

# OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

Paul & Niamh Eagle

Cloran

Athenry

Galway

H65W982

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála

64 Marlborough Street

Dublin 1

D01 V902

Date: 21 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 1.99km from the proposed site of the Cashla Peaker Plant (Athenry).

To whom it may concern,

We are writing to formally object to the proposed peaker plant development near Athenry.

We are a newly married couple living in the area, building our future here, and planning to raise our family in this community. I have also lived in Athenry all my life, and my roots, family, and future are firmly grounded here. This is not just a planning application to us. It is a direct threat to our long term health, our future children, and the environmental integrity of Athenry.

At the core of our objection is human health.

Peaker plants operate by burning fossil fuels such as gas and diesel, releasing emissions into the air during operation. These emissions are known to contribute to respiratory illness, cardiovascular problems, and long

term health complications. There is also strong international evidence linking air pollution from fossil fuel combustion including nitrogen oxides (NOx), particulate matter, and other pollutants, to an increased risk of cancer, particularly lung cancer. While such plants may not run continuously, the nature of their operation, high intensity output during peak demand, means emissions are concentrated and impactful.

This is not theoretical for us.

I personally suffered with severe asthma throughout childhood, along with ongoing respiratory issues. I understand firsthand the impact that poor air quality has on daily life, restricted breathing, hospital visits, reliance on medication, and long term vulnerability. It is simply not acceptable to introduce a known source of air pollution into an area where families, children, and vulnerable individuals live.

In addition, this proposal has a direct and immediate impact on our close family. My sister, her husband, and their two young children, aged just 3 and a half years and 1 and a half years old, live only a few hundred metres from the proposed site. At such a critical stage of development, children are particularly vulnerable to air pollution, with well established links to respiratory issues and long term health effects. The introduction of an emissions generating facility in such close proximity to their home raises serious concerns about their health, safety, and overall quality of life. This is not a distant or abstract impact, it is a direct risk to young children growing up within the immediate vicinity of this development.

We are deeply concerned about what this means not only for us now, but for our future children. Clean air is not a luxury. It is a basic requirement for healthy development. Introducing industrial emissions into a rural community fundamentally undermines that.

Beyond our personal situation, the broader implications are serious:

**Public Health Risk:** Increased air pollution affecting children, the elderly, and those with asthma or heart conditions, with established links to serious long term illnesses including cancer.

**Environmental Impact:** Emissions affecting local biodiversity, farmland, and the wider ecosystem.

**Agricultural Threat:** Farming in the area depends on clean air, clean water, and an unspoiled environment, this development directly conflicts with that.

**Water Safety Concerns:** Any risk to groundwater or local water sources is unacceptable given the reliance of homes and farms on these supplies.

**Road Safety & Infrastructure:** Increased traffic from construction and operation on rural roads not designed for heavy use.

**Fire & Explosion Risk:** The storage and use of fuels introduces a level of risk that local emergency services may not be adequately resourced to handle.

**Visual & Heritage Impact:** A large scale industrial facility has no place in a historic rural town like Athenry, where landscape and character are central to its identity.

There is also a fundamental issue of community engagement. Many residents were not properly informed about this development until recently. For a project of this scale and consequence, that is simply not good enough.

Athenry is not an industrial zone. It is a heritage town, a farming community, and a place where people

choose to live for quality of life. This proposal is incompatible with that reality.

Yes, energy security is important, but it cannot come at the cost of public health, environmental safety, and the wellbeing of current and future generations. There are cleaner, more sustainable alternatives that do not place communities like ours at risk.

This decision will have long term consequences. Once built, the damage whether environmental, health related, or social, cannot simply be undone.

We strongly urge that this application be refused.

This is about protecting not just our home, but the future of Athenry.

### **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 (NO<sub>x</sub>) and fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>) 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.

### **Protection of Agricultural Livelihoods**

Farmers work diligently within stringent environmental guidelines and uphold rigorous standards of environmental stewardship, fully recognising the importance of these obligations. There is concern that an industrial development of this nature—particularly one involving diesel use and long-term emissions, potentially until 2050—could introduce risks that undermine that work by affecting land quality and increasing environmental pressures. This situation presents significant challenges for farmers, who should not face penalties for problems caused by factors beyond their control. There are concerns that agricultural risks remain overlooked and the development may affect local farming long-term.

### **Cumulative Impact on Child's Development**

As a parent in the area, I am concerned about the impact of fine particulate matter over time. These pollutants can travel long distances and accumulate, meaning children may be exposed not only during peak pollution events but also through ongoing low-level exposure. The cumulative effect of this is particularly worrying, as repeated exposure during key stages of growth and development could have lasting impacts on lung development and overall health. From a community perspective, this raises serious concerns about the long-term safety of this development for children, and it is not clear that these cumulative impacts have been

fully considered.

### **Availability of Cleaner Alternatives**

Although cleaner and more sustainable alternatives to fossil fuels—such as renewable energy, energy storage, demand response, and grid flexibility measures—are available, building new gas infrastructure may lessen the urgency to invest in these solutions. Given the climate crisis, emphasis should be placed on low-carbon and renewable options instead of furthering dependence on fossil fuels; this proposal could delay the shift toward a more sustainable energy system.

### **Operational Uncertainty and Lack of Enforceable Limits**

There are concerns that the Environmental Impact Assessment relies on assumed operational scenarios rather than fully assessing worst-case conditions. As the plant will operate in response to electricity demand, there is uncertainty regarding how frequently or intensively it may run, including periods when diesel will be used, potentially resulting in higher emissions than those modelled. Without a thorough evaluation of the worst-case scenario, it is not possible to confidently rule out the possibility of major environmental impacts.

### **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,

Paul & Niamh Eagle

Name: Paul & Niamh Eagle

Date: 21 April 2026