

Environmental Protection Agency  
McCumiskey House,  
Richview,  
Clonskeagh Road,  
Dublin 14,  
D14 YR62



**Date:** 24th April 2023

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE:** Objection to the Application for Industrial Emissions License by Runways Information Services Limited (parent company Facebook International Operations Limited)

**Lic application/review#:** LA010592

**Register #:** P1192-01

**Activities to be licensed:**

The overall campus includes 90 no. 8.26 MWth emergency (diesel-powered) generators all of which are individually situated within acoustic containers.

- Building CLN1: 18 no. 8.26 MWth emergency back-up generators;
- Building CLN2: 18 no. 8.26 MWth emergency back-up generators;
- Building CLN3: 18 no. 8.26 MWth emergency back-up generators; Clonee Data Center IE Licence AWN Consulting Prepared for: Runways Information Services Limited Attachment-1-2 - Page 4
- Building CLN5: 18 no. 8.26 MWth emergency back-up generators including Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) Abatement Systems; and
- Building CLN6: 18 no. 8.26 MWth emergency back-up generators including Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) Abatement Systems.

The combined thermal input (total capacity) from the emergency generators is 743.4 MWth, this exceeds the 50MWth threshold of Class 2.1 First Schedule of the EPA Act 1992 (as amended). The applicant is applying to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) for an Industrial Emissions (IE) Licence principally relating to the operation of emergency back-up generators under Activity Class 2.1.

**Location of facility:** Data Center, that is located in the townlands of Gunnocks, Portan, Loughsallagh and Clonee, County Meath

I write to you to object to the application by Runways Information Services Limited (parent company Facebook International Operations Ltd) for an Industrial Emissions License for a development consisting of 90 no. diesel powered emergency generators ("Subject Application"). I write on behalf of Not Here Not Anywhere, a nationwide, grassroots, non-partisan group campaigning to end fossil fuel exploration and the development of new fossil fuel infrastructure in Ireland and across the world. We advocate for fair society-wide energy usage and a just transition to renewable energy systems.

NHNA welcomes Ireland's commitment to transition to net zero by 2050 and the urgent adaptation of our energy supply. We recognise that the transition to renewables must be carried out in a way that guarantees nationwide energy security. However, the development and facilitation of new fossil fuel infrastructure to facilitate this transition is not a viable solution.

## Background - Ireland's Climate Obligations

Ireland is a signatory and party to multiple international organisations and treaties relating to the Climate Crisis with the aim of avoiding the worst impacts of the crisis, adapting to the challenges it presents, and supporting a just transition.

## National Climate Objective

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Act of 2021 (hereinafter “Climate Act”) outlines Ireland’s legal obligations to pursue and achieve a “climate neutral” society by 2050,<sup>1</sup> and to reduce overall GHG emissions by 51% on 2018 levels by the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2030.<sup>2</sup>

## Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance

During the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change 26<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties held in Glasgow in November 2021, Ireland became a core member of the international Beyond Oil and Gas Alliance<sup>3</sup> (BOGA). An international alliance committed to aligning the usage and production of Oil and Gas to the objectives of the Paris Climate Accord.<sup>4</sup> By joining BOGA, the Irish Government acknowledged and committed to a 55% reduction in natural gas between 2020 and 2030.

It is highly concerning that there are ongoing plans to develop and permit new fossil fuel infrastructure. These plans are inconsistent with the objectives Ireland committed itself to under the BOGA.

## Carbon Budgets and Associated Sectoral Emission Ceiling

The Climate Act of 2021 requires that the Climate Change Advisory Council prepares and submits to the Minister of Environment 5-year carbon budgets outlining the route to achieving the targets set within the Act.<sup>5</sup> The Climate Act further requires the Government to set Sectoral Emission Ceilings for each sector.<sup>6</sup>

The Sectoral Emissions Ceiling for the Energy sector outlines a required reduction of 40% of CO<sub>2</sub>eq by 2025 year-end, on the 2018 baseline.

## Reasons for Objection

### Discrepancies/Omissions

#### Energy Usage

##### Electricity Usage

Complete the table below with summary details of current and proposed electricity usage

(The following table contains additional guidance for certain fields where you see the small red triangle in the cell. To view the guidance simply hover over the cell).

