

# **OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION**

**Case Reference: 324113**

Niamh McDermot

39 Parklands

Athenry

Galway

H65A275

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála

64 Marlborough Street

Dublin 1

D01 V902

Date: 17 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 3.42km from the proposed site of the Cashla Peaker Plant (Athenry).

I wish to make an observation in relation to the proposed Cashla Peaker Power Plant development near Athenry.

I have grown up in this area, and my family home is located in Derrydonnell North, approximately 3km from the proposed development. I am deeply concerned about the potential impact of emissions from this plant on the health of my family, particularly my father, who has experienced respiratory health difficulties. These issues are known to be exacerbated by poor air quality, and the introduction of a gas-fired power plant in such close proximity raises serious concerns for his wellbeing.

In addition, I have recently purchased a home in Athenry town, approximately 4km from the proposed site, and I intend to live and contribute to this community long-term. As a future permanent resident, I am concerned about the cumulative impact of emissions on air quality in the wider Athenry area.

I am also a primary school teacher at Lisheenkyle National School, located approximately 3km from the proposed development. In my professional capacity, I am extremely concerned about the potential impact of emissions on the health and wellbeing of children in the community. Children are particularly vulnerable to air

pollution, and any deterioration in air quality could have long-term consequences for their respiratory health and overall development.

I am concerned that the Environmental Impact Assessment does not sufficiently address the cumulative and long-term exposure risks for nearby residents and sensitive groups, including children and individuals with pre-existing respiratory conditions.

I believe the location of this development is inappropriate given its proximity to homes, schools, and the wider community. The potential risks to human health, particularly for vulnerable individuals such as children and those with pre-existing respiratory conditions, have not been adequately addressed.

Given these concerns, I respectfully request that permission for this development be refused.

### **High-Intensity Emissions and Diesel Impacts**

I am concerned about the potential impact of air pollution from this proposed development. Pollutants such as nitrogen oxides (NOx) and fine particulate matter (PM2.5 and PM10) are known to damage air quality, irritate the lungs, and contribute to long-term harm to both human health and the environment. Although the plant would not operate continuously, it may run at extremely high output when required, leading to short but intense bursts of pollution, particularly during start-up and peak demand periods. The possible use of diesel during these times is especially worrying, as it produces higher levels of harmful emissions, including nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide, and particulate matter.

These pollutants can penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream, increasing the risk of respiratory and cardiovascular illness, particularly for vulnerable groups such as children, older people, and those with existing health conditions. Fine particulate matter can also travel long distances and accumulate over time, meaning the impacts may extend beyond the immediate area and persist in the long term. In summary, I have reservations regarding the thoroughness of the assessment of these emissions. This issue presents significant implications for public health and environmental protection, especially in relation to EU air quality standards established by Directive 2008/50/EC.

### **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.

### **School Safety and Peak-Time Risks**

As someone who lives locally and extensively uses this road, I am concerned about the proposed location of the site entrance on the L3103. This section of road is already extremely dangerous, as it is narrow, has no hard shoulder, and does not provide sufficient space for two heavy goods vehicles to pass safely. Visibility is also poor due to blind dips and sharp bends, meaning drivers often cannot see oncoming traffic in time, and introducing a site entrance at this location would significantly increase the risk to all road users.

There are strong concerns that adding traffic—particularly large vehicles—would worsen these existing

hazards, especially near homes and schools during busy periods such as morning and afternoon times. The interaction between heavy goods vehicles, farm machinery, and everyday local traffic creates a higher risk of accidents, particularly for children and other vulnerable road users. Overall, this is not a suitable location for this level of traffic, and the associated safety risks for the community are a critical concern.

### **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**

This proposal presents important concerns regarding people, public health, agriculture, and the surrounding environment. Because the documentation is complex and community engagement has been limited, many individuals have found it challenging to take part in the decision-making process. Communities should not face uncertain or potentially substantial environmental risks. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that planning permission be refused.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Niamh McDermot". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Name: Niamh McDermot

Date: 17 April 2026