

OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

Michael Connell

Barretspark

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 2.98km from the proposed site of the Cashla Peaker Plant (Athenry).

My biggest concern is a resident living in the area is the pollution that's going to come from the peaker plant for people with asthma and health conditions like that I have a health and safety concern regarding the amount of diesel that's been stored on site and if there was ever an explosion. The amount of stuff put up into the atmosphere and the concerns this will bring to the people in the area. I am also a farmer with approx 60 cattle on my farm. As a farmer we have had to adhere to a lot of guidelines over the last 5 years where we have had to work very hard to reduce emissions. I have a water well on my lands also, this water was tested in Galway Regional hospital lab, and I have a report that this is of the highest quality standard, the second-best quality water in Ireland. I have huge concern and anxiety that this precious commodity (water) will become polluted over time if this Peaker plant is given the go ahead.

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

Risk of Groundwater Contamination from Fuel Storage and Handling

A peaker plant requires the storage and handling of fuels such as diesel, lubricating oils, and other chemical substances, all of which present potential contamination risks. These substances may enter the ground through leaks, spills, or contaminated surface runoff, particularly over the long operational lifespan of the facility (until at least 2050). Even minor but repeated incidents can lead to the gradual accumulation of pollutants in soil and groundwater. Once groundwater contamination occurs, it is extremely difficult and costly to remediate, and impacts can persist for decades. This raises serious concerns under Directive 2000/60/EC, which requires the protection of water bodies and the prevention of deterioration in water quality.

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.

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

Major Accident Hazard and Regulatory Concerns

The operation of a gas-fired peaker plant, combined with on-site fuel storage, gives rise to potential major accident hazards. Under the Seveso III Directive, developments involving dangerous substances must demonstrate that risks are properly identified, assessed, and minimised. It is not clear that the likelihood and consequences of major accident scenarios, including fire, explosion, and fuel release, have been fully assessed or adequately demonstrated.

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.

Precautionary Refusal Based on Uncertainty and Risk

The proposal raises significant concerns in relation to environmental protection, public health, farming, road safety, and community wellbeing. The level of uncertainty regarding operational frequency, diesel use, and cumulative impacts means that the development cannot be considered acceptable. In the absence of a complete and precautionary assessment, it cannot be concluded that significant environmental effects will not arise. I respectfully request that permission for this development be refused.

Yours Sincerely,

Michael Connell

Name: Michael Connell

Date: 08 April 2026