

OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

Ronan Mullins

Rahard

Athenry

Galway

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála

64 Marlborough Street

Dublin 1

D01 V902

Date: 10 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 5.08km from the proposed site of the Cashla Peaker Plant (Athenry).

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a local resident in Athenry. My main concern as I will elaborate below, are health concerns for the people of Athenry, especially young children. The plant will be close to two secondary schools and five primary schools all of which will have full classrooms and children playing outside breathing in the fumes from the plant.

The local landscape will be seriously affected by the visual impact of this huge chimney and industrial plant.

The local environment and rural landscape will be always affected by this.

Human Health & Air Pollution

Cumulative Health Impacts Over Time

The intermittent but high-intensity operation of a peaker plant, combined with periodic diesel use, can result in repeated short-term spikes in air pollution. While individual emission events may appear limited in duration, repeated exposure over time (until at least 2050) creates a cumulative health burden. Pollutants such as nitrogen oxides and fine particulate matter can worsen asthma, trigger respiratory symptoms, and contribute to long-term health impacts, including chronic respiratory disease and cardiovascular conditions. The cumulative effect of these emissions over the operational lifespan of the development has not been fully assessed, particularly in relation to long-term exposure pathways and sensitive populations living nearby.

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

Cumulative Impact on Child's Development

Fine particulate matter can travel significant distances and accumulate over time, meaning children may be exposed not only during peak events but also through repeated low-level exposure. The cumulative effect of these exposures is particularly concerning during key stages of physical development, where long-term impacts on lung function and overall health may arise.

Local Roads, Safety & Schools

School Safety and Peak-Time Risks

Positioning the site entrance at this location on the L3103 introduces extreme risk to road users. This treacherous section of the road is entirely devoid of a hard shoulder and is physically too narrow for two HGVs to pass one another safely. Furthermore, severely compromised sightlines caused by blind dips and sharp corners make this access point highly perilous. It is imperative that these severe, compounding traffic hazards are urgently mitigated before any development is permitted.

Additional traffic associated with the development may significantly increase risks near schools and residential areas, particularly during peak periods such as morning and afternoon school times. The interaction between heavy vehicles, farm machinery and local traffic creates a heightened risk of accidents, particularly for children and other vulnerable road users. This is especially concerning given the existing

constraints and hazards on this section of road.

Fire Safety & Major Accident Hazards

Emergency Response and Adequacy of Assessment

There is insufficient information provided regarding emergency response planning, including evacuation procedures, coordination with local emergency services, and the ability to respond effectively to a major incident. This is of particular concern in a rural area with constrained road infrastructure. Taken together, the absence of detailed worst-case analysis and robust emergency planning means it has not been demonstrated that risks to human health and safety have been reduced to an acceptable level.

Visual Impact & Landscape

Landscape Character and Policy Conflict

The proposed development represents a significant industrial intrusion into a rural landscape characterised by agricultural land use and dispersed residential development. The scale, height, and industrial nature of the plant, including associated infrastructure such as buildings, stacks, lighting, and fuel storage, will fundamentally alter the character of the area. This type of development does not appear consistent with the existing landscape or its capacity to absorb such change. This raises concerns under Policies LCM1, LCM2 and LCM3 of the Galway County Development Plan, which require the protection of landscape character, sensitivity, and capacity, and seek to ensure that development is appropriate to its setting.

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.

Community Engagement

Lack of Clear, Accessible, and Effective Communication

There appears to have been insufficient and ineffective community engagement in relation to this project. Many residents did not receive any direct communication or notification regarding the development. While some individuals report receiving a flyer or attending an information event, the material provided was highly technical and difficult to understand without specialist knowledge. This significantly limits meaningful participation. Effective consultation requires that information is accessible, clearly explained, and actively communicated to all affected members of the community. In this case, the level of detail and technical complexity of the documentation creates a barrier to understanding, meaning that many people are unable to fully assess the potential impacts of the development.

Planning & Assessment

Failure to Properly Assess Cumulative and Long-Term Impacts

The Environmental Impact Assessment does not adequately assess cumulative impacts, including the combined effects of emissions, noise, traffic, diesel use, and environmental disturbance over time. These impacts may interact and intensify, particularly during peak operational periods. The long-term (until at least

2050) and cumulative nature of these impacts has not been fully considered, limiting the ability to understand the true environmental burden of the development. This represents a significant gap in the assessment.

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.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ronan Mullins', with a stylized flourish above the name.

Name: Ronan Mullins

Date: 10 April 2026