

OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324162

Kieran & Caroline Coffey

Rathmorrissey

Athenry

Galway

H65Y104

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála

64 Marlborough Street

Dublin 1

D01 V902

Date: 26 May 2026

Re: Observation to the proposed development of a 220kV substation, telecommunications mast and underground electricity cable infrastructure with associated works.

Location: Rathmorrissey, Pollnagroagh, Moanbaun, Castletambert, Knocknacreeva, Caraunduff, Caherbriskaun, Lisheenkyle East, Barrettspark and Cashla (Townlands), Athenry, Co. Galway

Applicant: Bord Gáis Energy Limited

Dear Sir/Madam,

We are objecting to the Cashla Grid connection & substation for a number of reasons including:

Fragmentation of the Project

The grid connection & substation planning application has been separated from the main Peaker Plant planning application albeit the grid connection and substation provide the critical infrastructure to connect the Peaker Plant to the national grid. The Peaker Plant cannot operate without the grid connection & substation and on that basis both projects should have included in a singular combined planning application. We have serious concerns that due to the separation of the projects into separate planning applications the full combined impact of the larger project (i.e. the Peaker Plant and grid connection & substation project) has not been assessed. We are of the opinion that the consultation process for the larger project was inadequate as it did not address the separation of the project into two separate planning applications.

Road Network

We have concerns that the local road network is not suitable to facilitate the construction of the Peaker Plant

or the cable route to connect the Peaker Plant to the national grid. The local road network is not equipped to deal with the disruption that will arise during the construction of the plant and the connection of the plant to the grid. Wide spread road closures will be required and there are not sufficient diversion routes available to cater for the road closures and we have concerns that the projects could restrict and delay emergency access routes for local residents which could have fatal consequences. We have not been provided with any road diversion plan for the affected roads and we have huge concerns surrounding the knock impacts of same in terms of emergency access, school and business access. Also the larger traffic volumes particularly heavy duty construction traffic on the road network will heighten the potential accident risk during the prolonged construction period for both projects.

We have concerns that other non public routes will be used as access points to the Peaker Plant site and indeed in recent times contractors engaged by Bord Gais have access the Peaker Plant site through a private road off the R348 without seeking or being granted permission from the local road owners.

A number of the local roads and bridges have been confirmed as unsafe for the high volume construction traffic that will be accessing the roads during the construction of both projects. In particular an engineer (Atkins Réalis) formally certified the Castleambert Bridge as structurally unsafe under project loads.

We have huge concerns that the issues listed above have not been fully accessed and in particular due to the separation of the project into two separate applications a full combined assessment of the impact of the larger project (i.e. the Peaker Plant and the grid connection and substation) on the local road network has not been properly undertaken.

Health Concerns

The application for the grid connection and substation will facilitate the construction of the Peaker Plant which we have major concerns regarding the health risks associated with the operation of the plant. We are a family of five living with 670metres of the site boundary and within our family we have 3 members (2 children) that are diagnosed with asthma and suffer from asthmatic symptoms on a daily basis. The construction of the Peaker Plant which will be facilitated by the grid connection and substation provides serious concerns on the future health of our family members due to the harmful emissions that will be generated from the Plant and the impact of same on the air quality which our family members that suffer from asthma will be exposed to on a daily basis.

Having reviewed the application documentation, I have outlined my concerns regarding the proposed development

Emissions Impact on Residents and Vulnerable Groups

Although this application relates to the proposed substation and mast, both form part of infrastructure required for the wider Cashla Peaker Project and the operation of the proposed gas-fired peaker plant. I am concerned about the potential impact of emissions associated with the overall development on local air quality and public health, particularly for nearby residents, children, older people and individuals with respiratory conditions.

Absence of Standalone Noise Assessment

I am also concerned that no standalone noise assessment appears to have been carried out regarding the proposed grid connection infrastructure, including the substation and associated works. I do not believe sufficient assessment has been provided regarding potential construction noise, operational noise or the impact on nearby residents located along the proposed cable route and surrounding rural roads.

Unsuitable Rural Location

I believe the proposed substation and mast are not suitable for this rural location. The development would introduce permanent industrial-scale infrastructure, including a 220kV substation, security fencing, lighting and telecommunications equipment, into an area characterised by homes, farms and open countryside.

Incompatible with Rural Character and Galway CDP

In my view, the scale, appearance and industrial nature of the proposed infrastructure are not compatible with the surrounding residential and agricultural landscape. I do not believe the proposal is consistent with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development or with the protection of rural character and landscape objectives contained within the Galway County Development Plan.

Karst Geology and Constrained Road Network

The proposed cable route would involve major construction activity through established rural areas with ribbon development, homes, farms, schools and businesses located along the route. In my view, the cumulative impact of prolonged roadworks, rock-breaking, excavation activity and construction traffic has not been fully addressed within the application documentation, particularly given the sensitive karst limestone geology and constrained nature of the local road network.

