

Ireland should reconvert Moneypoint to coal, say engineers

Engineers warn that Republic must bolster energy security



Moneypoint power plant could be key to energy security, engineers say.

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Fri May 08 2026 -

The State should convert Moneypoint power station to [burn coal](#) and drop the ban on offshore fossil fuel exploration, experts argue in a report on energy security.

[War in the Middle East](#) has exposed risks to energy supplies in the Republic, which relies heavily on imported [oil](#) and gas, according to the [Irish Academy of Engineering](#).

The academy has called on the State to reconvert Moneypoint power station in Co Clare to burn coal as a last resort to bolster energy security, in two reports published on Friday.

Moneypoint previously burned coal and ceased full operations last year, but it was converted to burn heavy fuel oil so it could be called on to generate electricity in case of a serious threat to supplies.

National grid company EirGrid has not had to call on Moneypoint since it ceased operations.

The US-Israeli war with Iran has since squeezed heavy fuel oil supplies globally, the academy's report points out, while Moneypoint can only store up to 10 days worth of the fuel if it runs on full capacity.

Consequently the academy has argued in two reports, *Energy Security and the future of Moneypoint Power Station*, and *Worst Ever Energy Crisis?*, that the plant should be switched back to burn coal, or have its capacity to store fuel oil increased.

Plans to close Moneypoint finally in 2029 should be postponed to 2036, the academy said.

Eamonn O'Reilly, chairman of the academy's energy and climate action committee, stressed that Moneypoint should remain only as a "generator of last resort".

But he warned that the Middle East conflict had exposed weaknesses in Government energy policy.

“That is dominated by one thing, to get the economy to net zero by 2050, regardless of expense, feasibility or energy security,” he said.

The academy calculated that while reconverting Moneypoint to coal risked increasing greenhouse gas emissions, it would have minimal impact.

The academy also called for the acceleration of plans to convert the old Kinsale natural gas reservoir off the south coast to gas storage, something most energy industry figures have been seeking for several years.

A proposed facility to store and convert liquid natural gas in Co Clare is too small and should be replaced with a more adequate resource, the academy maintained.

The engineers also recommended that the Oireachtas remove the February 2021 ban on oil and gas exploration in Irish waters.

The Republic will continue to need fossil fuels until 2050 and beyond, said an academy statement.

“In the meantime, the reality of Ireland’s energy supply risk exposure must be recognised in policy and, where possible, mitigated,” added the organisation.