

Enda McGovern, B.Eng, MBA, Ph.D.  
20 Abbey Glen,  
Athenry, Co Galway,  
H65 EK65.

23<sup>rd</sup> April, 2026.

## Formal Planning Objection

**To:** Galway County Council / An Bord Pleanála

**Re:** Planning Application [ACP -324162 -26] – Proposed Power Plant at  
[Rathmorrissey, Pollnagroagh, Moanbaun, Castletambert, Knocknacreeva,  
Caraunduff, Caherbriskaun, Lisheenkyle East, Barrettspark, Cashla, Athenry, County  
Galway]

### To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to formally object to the proposed development of a fossil-fuel-burning Peaker plant in Athenry. This development is fundamentally at odds with Ireland's statutory climate obligations and the sustainable future of the County Galway region.

At the outset, I would critique that the name **Peaker Plant** is a misrepresentation of this project. While the plant is anticipated to run for only 100 hours per year, the planning and environmental assessments (EIAR) are tied to a specific regulatory cap under EU and Irish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards. Thus for "Open Cycle Gas Turbines" (OCGT), these plants are capped at 1,500 operating hours per year as a rolling average", which implies, based on an unpredicted energy crisis, this plant could be used daily if needed to,  $1,500 / 365 = 4$  hours per day! This is simply not binding to the principles as set out in the submission.

Other critical topics below challenge the principles behind this submission,

### 1. Contravention of the Climate Action Plan

---

Under the **Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act 2021**, Ireland is legally bound to a 51% reduction in emissions by 2030.

Authorizing new fossil fuel infrastructure at this stage of the "Decade of Action" risks creating a **stranded asset** or forcing the state to breach its carbon budgets. This development represents a long-term "carbon lock-in" that undermines the transition to a 100% renewable grid.

### 2. Peaker Plants Are Very Inefficient .

---

Peaker plants are significantly less efficient than "baseload" power plants.

- Inefficiency: Because they must ramp up and down quickly, they often operate at lower thermal efficiency. This means they burn more fuel and emit more

CO for every unit of electricity produced compared to modern combined-cycle gas turbines.

- **Dual-Fuel Risks:** Many proposed plants, including those in the Galway region, often include a backup of gas oil (diesel). Diesel is one of the most carbon-intensive fuels available; its use is fundamentally at odds with any "green" energy transition.

### 3. Failure to Prioritize Low-Carbon Alternatives

---

The argument that peaker plants are "necessary" for grid stability is increasingly outdated as technology evolves.

**Battery Storage:** Large-scale Lithium-ion and Flow batteries can respond in milliseconds to grid fluctuations—far faster than a gas turbine—without any onsite emissions.

**Demand Side Management:** Instead of increasing supply with a new plant, the grid can use "Smart Grid" technology to temporarily reduce demand from large industrial users (like data centers) during peak hours.

**Synchronous Compensators:** As Ireland moves toward 80% renewable electricity, the grid needs "inertia" to stay stable. New technologies, such as rotating stabilizers, provide this service without burning a single drop of fuel.

The applicant has clearly failed to demonstrate why zero-emissions alternatives—specifically **Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)** and **Demand Side Unit (DSU)** technology—are not being utilized at this site instead. Unlike gas or diesel peakers, BESS can provide the same grid balancing services (SESS) without the emission of CO<sub>2</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, or particulate matter.

It is evident, for example in California and Minnesota, how this form of energy delivery is becoming standardised to be much more effective than the 'old application' of peaker power stations that only utilize fossil fuels. Many California batteries powered stations are 4-hour duration systems. This means a 500 MW battery can discharge at full power for 4 hours, providing 2,000 MWh of energy. The "Shifting" Role as these stations charge during the day when solar power is cheap and abundant (sometimes even negative in price) and can discharge anytime but primarily between 4:00 PM and 9:00 PM when the grid is most stressed. Many of these stations (Moss Landing is an example) can "jump-start" the grid if there is a total blackout, a task traditionally reserved for gas plants similar to the Cashla Peaker plant proposed.