Long-Term Road Reinstatement Concerns

I am also concerned regarding the long-term standard of road reinstatement following completion of the proposed works. Similar utility infrastructure works in nearby areas have resulted in uneven road surfaces, raised utility covers and poor reinstatement quality. Given the scale and duration of the proposed trenching works, I believe binding commitments should be provided regarding full road restoration, ongoing maintenance responsibility and reinstatement to an appropriate long-term standard for local communities.

Emergency Services and Limited Alternative Routes

I am concerned about the impact the proposed cable and construction works could have on emergency access and daily movement throughout the area. The affected rural roads are used daily by ambulances, emergency services, carers, school transport, farmers, local businesses and residents, and many of these roads have limited alternative access routes available.

Inadequate Assessment of Disruption to Communities

I believe insufficient consideration has been given to the effect prolonged trenching works, stop/go traffic systems, temporary road closures and traffic diversions would have on the normal functioning of local communities. I do not believe adequate assessment has been provided regarding the likely impact of prolonged disruption on residents, emergency access, school transport, farms and daily community movement, particularly given the scale of the proposed construction activity and associated HGV traffic on local roads including the L3103.

Delays to Emergency Response and Defibrillator Access

The proposed works could cause significant delays and disruption for emergency vehicles, home-support services, school transport, agricultural traffic and daily commuters. I am also concerned about possible delays in accessing community defibrillators and emergency response assistance in rural areas where rapid access can be critical for medical emergencies.

Groundwater and Drainage in Karst Limestone Geology

I believe insufficient consideration has been given to the possible impact trenching and excavation works could have on groundwater movement, field drainage systems and soil conditions along the route. The proposed works pass through an area of sensitive karst limestone geology where groundwater flows, drainage pathways and subsurface conditions can be complex and unpredictable. Given the nature of karst geology, I believe a precautionary approach should be applied regarding excavation activity, groundwater protection and potential impacts on surrounding lands, wells and drainage systems under the EU Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC).

Private Wells, Livestock Water and Agricultural Land

Many farms and rural homes in the area rely on private wells, groundwater supplies and established drainage networks. I am concerned that excavation, rock-breaking and underground cable installation works could interfere with wells, livestock drinking water supplies, drainage systems and agricultural land conditions during and after construction.

Habitats and Ecological Corridors for Wildlife

Hedgerows and roadside vegetation within the area provide important habitats and ecological corridors for birds, pollinators and local wildlife. I am concerned that prolonged construction activity and vegetation disturbance could negatively affect biodiversity and the ecological character of the surrounding rural landscape.

Long-Term Landscape Reinstatement and Visual Amenity

I am also concerned that insufficient information has been provided regarding long-term landscape reinstatement and ongoing maintenance responsibilities following completion of the proposed works. In my view, the cumulative impact of vegetation loss, hedgerow disturbance and infrastructure works could have a lasting effect on the visual amenity and landscape character of the surrounding rural area.

Safety Risks Near Lisheenkyle National School

The proposed cable route passes in close proximity to Lisheenkyle National School along narrow rural roads with limited visibility and no proper hard shoulders. I am concerned that trenching works, construction activity, increased traffic volumes and temporary traffic management measures would create additional safety risks and disruption for children, parents and school staff, particularly during school drop-off and collection times.

Narrow Roads, HGV Traffic and Increased Congestion

The roads surrounding Lisheenkyle National School are already heavily used by local traffic, school transport and agricultural vehicles. These roads are narrow, have restricted visibility and lack proper public hard shoulders. The only widened sections are private parking bays located outside newer houses, which remain the responsibility of homeowners and are not intended for pedestrian use or roadside safety. The introduction of heavy construction traffic, HGVs and stop/go traffic systems would significantly increase congestion and road safety risks for schoolchildren, residents and all road users.

Students Travelling Daily Along Affected Roads

Many students and school staff from surrounding rural areas travel daily along these local roads to schools in Athenry by bus, car, bicycle and on foot. The road network already experiences significant traffic volumes during school drop-off, collection and commuter periods, particularly within this expanding rural residential

area characterised by substantial ribbon development.

Negative Effect on Residential Character and Quality of Life

The affected area forms part of a growing rural residential community within the wider Athenry area, where many families choose to live because of its rural character, agricultural setting and proximity to local towns, schools and employment centres. The area has experienced significant residential and commuter-related growth in recent years. I am concerned that the introduction of major energy infrastructure into this established rural environment would negatively affect the residential character, visual amenity and overall attractiveness of the area as a place to live and raise families, while also impacting the enjoyment and quality of life of existing residents and property owners.

