



KANTON AARGAU

## **STATE CHANCELLERY**

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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Birr reserve power plant clears important hurdle**

**Due to the impending electricity and gas shortage, the canton welcomes the signing of the contract between the federal government and GE Gas Power for the installation of a mobile reserve power plant of national importance**

**The agreement between the federal government and GE Gas Power to secure financing lays the foundation for a reserve power plant with a capacity of almost 250 megawatts that can be deployed at short notice. In view of the impending electricity and gas shortage, the next steps must now be taken by the canton and municipalities in order to realise an operational temporary power plant with a high level of acceptance in good time. In particular, flanking measures are needed to minimise negative impacts such as noise, air pollution and greenhouse effects, and a strategy to further develop the Birr site.**

Every third kilowatt hour is produced in the energy canton of Aargau. In order to avert the risk of an electricity and gas shortage, the canton took responsibility and offered its hand at an early stage to find possible locations for a reserve power plant. The Birr site has ideal conditions for a thermal power plant thanks to the available space, sufficient connections to the gas, electricity and rail networks, and solution-oriented stakeholders. Discussions between the federal government, the canton of Aargau and the municipalities of Birr, as well as potential operators, were intensified as the threat to supply security increased. Now the federal government and GE Gas Power have signed a contract that will enable a power plant to be deployed at short notice.

### **A power plant of national interest requires national regulations**

Eight mobile gas turbines are being made ready for operation as a reserve at the GE Gas Power company site in Birr. They have an output of almost 250 megawatts, which is a quarter of the output of the Leibstadt nuclear power plant or 15 times the output of the Aarau hydroelectric power plant. They thus provide a large part of the 300 megawatts of additional capacity that the federal government promised on 17 August 2022 and that can be realised in the short term. In addition to the hydropower reserve, they are vital for ensuring security of supply towards the end of the winter of 2022/2023 and for the coming winters. In order to be ready for operation in time, the licensing procedures must be accelerated accordingly and environmental protection regulations for operation must be temporarily relaxed. This requires adjustments to federal laws.

### **Developing the Birr site in the long term**

It is all the more important to keep the use of the oil- or gas-fired power plant to a minimum. Other measures appropriate to the stage, such as energy saving, must be exhausted upstream. The plant must be built and operated in such a way that as few immissions (noise, air) as possible are generated. It must be specified which limit values must be complied with at all times and which technically and economically feasible reduction paths must be implemented. Finally, the site is to be strategically developed further. After the expiry of the temporary contract in 2026 at the latest, a regular gas turbine with an output of 300 to 400 megawatts should be operational as a reserve power plant with multi-fuel mode (oil, gas, renewable fuels) for 15 to 20 years. The canton would also like to offer a hand in this.

*Further information for media professionals:*

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