Demand for long-lasting energy storage is accelerating, and that offers a rare opportunity for clean technology companies to supersede the necessity of older fossil fuel designs. Currently, lithium-ion is the dominant type of battery, but many lithium batteries can provide electricity for only about four hours. To get longer coverage, you have to install twice as many. So the search is moving on for batteries that can discharge for days — or even weeks. Now installations of

long-duration systems are surging as the world looks to better harness renewable energy. Deployments are forecast to almost quadruple this year after a record 2025, according to BloombergNEF.

Yes, in EirGrid's primary strategy, *Shaping Our Electricity Future*, the document identifies a need for 2,400 MW of additional storage capacity by 2030. Batteries are no longer just for emergencies; they are being used to "time-shift" wind and solar energy—soaking up power when it's windy and releasing it during the evening peaks. So the 'DESIGN' of this Peaker Plant in Athenry needs to be submitted with the latest Battery technologies in play as it is a backward step to build this project powered by fossil fuels.

The article below dates back to 2017 with massive improvements in energy storage since. Why is EirGrid proposing the most outdated application, i.e. the use fossil fuels, to a project to be constructed by 2030!. There is no logic to this submission.



## California's big battery experiment: a turning point for energy storage?



📷 The lithium-ion battery at Escondido, north of San Diego, can power the equivalent of 20,000 homes. Photograph: Julian Spector

The world's largest lithium-ion battery installed after the Aliso Canyon gas blowout has become a test case for the grid storage industry

Most viewed

Link: <https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2017/sep/15/californias-big-battery-experiment-a-turning-point-for-energy-storage>

#### 4. Impact on Local Air Quality and Biodiversity

---

The burning of fossil fuels, particularly if gas oil (diesel) is used as a secondary fuel, poses a direct threat to the local environment. The emission of nitrogen oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>) is a significant concern for the health of the local community in Athenry, especially for children, and the integrity of nearby habitats. This is inconsistent with the **Galway County Development Plan** policies regarding the protection of air quality and natural heritage. Also, the "Lock-In" Effect: Investing millions in gas or diesel infrastructure creates a financial incentive to keep using it, potentially crowding out cleaner investments and making the eventual transition to renewables more expensive and difficult.

The primary concern with gas-fired peaker plants is the emission of combustion by-products during the "startup" and "ramping" phases, which happen frequently for these types of facilities:

**Nitrogen Oxides (NO<sub>2</sub>):** This is the most significant local pollutant. contributes to the formation of ground-level ozone (smog) and acid rain. Even though a plant may only run for 100–500 hours a year, the concentration of during those hours can be high.

**Particulate Matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub> and PM<sub>10</sub>):** While natural gas is "cleaner" than coal or oil, it still releases fine soot particles. These can penetrate deep into human lungs and are a major concern for residents with respiratory conditions like asthma.

**Carbon Monoxide (CO):** Typically higher during the startup phase before the turbine reaches its optimal operating temperature.

#### 5. Noise and Industrialization of Rural Landscape

---

The intermittent, high-intensity noise generated by peaker plants during "ramp-up" phases is highly disruptive. This development would negatively impact the residential amenity of the Athenry area and is unsuitable for a location that should be prioritized for sustainable, low-impact investment.

#### Conclusion

---

The proposed peaker plant in Athenry represents a real step backward in Ireland's energy transition. By committing to fossil fuel infrastructure in 2026, we are ignoring the availability of zero-emission battery storage and demand-response technologies. This project risks breaching our national carbon budgets and contradicts the Galway County Development Plan's goal of transitioning to a low-carbon, climate-resilient society. It is simply wrong in 2026 to make this submission based on the current design of engaging fossil fuels.

For the reasons stated above, I urge the planning authority to REFUSE permission for this development and instead demand energy projects that align with a carbon-neutral future allowing future generations of Irish people to live in harmony and to continue enjoying the beauty of nature. As Irish citizens, this is a primary duty of care that we are obligated to observe.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Enda McGovern', written in a cursive style.

Enda McGovern, B.Eng, MBA, PhD.  
20 Abbey Glen,  
Athenry, Co Galway, H65 EK65