

# OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324113

Thomas & Kathleen Kelly

Ivy House

Castle Lambert

Athenry,

Galway

H65 EH74

To: An Coimisiún

Pleanála 64 Marlborough

Street

Dublin 1

D01 V902

Date: 09 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 610m from the proposed site of the Cashla Peaker Plant (Athenry).

Our names are Tommy and Kathleen Kelly, married 57 years, and we live approximately 600 metres from the proposed development.

We have lived and worked in Castlelambert all our lives — for Kathleen, all her married life, and for Tommy, his entire life. Tommy is the third generation of his family to farm this land. As a retired farmer (due to health), he has now handed over the farm to our sons, who are continuing with dry stock (beef) farming. They will be the fourth generation farming this land, and farming is not just our livelihood but our passion and way of life. We have very serious concerns about this development and the effects it will have on our lives and the lives of our family, neighbours, and future generations of the Kelly family.

### **Human Health & Air Pollution**

We have 6 children and 11 grandchildren living nearby, and we are deeply concerned about what this could mean for their health and wellbeing. We worry not only for them, but for the future generations of the Kelly family who will grow up in this area. Children are particularly vulnerable to air pollution, and emissions from a peaker plant — especially where diesel is used — can include fine particles and pollutants that may affect lung development and long-term health. Even if emissions are intermittent, repeated exposure over time gives rise to serious concern.

Just this past year, we have both suffered from pneumonia, and we are anxious about what additional environmental pressures could mean for our own health as an older couple, as well as for our children and grandchildren into the future.

Air pollution from a peaker plant can affect human health, particularly during peak operation periods when emissions are highest. The inclusion of diesel use introduces additional pollutants that are widely recognised as harmful and capable of long-range transport and accumulation in the environment. Given the uncertainty around operational frequency, emission levels, and long-term exposure patterns (until at least 2050), a precautionary approach should be applied to protect public health. In the absence of clear and robust evidence demonstrating that no significant harm will occur, the potential risks to human health should be given significant weight in planning decisions.

The long-term health impact on children has not been fully assessed, particularly in relation to repeated exposure to emissions associated with intermittent operation and diesel use. Given the uncertainty and the known vulnerability of children to air pollution, a precautionary approach should be applied to ensure that health risks are avoided.

### **Water & Groundwater**

#### **Risk of Groundwater Contamination from Fuel Storage and Handling**

In our home, we rely on our own spring water from a well for drinking and everyday use. We are extremely concerned about the risk to groundwater from this development. The storage and handling of fuels such as diesel, along with other chemicals and runoff from hard surfaces, presents an ongoing risk of contamination through leaks, spills, or gradual seepage over time. Even small or repeated incidents could lead to pollution entering the soil and groundwater. Once groundwater is contaminated,

it is very difficult, if not impossible, to fully restore. This could have serious consequences not only for our household water supply, but also for surrounding farms, livestock, and the wider community who depend on clean water.

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.

## **Farming & Agricultural Impact**

### **Protection of Agricultural Livelihoods**

As a farming family, we are also deeply concerned about the impact on agriculture. Farming in this area depends on clean land, clean water, and a healthy environment. Our sons are now carrying on the farm, and we want to see them able to continue farming into the future. Farmers are already operating under strict environmental regulations, and it is not acceptable that additional environmental pressures from an industrial development of this nature could affect soil quality, water, livestock, or compliance with farming schemes through no fault of their own. Any contamination or environmental degradation could have serious financial and practical consequences for farming families such as ours.

Farmers are already subject to strict environmental regulations 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.

### **Local Roads are not suitable.**

As drivers on the local road L3103 to Athenry, we are also very concerned about the increase in heavy traffic associated with this development. The road to Athenry (L3130) is narrow, with hidden dips and sharp corners, and is already difficult to navigate safely. The introduction of additional heavy goods vehicles, construction traffic, and fuel deliveries will significantly increase the risk of accidents for all road users.

## **Fire Safety & Major Accident Hazards**

### **Risk of Fire and Explosion from Fuel Storage**

There is serious safety concerns associated with this development. The storage and use of fuels such as gas and diesel introduce risks of fire, explosion, or accidental release. Given the scale of the proposed plant, any such incident could have serious and far-reaching consequences. An explosion or fire at the site would have devastating effects for the people of Athenry and the surrounding area, and we dread to think how such an event would impact us living just 600 metres away.

These risks are not confined to the immediate locality. In the event of a major incident, impacts could extend beyond local roads and affect key transport routes such as the M6, M17, and M18, which are heavily used by commuters and the wider public. This raises serious concerns not only for nearby residents but also for those travelling on these major routes, as well as on surrounding country roads.

## **Visual Impact & Landscape**

### **Impact on Residential Amenity and Long-Term Visual Change**

The development will be visible from surrounding homes, roads, and farmland, resulting in a permanent change to the visual environment. This may affect residential amenity, enjoyment of the area, and the overall character of the landscape. Given the long operational lifespan of the development (until at least 2050), these visual impacts will be enduring and cannot be easily mitigated. The introduction of industrial lighting, structures, and activity into a rural setting represents a long-term change that should be carefully considered.

## **Rural Environment and Biodiversity**

We live very close to the proposed site, and this adds greatly to our concern about the potential impacts on our home and daily lives. We remember, in earlier years, going up to Rathmorissey and exploring the lands there has always been a quiet rural area, rich in nature, where we regularly see foxes, badgers, and bats. We are very concerned about what will happen to this wildlife and natural habitat if a large industrial site is introduced. This area has always been peaceful and environmentally sensitive, and we do not believe it is suitable for this type of development.

## **Community Engagement**

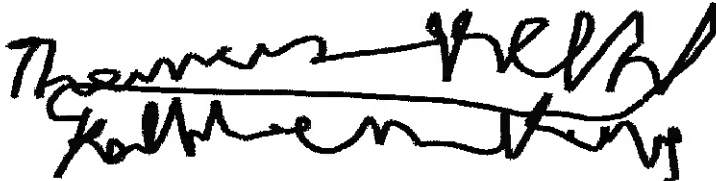
### **Lack of Transparency, Inclusiveness, and Early Engagement**

I do not believe that consultation has been clear, inclusive, or effective. For a development of this scale and potential impact, there should have been proactive, transparent, and early engagement with the local community. This includes clear communication, accessible materials, and sufficient time for people to understand and respond to the proposal. The lack of meaningful engagement raises concerns regarding fairness, transparency, and the overall integrity of the planning process. Communities should not be placed at a disadvantage due to inaccessible information or limited consultation.

### **Conclusion**

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 "Thomas & Kathleen Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive, somewhat stylized font and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Name: Thomas & Kathleen Kelly

Date: 09 April 2026