OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

Siobhan Morrissey

Castlelambert

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,

I am submitting this objection because I am deeply concerned about how the proposed Cashla Peaker Plant would affect the health, safety, and day to day life of my family and our community.

My primary concern is public health, particularly the release of pollutants from the plant. Emissions from gas combustion and diesel testing are known to affect air quality, and introducing a new source of these pollutants into our area places unnecessary health risks on nearby residents. Clean air is fundamental, and once local air quality is affected, it cannot be easily reversed.

These concerns are especially serious when it comes to children. Homes and local schools would be within proximity of the plant, meaning children could be exposed to pollution both at home and during the school day. Even low level or intermittent pollution can worsen respiratory conditions in children with asthma and place long term strain on developing lungs.

The proposed development would also have a significant visual and lighting impact. The height of the infrastructure and the intensity of industrial lighting would be highly visible from our home and would intrude into family life, particularly during evening and night time hours. This would fundamentally alter the rural character and quiet enjoyment of where we live.

I am also very concerned about traffic disruption, including road closures and increased construction traffic. Our local roads are narrow rural routes that are not designed to accommodate sustained heavy vehicles.

Increased traffic would make daily travel more difficult and dangerous, and would significantly affect school travel and commuting.
Finally, these roads are regularly used for recreational walking, an important part of community and family life. Increased HGV traffic would make these roads unsafe for walkers, effectively cutting off safe local access to outdoor recreation.
For these reasons – mainly health, children's safety, home life, traffic, and community wellbeing, I strongly object to the Cashla Peaker Plant.

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.

Children & Health

Vulnerability to Diesel-Related Air Pollution

Children are particularly vulnerable to air pollutants due to their developing lungs, higher breathing rates relative to body size, and increased time spent outdoors. The intermittent high-output operation of a peaker plant, particularly where diesel is used during start-up or peak demand periods, may expose children to short but concentrated bursts of pollution. Diesel emissions contain fine particulate matter and nitrogen oxides that can penetrate deep into the lungs, potentially affecting lung development and increasing the risk of respiratory illness.

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

Risk of Fire and Explosion from Fuel Storage

The proposed development involves the storage, handling, and use of highly flammable fuels, including natural gas and diesel, which present inherent risks of fire and explosion. In the event of equipment failure, leakage, or operational malfunction, these substances could ignite and result in a serious incident. Given the high-intensity and intermittent operation of a peaker plant, the potential for such events cannot be dismissed. The consequences for nearby homes, people, farmland, and livestock could be significant.

Visual Impact & Landscape

Scale, Integration, and Rural Context

The scale and industrial nature of the proposed development are not consistent with the surrounding rural environment. The introduction of large-scale plant, structures, and associated infrastructure will create a visually dominant feature in the landscape that is out of character with existing development. It has not been demonstrated that the development can be successfully integrated into its surroundings. This raises concerns under Policy GB1 of the Galway County Development Plan, which requires that developments be designed and located to integrate effectively into the landscape.

Climate Impact

Underestimation of Operational Emissions

The Environmental Impact Assessment may underestimate emissions associated with the development by relying on assumed operational patterns. As a demand-led facility, the plant may operate more frequently or for longer periods than predicted, particularly during periods of energy system stress. This creates uncertainty regarding total greenhouse gas emissions over time and raises concerns that the climate impact of the development has not been fully assessed.

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

Over-Reliance on Mitigation Measures and Uncertainty of Outcomes

The Environmental Impact Assessment relies heavily on mitigation measures to reduce environmental impacts. However, mitigation does not eliminate impacts, and its effectiveness over time is uncertain, particularly over the long operational lifespan of the development (until at least 2050). There is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that mitigation measures will perform as predicted under real-world conditions. This creates uncertainty regarding whether impacts will remain within acceptable limits, particularly in relation to emissions, noise, and environmental protection.

Operational Uncertainty and Lack of Enforceable Limits

There is no clear or enforceable limit on how often or how long the plant will operate. As a demand-led facility, operation may be more frequent or prolonged than assumed in the Environmental Impact Assessment. This includes diesel use during start-up and operation. If this occurs, impacts such as emissions, noise, and traffic may be significantly greater than predicted. This uncertainty raises concerns regarding the accuracy of the assessment.

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,

Name: Siobhan Morrissey
Date: 10 April 2026