

OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

Jackie Freeney

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Galway

H91W1E2

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 3.85km from the proposed site of the Cashla Peaker Plant (Athenry).

I have grown up a few kilometres from this site in Rathmorrissety, from my home in Derrydonnell. During the 1980's, I purchased land less than 500 metres from this proposed site of the Cashla Peaker Plant in Rathmorrissety. My wife and I built a strong dairy herd that my son now runs with his family, and this has given me tremendous pride and satisfaction. The land I purchased in Rathmorrissety was of a poor agricultural standard and I spend almost 10 years reclaiming it in the 80's & 90's with my young family, to what it is today. I have raised 7 children through our farm, and one of my Children is living 500 metres from this site today, he has 5 children, my grandchildren. I also gifted a site to my oldest daughter living in London, with the plan (my dream) she will also build a home there in the coming years. In total, I have 19 grandchildren, 14 of them are living within 3 km of this proposed site, and this gives me concerns for their health, especially as 3 of my children (all Adults now) have suffered severe Asthma growing up. Although grown up, you never stop worrying about your children. I have a keen interest in Horses and passed this onto my children, I love spending time with my grandchildren at Rathmorrissety Lodge where they bred and train horses, this gives me enormous pride. I would honestly not feel safe spending time there if this peaker plant is running with fumes

emitting out of it. I would also have a concern for the 5 young grandchildren living at this house as they all love the outdoors and sports.

Our farm has provided me a living and supported our family, as a dairy farmer I oversaw a quantum change in how we milk cows since the 70's and regulation I had to adhere to, slurry bans, emission control, fertilizer control to name a few, this could all be undone with 1 hour of this peaker running on 50,000 litres of diesel. My other son now runs the dairy herd, and we have had some wonderful days out as an extended family supporting him as he has won numerous awards for his cattle, both on breeding and milk quality. As recent as November 2025, my son won a national prize for the milk quality produced by his herd, the award was given by Animal Health Ireland. I have seen him work tirelessly as I did, long hours, long days and I have huge concerns for this enterprise. My daily routine includes visiting our different pastures and requires road access to visit them. I note certain road closures will now hamper this for up to 5 months. At my age, this is a very important routine for me as I have a love of all animals. My son's cows and horses, I fear for their health, as it is proved Particulate matter (PM) significantly impacts animal health, causing respiratory diseases, reduced fertility, weakened immunity, and liver damage. What assurances are there to health of those animals, has this been addressed by Bord Gais and assessed properly? As a retired farmer, who has worked extremely hard since my own father was bedridden since I was the age of 13, I have a terrible fear for what this site will do to the local area. Farms, Water ways, Children and elderly health are a concern when thinking about this plant, I take 14 tablets a daily to manage my own health and would have a huge fear of what would be coming out of that chimney.

Public Health Protection

There is significant concern within the community about the potential impact of air pollution from this proposed peaker plant on human health, particularly during periods when it is operating at full capacity and emissions are highest. The possible use of diesel is especially worrying, as it introduces additional harmful pollutants that can travel long distances and accumulate in the environment.

There is ongoing uncertainty concerning the operational frequency of the plant, its emission rates, and the extent of public exposure to pollutants through 2050. Because these issues remain unresolved, it is difficult to verify that all risks have been considered. Given these unknowns, it is wise to adopt a careful strategy to protect public health; unless definitive evidence proves no harm, any dangers to residents should be considered as part of the planning process.

Risk of Groundwater Contamination from Fuel Storage and Handling

I am concerned about the risks of soil and groundwater contamination from this 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. This 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.

Derogation Limits

As a derogation farmer, I operate under strict environmental limits and take compliance very seriously, but there is concern that this proposed development could make it much harder to remain within those limits. Additional environmental pressure from nearby industrial activity, including emissions or contamination linked to diesel use, could increase nitrate levels in the area, which is entirely outside my control. This could result in penalties, reduced stocking levels, or even the loss of derogation status, despite full compliance with regulations, leading to serious financial and operational consequences. Overall, this creates an unfair situation where farmers may be penalised for environmental impacts arising from a development beyond their control.

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.

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.

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.

Conflict with National and EU Climate Targets

There are serious concerns regarding Ireland's legally binding obligations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions under the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021, as well as wider EU climate frameworks. The continued development of gas-fired generation, 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.


Reliance on Regulation Does Not Eliminate Risk

The Environmental Impact Assessment depends on forthcoming regulation, licensing, and monitoring to manage environmental effects. Nonetheless, regulatory oversight cannot entirely remove environmental risks or ensure that actual emissions and impacts will match those projected by models. Uncertainty persists regarding the long-term performance of the development, especially under diverse operational scenarios.

Conclusion

The proposal raises important concerns about environmental protection, public health, agriculture, road safety, and community welfare. Due to uncertainties regarding how often operations would occur, diesel usage, and overall impacts, this development cannot be considered acceptable. A thorough and cautious assessment is needed to ensure that significant environmental effects are avoided, but such an evaluation has not been conducted. Therefore, I recommend that approval for this development be refused.

Yours Sincerely,



Name: Jackie Freney

Date: 23 April 2026