Long-Term Impact on Rural Development Patterns and Amenity

I believe insufficient consideration has been given to the long-term impact that concentrating large-scale energy infrastructure within the area could have on future rural development patterns, residential amenity and the character of the local community. The proposed development would introduce permanent industrial-scale infrastructure into an established rural landscape and could undermine the sustainable growth of the surrounding rural community, including the future use and development potential of nearby residential properties and landholdings.

Impact on Property Values and Investment Confidence

The proposed substation, underground cable infrastructure and associated development could negatively influence future residential development, land use potential and investment confidence within the area. As a resident/property owner in the area, I am concerned that the cumulative impact of this infrastructure could reduce the attractiveness of the locality for existing and future residents and adversely affect the long-term enjoyment, value and future use of nearby properties and landholdings.

Cumulative Industrialisation of the Wider Cashla Peaker Project

In my view, the cumulative industrialisation associated with the wider Cashla Peaker Project, including substations, underground infrastructure, lighting, fencing and associated works, would have a significant negative impact on rural amenity, residential character and the long-term sustainability of surrounding rural communities. I am also concerned about the long-term effect this level of industrialisation could have on the quality of life, enjoyment of property and future viability of surrounding homes and agricultural landholdings.

Facilitating Fossil Fuel Infrastructure Against Climate Policy

The proposed substation, mast and underground cable infrastructure are intended to support the operation of new gas-fired electricity generation infrastructure. I am concerned that the proposed development would facilitate long-term fossil fuel energy infrastructure at a time when national and EU climate policy requires significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and greater transition towards sustainable and lower-carbon energy systems.

Incompatibility with Ireland's Climate Obligations

In my view, insufficient consideration has been given to the long-term climate implications associated with infrastructure designed to support fossil fuel-based electricity generation. I believe the compatibility of the proposed development with Ireland's climate obligations, emissions reduction targets and broader sustainability objectives has not been adequately demonstrated within the application documentation.

Inadequate Consultation Across Connected Applications

I do not believe adequate consultation or engagement has taken place with residents and communities affected by the wider Cashla Peaker Project. Although the peaker plant, substation and cable route are being progressed through separate applications, they form part of one overall development with significant impacts on the surrounding area.

Residents and Landowners Not Individually Engaged

I am concerned that many residents, landowners and businesses affected by the proposed development were not individually engaged regarding the practical impact the project could have on homes, farms, local roads, property access and daily community life. No clear information appears to have been provided regarding issues such as noise, vibration, road closures, rock-breaking, groundwater impacts or future maintenance requirements.

Cannot Be Assessed in Isolation from the Wider Development

Although this application relates to grid connection infrastructure, I believe the proposed substation, mast and cable route cannot be properly assessed in isolation from the wider connected energy development to which it relates. The planning documentation does not adequately assess the combined and cumulative impact of the proposed infrastructure on the surrounding rural area, road network, residential amenity, agricultural activity and local environment in accordance with the principles of proper planning and sustainable development.

Likely Scale and Duration of Disruption Not Fully Reflected

I am concerned that the application does not fully reflect the likely scale, duration and intensity of disruption associated with prolonged construction works, trenching activity, traffic management systems, road restrictions, rock-breaking and associated infrastructure works across multiple rural communities. Given the nature of the local road network and surrounding residential areas, I believe the likely impact during the construction phase has been significantly underestimated.

Further Assessment Required and Precautionary Approach Needed

I believe further assessment is required regarding the long-term impact of the proposed infrastructure on rural amenity, groundwater protection, traffic safety, agricultural activity and future development within the area. I am also concerned that no detailed vibration assessment appears to have been carried out in relation to trenching works, rock-breaking, excavation activity or heavy construction traffic along the proposed cable route. Given the sensitive karst limestone geology within the area, vibrations may travel further and affect nearby homes, boundary walls, agricultural structures and local roads. I do not believe sufficient baseline studies, including structural surveys, road condition assessments, vibration monitoring proposals or mitigation measures, have been provided prior to works commencing. Given these uncertainties and the potential for lasting impacts on surrounding rural communities, I believe a precautionary approach should be applied in the assessment of this application.

Conclusion

Given the scale of the proposed development and the uncertainty regarding construction impacts, groundwater disturbance, traffic disruption, vibration impacts and long-term infrastructure effects, I do not believe this proposal represents proper planning and sustainable development. In light of the unresolved concerns regarding cumulative impacts, groundwater protection, traffic safety, environmental effects and the adequacy of the supporting assessments, I believe a precautionary approach should be applied in the

assessment of this application. I respectfully request that An Coimisiún Pleanála refuse permission for the proposed development.

Yours Sincerely,

Kieran
Coffey

Name: Kieran & Caroline Coffey

Date: 26 May 2026