

**OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION**

**Case Reference: 324113**

Karla Byrne

Castlelambert

Athenry

Galway

H65R940

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála

64 Marlborough Street

Dublin 1

D01 V902

Date: 14 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,

I wish to formally object to the proposed development of the open-cycle gas turbine power plant, above ground installation and ancillary development in Athenry.

My family will be living 1.4 km from the boundary of the proposed site, and we are currently in the process of building our home. At the time of seeking planning permission and deciding to settle in Castlelambert, Athenry, this peaker plant was neither a factor nor a

consideration. Living in close proximity to a gas- and diesel-burning plant is not something I ever envisioned when raising a young family. I am deeply concerned about the emissions from such a facility and the potential long-term effects of exposure, particularly on children. I am also concerned about how these emissions may adversely affect the ageing population, especially those with underlying respiratory conditions. Furthermore, I understand that the projected emissions do not account for the additional output during start-up and shut-down phases of operation.

Evidence from the United States shows that peaker plants have frequently been located in lower socio-economic areas, with documented negative health outcomes for surrounding communities. In recent years, many such plants have begun to be decommissioned as part of a broader shift away from fossil fuel dependency. In this context, decision-makers in Ireland should be prioritising greener and more sustainable approaches to ensuring energy security, such as those implemented in Scandinavian countries, rather than commissioning a gas- and diesel-powered plant with an operational lifespan extending to at least 2050. Such a development is difficult to reconcile with Ireland's stated climate objectives and commitments.

It is widely acknowledged that modern new-build homes are designed without chimneys or reliance on fossil fuel burning. In our own case, we made a conscious decision not to include a chimney and to make our home as environmentally friendly as possible. As part of this, we have installed solar panels, a step that has also been taken by many households in the local area. Residents are actively choosing cleaner, greener methods of energy generation. In this context, it seems inconsistent and inequitable that a large industrial chimney would be constructed in such close proximity to these homes.

Another major concern is the proximity of the proposed site to Lisheenkyle National School, which my children attend. Any potential negative impact on air quality in an area where children spend significant time outdoors is deeply concerning. In addition, there is a community playground, running track and all-weather astro facility nearby, all of which are in regular use throughout the year. This development risks sending a conflicting message to children: on the one hand, they are encouraged to value environmental care and sustainability, while on the other, a 30-metre chimney stack is proposed in close proximity to their school and homes. Lisheenkyle National School itself demonstrates a strong commitment to sustainability, with its own wind turbine and five Green Flags under the Green-Schools programme. My six-year-old daughter recently asked, "Why don't they use a windmill instead?" While an innocent remark, it reflects a clear understanding—even among young children—of the importance of clean energy. As a primary school teacher, I

believe developments such as this undermine the environmental values we are striving to instil in the next generation.

There is no doubt that this development would represent a significant visual intrusion on the local landscape, with its chimney stack, fuel storage tanks, masts and 24-hour floodlighting. It is difficult to see how such a power plant could be considered compatible with the character of the 'Fields of Athenry'. Having lived away from Galway for many years, I have often heard people speak of their admiration for the region, particularly its green fields and distinctive stone walls. While the local area has experienced considerable change in recent years—most notably with the development of the M6/M18 motorway interchange in the Lisheenkyle area—and while Athenry continues to expand rapidly, these changes have also brought positive developments. The presence of nearby solar farms further demonstrates the community's openness to progress and sustainable energy. However, this proposed peaker plant would introduce an excessively industrial visual impact into a predominantly rural setting. As a heritage town with growing tourism, Athenry's character is an important asset, and it would be regrettable for such a development to detract from the landscape experienced by those travelling to and from Galway.

The final point I wish to raise is that the local road network is not suitable for a development of this scale. The construction phase in particular would likely result in significant disruption to local traffic, including road closures and delays, especially during school drop-off and collection times. In our own case, we travel to and from the school multiple times each day, and any required detours would add considerable difficulty. The L3103 is not designed to accommodate heavy goods vehicle traffic; as it currently stands, when two cars meet, one often has to pull in to allow the other to pass. This further underlines the unsuitability of the site for the proposed peaker plant.

In conclusion, I strongly urge that this proposed development be reconsidered in light of the serious concerns outlined above. The potential risks to public health, the negative environmental impact, the unsuitability of the location so close to homes and a primary school, and the incompatibility with both local infrastructure and Ireland's broader climate commitments all point to this being an inappropriate site for such a project. Our community has shown a clear willingness to embrace sustainable and environmentally responsible solutions, and it is only fair that future developments reflect those same values. I respectfully ask that the voices of local residents be given due consideration and that a more suitable, forward-thinking alternative be pursued.

Yours sincerely,

Karla Byrne

14/04/26