

OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

Krista Olson
Knocknacreeva
Athenry
Galway

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

Date: 10 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 am writing to object to the proposed Cashla Peaker Plant because of the serious impact it would have on my family, our home, and our future in this area.

My foremost concern is exposure to air pollution. Our home uses a heat rec continuously draws outside air into the house. This system is essential for indoor air quality, but it also means that any increase in emissions in the surrounding area will be brought directly inside our living space. The proposed plant would emit pollutants associated with gas combustion and diesel testing, and I am deeply worried about what this means for the air my family breathes on a daily basis.

This concern is heightened by the fact that one of our children has asthma. Even small increases in air pollution can trigger symptoms and worsen respiratory health. As parents, we already manage this condition carefully. The idea of introducing an industrial pollution source nearby, with guaranteed annual diesel burning, places an unnecessary and avoidable burden on our child's health and wellbeing.

The visual impact of the proposed development is another major concern. The plant, its stack and associated infrastructure would be highly visible from our home, fundamentally changing the rural character of where we live. In addition, industrial lighting from the site will affect our home, particularly at night, reducing amenity and altering the quiet, dark rural environment we currently value.

From a practical perspective, traffic disruption and road closures during construction would severely affect

our daily lives. Our commute to work and the school run rely on local roads that are not designed for sustained heavy traffic or prolonged closures. This disruption would add significant time, stress, and safety concerns to everyday routines.

As a farming family, I am also worried about the impact on livestock and agricultural activity. Increased construction traffic, noise, and emissions can affect animal welfare. Seasonal farm operations, such as silage and hay movements, depend on accessible rural roads. Prolonged closures or congestion would directly interfere with farming operations and livelihoods.

Looking to the future, I am concerned about land value and planning implications. The presence of major industrial infrastructure adjacent to our land may reduce its value and could restrict future planning permission, including the possibility of one of our children building a home on family land.

Finally, the fire and safety risk associated with storing and burning large volumes of diesel fuel so close to homes raises serious concerns. While risks may be described as managed, they are not risks that should be placed in a rural family setting.

For all these reasons — health, safety, farming, traffic, visual impact, and the future of our family here — I strongly object to the Cashla Peaker Plant.

Human Health & Air Pollution

High-Intensity Emissions and Diesel Impacts

Air pollutants, including nitrogen oxides (NOx) and fine particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10), are well established as contributors to respiratory irritation, reduced air quality, and long-term environmental degradation. A peaker plant operates intermittently but at very high output during periods of peak electricity demand, resulting in concentrated bursts of emissions, particularly during start-up and ramp-up phases. Where diesel is used as a backup fuel or during start-up, emission levels may be significantly higher, as diesel combustion produces elevated levels of nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, particulate matter, and other combustion-related pollutants compared to gas. These pollutants can penetrate deep into the lungs and bloodstream, contributing to respiratory and cardiovascular illness. Vulnerable groups, including children, older people, and individuals with pre-existing respiratory conditions, are particularly at risk. Fine particulate matter can travel significant distances and accumulate over time, extending the area and duration of exposure. This creates a risk of both immediate and long-term health impacts and raises concerns under Directive 2008/50/EC on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe.

Water & Groundwater

Long-Term Accumulation of Pollutants and Chemical Residues

The presence of diesel storage tanks, hardstanding areas, drainage systems, and associated infrastructure increases the risk of pollutants entering soil and groundwater over time (until at least 2050). Hydrocarbons (pollutants from gas, diesel) and chemical residues may accumulate gradually, particularly where there are repeated minor leaks, operational losses, or accidental discharges. These impacts may not be immediately visible but can result in long-term degradation of groundwater quality and soil health, affecting both environmental protection and agricultural productivity.

Farming & Agricultural Impact

Protection of Agricultural Livelihoods

Farmers are already subject to strict environmental regulation and are required to meet high standards of environmental protection. It is not acceptable that industrial development, including diesel use and associated

emissions (until at least 2050), could introduce environmental risks that undermine compliance, damage land quality, or threaten farming livelihoods. Farmers should not be placed in a position where they are penalised for environmental impacts arising from activities outside their control.

