

OBSERVATION/SUBMISSION TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Case Reference: 324162

Padraic & Sarah Quirke
Tobar na bhFiann
Athenry
Galway

To: An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902
Date: 25 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, Castlelambert, Knocknacreeva, Caraunduff, Caherbriskaun, Lisheenkyle East, Barrettspark and Cashla (Townlands), Athenry, Co. Galway

Applicant: Bord Gáis Energy Limited

Dear Sir/Madam,

I reside approximately 2km northeast of the proposed Cashla Peaker plant development with my young family. Our home is located within the area that will be directly affected by the construction and long term operation of the Cashla Peaker Plant and grid infrastructure. My family has deep roots in the area having lived and worked the land here for generations. I am gravely concerned about this development when taken as a whole (both the Cashla Peaker Plant and the associated grid works) and the cumulative impact this will have on my own and my extended family's welfare.

The proposed development related to the planning application number 324162 and the associated road closures will impose a significant and unacceptable burden on my own and my extended family's daily life.

1. Access, Safety and Traffic Impacts

The proposed works and associated road diversions pose a serious risk to the daily functioning and safety of local families such as my own and my extended family. We use the affected road network on a daily basis multiple times a day travelling the Lisheenkyle East Road, L7108, and the L3103 for the purposes of dropping our children to school, preschool and commuting to work and other essential services in the town of Athenry. Access to family members living on the L3103 who we provide support to on a routine basis is also restricted. It is expected that the L7108 road will be closed for 5 months at a minimum. For our young children who must travel to school, childcare, and medical appointments, reliable and safe access is essential. The construction traffic, road closures, and heavy vehicle movements will impede our access to our children's school in Lisheenkyle and

preschool, our place of work and other essential services in the town of Athenry. In the event of an emergency it would also increase emergency response times for ambulances, fire services and the Gardai which gives me huge cause for concern.

A section of approximately 3 km will be closed on both roads (L7108 and L7109), resulting in a diversion route of ca. 8 km, which will add ca. 5 km of extra travel. The EIAR indicates that while full closure is shown on these roads, only through traffic will be significantly impacted. As a family falling into this bracket of 'through traffic' we are extremely concerned.

The proposed diversions will impose both direct and indirect financial costs on our household, including:

- Increased fuel consumption due to longer travel distances
- Additional childcare costs arising from extended commute times
- Lost working hours and reduced productivity
- Wear and tear on vehicles from unsuitable diversion routes

These costs are not incidental; they represent a sustained financial burden.

2. Significant Construction Disruption to a Residential Area

The grid connection works will require extensive trenching, heavy machinery, road openings, and prolonged construction activity. Again, this will have a disproportionate impact on households with young children such as my own due to:

- Noise levels from excavation, drilling, and heavy vehicles during daytime hours when children are at home.
- Dust and air quality impacts, which are particularly concerning for infants and young children whose respiratory systems, are more vulnerable.
- Traffic disruption, including road closures and diversions, which will affect school runs, childcare drop offs and pickups, and access to essential services.

The rural road network in this area is already narrow and constrained. It is not designed to absorb prolonged industrial scale construction traffic. The planning documents do not adequately assess the real world impact on families living within metres of the proposed works, nor do they propose meaningful mitigation measures.

3. Cumulative Impact with Existing Infrastructure & Disproportionate Burden on a Rural Community

The Cashla area already hosts substantial energy infrastructure. The addition of further grid works — especially those requiring excavation and heavy construction — adds to a cumulative burden to our small rural community.

The planning process must consider:

- Existing substations and transmission lines
- Previous construction disruptions
- The concentration of energy infrastructure in a residential area

No cumulative impact assessment has been meaningfully provided.

This project adds to a growing concentration of large scale energy infrastructure in a rural area (Solar farms (Cregmore & Belleville), Wind Farm (Gannow)) that lacks the political, economic, and infrastructural capacity to absorb such impacts. Rural communities should not be used as default locations for industrial scale energy projects simply because land is available.

The cumulative impact of the Peaker plant, the substation, the grid connection and associated construction traffic and roadwork's represents a disproportionate burden on a small rural population with limited public transport, limited alternative routes, and limited access to public services. This is inconsistent with principles of balanced regional development and equitable distribution of national infrastructure.

4. Health Risks - EMF Cables

We are extremely concerned about the health risks associated with prolonged exposure to EMF cables. While research is ongoing, some findings suggest links to:

- Sleep disturbances
- Headaches and fatigue
- Increased risk of certain cancers, especially in children ('the association with childhood leukaemia, which the International Agency for Research on Cancer regards as sufficiently well established to rate extremely low frequency magnetic fields as a "possible" human carcinogen'.
- Neurological and immune system effects

Given the proximity of the proposed cable route to our home and other family members homes, the school route which we travel on a daily basis, and other sensitive locations, this poses an unacceptable risk. The planning file does not appear to include a comprehensive EMF risk assessment or mitigation strategy and there is no clear evidence that EMF levels have been modelled or measured to ensure safe distances from residential properties have been established.

5. Health and Environmental Concerns Regarding the Peaker Plant

The grid connection, substation, and Peaker plant are functionally interdependent. None of these components can operate in isolation. They form a single project in practical, operational, and environmental terms. The proposal is intrinsically linked to the separate application for the Cashla Peaker Plant. Peaker plants, by design, operate during periods of high demand and typically rely on fossil fuel combustion. This raises several concerns:

- Air quality impacts, including NOx and particulate emissions
- Noise pollution during operation
- Potential for accidental releases or operational malfunctions
- Cumulative health impacts when combined with other regional energy infrastructure

To conclude, as a parent of young children living close to the proposed grid connection route, I am deeply concerned about the **scale, duration, and intensity of disruption** that these works will bring to our home and community. The application does not adequately address these impacts, nor does it provide the level of detail required for informed decision making.

For the reasons outlined above, I believe the proposed development would have significant adverse impacts on the local community, rural environment, farms, roads, and surrounding residential areas. In my view, the application has not adequately demonstrated that the proposed development can proceed without unacceptable impacts on rural amenity, traffic safety, environmental protection and community wellbeing. I do not believe the proposal represents proper planning and sustainable development, and I respectfully request that permission be refused.

Yours faithfully,

Padraic and Sarah Quirke