**

It is our position 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. The long-term nature of the development 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.

This proposal concerns my family greatly. As a family with young children the impact on air and water quality are of particular concern. The lack of rigour in identifying the impact and risks in the EIA is of particular concern. The proposal is not aligned with current climate objectives, the Sustainability Development Goals and with forward thinking governance. In fact, the proposal represents a backwards step: locally, regionally and nationally. Because community engagement has been limited, many individuals have found it challenging to take part in the consultation process. Alternative solutions were not considered or discussed at consultation and because of this the consultation period felt 'performative' at best. As a community our voice is not being heard and our concerns are not being taken seriously. We strongly recommended that planning permission be refused.

Thank you for your time.

Yours Sincerely,

[Signed electronically]

Name: Emma Hogan

Date: 18 April 2026