

OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

Ronan Coffey
Derrydonnellmore
Athenry
Galway
Galway
H65E957

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

Date: 24 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 formally object to the construction of the proposed peaker energy plant on the grounds of its detrimental environmental impact.

The plant would increase local air pollution by emitting significant quantities of nitrogen oxides and sulfur dioxide contributing to poor air quality. The plants reliance on fossil fuels combustion would add green house gas emissions at a time when our community and country should be committing with more vigour to meeting our climate change mitigation targets.

Given the availability of cleaner renewable alternatives for providing peak load power such as wind and solar I respectfully request that the project be reconsidered in favour of sustsinable solutions that protect our environment, public health and climate commitments.

Thank you for your commitment to this critical matter.

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_x) and fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5} 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.

Short-Term Exposure

I'm concerned that emissions from the planned peaker plant could impact the environment, particularly if diesel is used at start-up or during periods of high demand. Diesel exhaust releases various dangerous pollutants, such as nitrogen oxides, fine particles, and other toxic chemicals. These substances are associated with respiratory issues, impaired lung function, and heart disease. What is especially worrying is that these emissions may occur in short but intense bursts rather than in a steady, predictable way, particularly during start-up and peak operation. The average-based modelling used in the assessment seems not to capture this kind of real-world operation completely.

There are worries that residents in nearby areas might face greater pollution levels than expected, especially when the weather is calm and pollutants linger instead of spreading out. There is considerable uncertainty regarding how accurate these air quality forecasts are, which makes it hard for the community to be sure that both public health and the environment are truly safeguarded.

Cumulative Health Impacts Over Time

I have serious concerns about how this proposed peaker plant would operate over time. Although it would run intermittently, it would do so at extremely high intensity, and the potential use of diesel adds to these concerns, as it could result in repeated short-term spikes in air pollution. While individual emission events may be brief, the fact that they could occur repeatedly over many years—potentially up to 2050—raises concerns about ongoing exposure and cumulative health impacts.

Pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and fine particulate matter are known to worsen asthma, trigger respiratory symptoms, and contribute to long-term conditions including chronic respiratory and cardiovascular disease. This is particularly concerning for nearby residents, especially vulnerable groups such as children, older people, and those with existing health conditions. There is still uncertainty regarding whether the lasting and cumulative effects of these emissions have been fully studied, which leads to real concerns that continued exposure during the development's lifetime could affect public health and wellbeing in the future.

Long-Term Accumulation of Pollutants and Chemical Residues

I am particularly concerned about the risk of pollution to soil and groundwater from this proposed development. The inclusion of diesel storage tanks, hardstanding areas, drainage systems, and other infrastructure increases the likelihood that pollutants could gradually enter the ground over time, potentially up

to 2050. Substances such as hydrocarbons from diesel and gas, along with other chemical residues, may build up slowly, particularly where there are repeated small leaks, routine operational losses, or occasional spills, with impacts accumulating over time.

What is especially worrying is that this type of pollution may not be immediately visible but could result in long-term damage to groundwater quality and soil health. This has implications not only for environmental protection but also for local agriculture, which depends on clean soil and water. Overall, there is significant concern that these long-term and cumulative risks have not been fully addressed and could have lasting consequences for the local environment and livelihoods.

Dependence on Groundwater for Domestic and Agricultural Use

I am concerned about the potential risk to groundwater from this proposed development. The area depends heavily on clean groundwater for essential needs, including drinking water, farming, and livestock, making it a vital resource for the community. The introduction of an industrial facility involving the storage and handling of fuels creates an ongoing risk to this resource, and any contamination, even if accidental, could have serious and long-lasting consequences for water quality, livestock health, and agricultural productivity.

What is particularly worrying is that once groundwater becomes contaminated, the damage can be extremely difficult—if not impossible—to reverse. This raises serious concerns about whether this type of development is appropriate for this location. To sum up, significant worries persist that the dangers to groundwater have not been fully assessed, and any consequences could be permanent.

Vulnerability to Diesel-Related Air Pollution

As a parent living in the area, I am particularly concerned about the potential impact of this proposed development on children's health. Children are particularly susceptible to the effects of air pollution because of their developing respiratory systems, elevated respiration rates, and greater exposure to outdoor environments. Although peaker plants do not function on a continuous basis, they can produce significantly elevated levels of output during initial start-up phases or times of peak energy demand. This may lead to brief yet significant emissions of pollutants, particularly when diesel fuel is utilised. These emissions contain fine particles and nitrogen oxides that can penetrate deep into the lungs, which may affect lung development and increase the risk of respiratory conditions such as asthma. Overall, this raises serious concerns about the health and wellbeing of children and whether these risks have been fully considered.

Unsuitability of Rural Road Network

There are serious concerns about the proposed site entrance on the L3103, which is an exceptionally dangerous stretch of road where introducing an access point would create an unacceptable level of risk. The road is extremely narrow and cannot safely accommodate two heavy goods vehicles passing at the same time, there is no hard shoulder to allow for safe manoeuvring or recovery, and visibility is severely limited due to blind dips and sharp corners. These are significant existing hazards that already pose a real danger to road users, and the addition of a site entrance would further increase that risk.

There are also concerns regarding the suitability of local roads for this type of traffic. Rural roads are not built to support continuous industrial activity, and when heavy trucks, farm equipment, and regular local vehicles share these routes, it often leads to difficult and dangerous traffic conditions. The introduction of additional industrial traffic, including construction vehicles and diesel deliveries, would further increase the risk and make these roads more dangerous for all users.

Risk of Fire and Explosion from Fuel Storage

As someone living in the area, I am very concerned about the safety risks associated with this proposed development. The project involves the storage, handling, and use of highly flammable fuels such as natural gas and diesel, which carry an inherent risk of fire or explosion. In the event of equipment malfunctions, leaks, or operational challenges, these substances may pose an ignition risk, potentially resulting in significant incidents. Considering the intermittent yet high-intensity operation of a peaker plant, the likelihood of such occurrences warrants careful consideration.

The potential consequences are particularly worrying, as any incident could have serious impacts on nearby homes, residents, farmland, and livestock. This raises significant concerns about whether the risks have been fully assessed and whether this location is appropriate for a development of this nature.

Lock-in of Fossil Fuel Infrastructure

There are serious concerns that the proposed development represents new fossil fuel infrastructure with a long operational lifespan, potentially extending to at least 2050, which risks locking in carbon-intensive energy generation at a time when national and EU policy require rapid decarbonisation. Investment in gas-fired infrastructure of this nature may delay or displace the development of renewable energy and energy storage solutions, leading to continued reliance on fossil fuels over the long term. Overall, there is concern that the proposal is not aligned with current climate objectives and may undermine the transition to a low-carbon energy system.

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.

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

Due to the concerns mentioned—such as uncertainty about how often operations will occur, overall environmental impacts, and risks related to diesel use—this project is not viewed as proper or sustainable development. There has also been insufficient consideration of the possibility that the actual impacts could be greater than those evaluated. Therefore, we respectfully ask that approval for this application be refused.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ronan Coffey". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent 'R' and 'C'.

Name: Ronan Coffey

Date: 24 April 2026