OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

Mark & Sinead Shaw

Castlelambert

Athenry

Galway

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála

64 Marlborough Street

Dublin 1

D01 V902

Date: 08 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 950m from the proposed site of the Cashla Peaker Plant (Athenry).

We have been living in our home with our 2 children since 2007. Having moved from the UK, we moved to the West of Ireland to raise our children in a safe clean environment in the countryside. Having seen overdevelopment and overpopulation in the UK, this was a big upheaval for us and now we are seeing history being to repeat itself in the Fields of Athenry, which is very disappointing. At our home 3 years ago, we invested in Solar Panels (PV) in an effort to support the Green climate initiates and reduce our reliance on Fossil fuel electricity coming from the Grid. Over the past 3 years, we have become net Exports of electricity where previously we were 100% reliant on power coming from the grid. This is extremely disappointing and devalues our investment and reports have shown, particles coming from the emission stack actually effects the life and performance from PV panes.
Additionally, the visual effect of a 30M chimney emitting pollutions on my property and my family is not something I would have had in mind moving to the countryside of Castlelambert.

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

Dependence on Groundwater for Domestic and Agricultural Use

This area relies heavily on clean groundwater for domestic consumption, livestock watering, and agricultural production. The introduction of industrial activity involving fuel storage and handling creates an ongoing risk to this essential resource. Any contamination could have serious and long-lasting consequences, including impacts on drinking water quality, livestock health, and agricultural productivity. The potential for irreversible damage to groundwater resources raises serious concerns regarding the suitability of this development.

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

Increased Heavy Traffic and Diesel Transport Risks

The placement of the proposed site entrance on the L3103 raises severe safety concerns due to the

inherently hazardous nature of this specific stretch of road. The carriageway is critically narrow, struggling to safely accommodate two passing Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs), and completely lacks a hard shoulder to allow for any margin of error. Compounding these dangers are the presence of blind dips and corners, which significantly reduce visibility and sightlines for all road users. These critical safety deficiencies create an unacceptable traffic hazard that must be comprehensively addressed.

In addition, the proposed development will result in increased traffic on local roads, including heavy goods vehicles, construction traffic, and fuel deliveries such as diesel tankers. These roads are rural in nature, often narrow with limited visibility, and are already used by residents, agricultural machinery, and school-related traffic. The introduction of additional heavy vehicle movements significantly increases the risk of collisions and creates a more hazardous environment for all road users.

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.

Planning & Assessment

Complexity of EIAR and Barriers to Public Understanding

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 project in its entirety. The level of technical detail, combined with the structure of the documentation, creates a barrier to meaningful engagement. Although not formally divided across separate EIARs, the practical effect is like fragmentation, as the public cannot easily assess cumulative impacts across all aspects of the development. This raises concerns regarding transparency and accessibility in the planning process.

Operational Uncertainty and Lack of Enforceable Limits

There is no clear or enforceable limit on how often or how long the plant will operate. As a demand-led facility, operation may be more frequent or prolonged than assumed in the Environmental Impact Assessment. This includes diesel use during start-up and operation. If this occurs, impacts such as emissions, noise, and traffic may be significantly greater than predicted. This uncertainty raises concerns regarding the accuracy of the assessment.

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,

Mark and Sinead Shaw

Name: Mark & Sinead Shaw
Date: 08 April 2026