Children & Health

Vulnerability to Diesel-Related Air Pollution

Children are particularly vulnerable to air pollutants due to their developing lungs, higher breathing rates relative to body size, and increased time spent outdoors. The intermittent high-output operation of a peaker plant, particularly where diesel is used during start-up or peak demand periods, may expose children to short but concentrated bursts of pollution. Diesel emissions contain fine particulate matter and nitrogen oxides that can penetrate deep into the lungs, potentially affecting lung development and increasing the risk of respiratory illness.

Local Roads, Safety & Schools

School Safety and Peak-Time Risks

Positioning the site entrance at this location on the L3103 introduces extreme risk to road users. This treacherous section of the road is entirely devoid of a hard shoulder and is physically too narrow for two HGVs to pass one another safely. Furthermore, severely compromised sightlines caused by blind dips and sharp corners make this access point highly perilous. It is imperative that these severe, compounding traffic hazards are urgently mitigated before any development is permitted.

Additional traffic associated with the development may significantly increase risks near schools and residential areas, particularly during peak periods such as morning and afternoon school times. The interaction between heavy vehicles, farm machinery and local traffic creates a heightened risk of accidents, particularly for children and other vulnerable road users. This is especially concerning given the existing constraints and hazards on this section of road.

Fire Safety & Major Accident Hazards

Proximity and Worst-Case Scenario Risks

The proposed site is in proximity to residential dwellings, agricultural lands, and local infrastructure. In this context, even a low-probability but high-impact event could result in serious consequences for public safety, property, and rural economic activity. The Environmental Impact Assessment does not clearly demonstrate that worst-case scenarios, including fire spread, explosion impact zones, and fuel ignition events, have been fully assessed. Without this information, the true scale and severity of potential impacts remain uncertain.

Visual Impact & Landscape

Impact on Residential Amenity and Long-Term Visual Change

The development will be visible from surrounding homes, roads, and farmland, resulting in a permanent change to the visual environment. This may affect residential amenity, enjoyment of the area, and the overall character of the landscape. Given the long operational lifespan of the development (until at least 2050), these visual impacts will be enduring and cannot be easily mitigated. The introduction of industrial lighting, structures, and activity into a rural setting represents a long-term change that should be carefully considered.

Climate Impact

Availability of Cleaner Alternatives

Cleaner and more sustainable alternatives to fossil fuel generation are available, including renewable energy, energy storage, demand response, and grid flexibility measures. The development of new gas infrastructure may reduce the urgency to deploy these solutions. In the context of the climate crisis, priority should be given to low-carbon alternatives rather than extending reliance on fossil fuels.

Community Engagement

Lack of Clear, Accessible, and Effective Communication

There appears to have been insufficient and ineffective community engagement in relation to this project. Many residents did not receive any direct communication or notification regarding the development. While some individuals report receiving a flyer or attending an information event, the material provided was highly technical and difficult to understand without specialist knowledge. This significantly limits meaningful participation. Effective consultation requires that information is accessible, clearly explained, and actively communicated to all affected members of the community. In this case, the level of detail and technical complexity of the documentation creates a barrier to understanding, meaning that many people are unable to fully assess the potential impacts of the development.

Planning & Assessment

Failure to Properly Assess Cumulative and Long-Term Impacts

The Environmental Impact Assessment does not adequately assess cumulative impacts, including the combined effects of emissions, noise, traffic, diesel use, and environmental disturbance over time. These impacts may interact and intensify, particularly during peak operational periods. The long-term (until at least 2050) and cumulative nature of these impacts has not been fully considered, limiting the ability to understand the true environmental burden of the development. This represents a significant gap in the assessment.

Lack of Worst-Case Assessment

The Environmental Impact Assessment relies on assumed operational scenarios rather than assessing worst-case conditions. Given that the plant will operate in response to electricity demand, there is no certainty regarding how frequently or intensively it will operate. This includes diesel use, which may result in higher emissions than those modelled. In the absence of a robust worst-case assessment, it cannot be concluded that significant environmental impacts will not occur.

Protection of Community, Health, and Environment

This proposal raises real and valid concerns for people, public health, agriculture, and the local environment. The complexity of the documentation and limitations in community engagement have made it difficult for the public to fully participate in the decision-making process. Communities should not be exposed to uncertain and potentially significant environmental impacts. I strongly urge that planning permission is not granted.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Krista Olson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "O" and a long, sweeping tail.

Name: Krista Olson

Date: 10 April 2026