

OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

Grainne McHugh and Martin Long

4 Gort na Ri

Raheen

Athenry

Galway

H65KW93

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 2.99km from the proposed site of the Cashla Peaker Plant (Athenry).

I am writing this statement to formally record our strong objections to the proposed gas and diesel peaker power plant in Athenry. This statement will outline how this development will directly impact our family and community. We believe the proposed Cashla Peaker Gas and Diesel Plant should not be built for the following reasons:

We are a young couple currently living in Athenry. We have a two year old little girl. Our current house is 2.99km from the nearest boundary point to the peaker plant.

We are planning to spend the rest of our lives in Athenry and the thought of a gas and diesel peaker plant being situated so close to us is honestly so frightening.

The main objections we have to this plant is the documented risk that a plant of this size has on the health

and wellbeing of the local residents. The health impacts it will have on children, elderly, those with underlying conditions could be life altering.

I am worried about the health impacts this will have on our child and potential future children.

Our daughter will be attending primary school in Athenry town and secondary school. As a family we spend a lot of time using town amenities such as pitches, playgrounds and the idea of a gas and diesel plant being that close to our child as she grows up is so at odds with the life we have worked very hard to provide her.

The visual and noise pollution that will come with the plant will have a long lasting and devastating impact on the rural environment.

The increase in heavy traffic would pose safety concerns for our child. We have chosen to live in Athenry as its a safe town to walk around, an increase in the traffic (particularly of large fuel trucks) will put my child as well as the wider population of Athenry and the surrounding areas at risk.

We are in the process of building a house in Athenry and will be situated just 2.7km from the nearest boundary to the plant. This proposed plant will most certainly have a negative impact on property value but more importantly the risk of groundwater contamination, soil contamination, fire or explosion risk associated with fuel storage and gas infrastructure is a serious concern. The plant will be visible from our future home. The prevailing winds that blow from west to east will be bringing any emissions from the plant directly to our home.

This plant that is proposed has been done so with no substantive community consultation. The disregard for local people's health and wellbeing when the known impacts of having a plant such as this near by are well documented.

We urge An Coimisiún Plenála to refuse planning permission for this development.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Operational Uncertainty and Lack of Enforceable Limits

There are concerns that the Environmental Impact Assessment relies on assumed operational scenarios rather than fully assessing worst-case conditions. As the plant will operate in response to electricity demand, there is uncertainty regarding how frequently or intensively it may run, including periods when diesel will be used, potentially resulting in higher emissions than those modelled. Without a thorough evaluation of the worst-case scenario, it is not possible to confidently rule out the possibility of major environmental impacts.

Conclusion

This proposal presents important concerns regarding people, public health, agriculture, and the surrounding environment. Because the documentation is complex and community engagement has been limited, many individuals have found it challenging to take part in the decision-making process. Communities should not face uncertain or potentially substantial environmental risks. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that planning permission be refused.

Yours Sincerely,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The first signature is 'Grainne McHugh' and the second is 'Martin Long'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Name: Grainne McHugh and Martin Long

Date: 23 April 2026