Electricity type	Current Usage Per Calendar Year (MWH) *	Future Usage Per Calendar Year if Authorisation Granted (MWH) *
Electricity Purchased	680,080	1,261,000
Total Renewable Electricity Generated <u>and</u> Used at the Site		
Total Non-Renewable Electricity Generated <u>and</u> Used at the Site		
<b>Total Electricity Generated and Used</b>	-	-
<b>Total Electricity Used</b>	<b>680,080</b>	<b>1,261,000</b>

Per the application, the generators would use a non-renewable fuel (diesel). We noted a discrepancy whereby, in the Electricity Usage table (in section 4.6.1 - Water and Energy Usage), “Total Non-Renewable Electricity Generated and Used at the Site” if authorisation is granted is **blank**. This is despite the fact that the generators would be licenced to run up to 500 hours annually and, per the application, would have “Thermal Energy Consumption” of 1872 m3 of “other fuel oil” annually.

<sup>1</sup> Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2021, Part 2, Section 5

<sup>2</sup> Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2021, Part 2, Section 9

<sup>3</sup> Department of Environment, Climate and Communications, “Minister Ryan announces that Ireland has joined the Beyond Oil & Gas Alliance (BOGA) to lead the transition away from global oil and gas production”, (11 Nov 2021)

<sup>4</sup> Beyond Oil and Gas, “Who We Are”, Accessed on 24 January < <https://beyondoilandgasalliance.com/who-we-are/> >

<sup>5</sup> Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2021, Part 2, Section 9

<sup>6</sup> Climate Action and Low Carbon Development (Amendment) Bill 2021, Part 2, Section 9

## Urgency of slashing greenhouse gas emissions

We have outlined Ireland's multiple climate obligations above. However, even if ours and other nations' climate obligations were to be met, these obligations are not strong enough to lead to the emissions reductions required to limit warming to an average of 1.5°C this century. This is what's referred to as the "emissions gap" in the most recent IPCC report<sup>7</sup>. Alarmingly, Ireland is failing in most of its climate obligations (the "implementation gap"). Ireland overshoot its 2020 emissions reduction target by 7 million tonnes of carbon in 2020.<sup>8</sup>

The latest IPCC report states:

"Risks and projected adverse impacts and related losses and damages from climate change escalate with every increment of global warming (very high confidence). Climatic and non-climatic risks will increasingly interact, creating compound and cascading risks that are more complex and difficult to manage (high confidence)."<sup>9</sup>

Given the increasing levels of disaster incurred with every increment that we warm the climate due to emissions of greenhouse gases, permitting any new fossil fuel infrastructure is unconscionable. The diesel generators in this application have, in total, a rating of 743.4 MWth. If licenced, they could be run for up to **500 hours annually**.

## Lack of transparency & prioritisation in relation to data being stored

It would be unconscionable to licence a wealthy corporation like Facebook (with an operating profit of \$46.76 billion in 2021<sup>10</sup>) to burn additional fossil fuels and for questionable purposes at that. An independent research report commissioned by Veritas<sup>11</sup> provides some insight into types of data being stored in data centres. Examining organisational data across 14 countries, the report found that only 14% of stored corporate data is "business critical" while 32% is redundant, obsolete or trivial. Another 54% is 'dark' data, out of sight of management. The report described a 'deluge of data' that is not being effectively managed. All of this data uses energy.

Transparency about what is being stored and for whom should be a requirement. It would enable society and the Government to rank different types of data storage services by importance to society, and be able to order data centres to turn off certain categories of services in different circumstances - such as in the event of a warning that the national grid may be unable to meet power demand - rather than allowing data centres to switch to proprietary, fossil-fueled generation

## Resources to operate sustainably

This is one of a recent wave of applications from data centres to the EPA for industrial emissions licences. It appears that the industry, conscious of the pressures data centres are placing on the electricity grid and the associated risks to their operations, is seeking to rely more on proprietary fossil fuel generation at their data centres and is putting pressure on the EPA to speed up licensing of this practice<sup>12</sup>.

Adding fossil fuel infrastructure is not a viable solution. Instead of increased investment in and running of fossil fuel generators, a company of Facebook's resources should be investing in alternatives such as

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<sup>7</sup> A.4.3. [IPCC\\_AR6\\_SYR\\_SPM](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Warning that cost of failure to meet climate targets could hit €8bn by 2030 - Independent.ie](#)

<sup>9</sup> B2 [IPCC AR6 Synthesis Report Notes](#)

<sup>10</sup> [FACEBOOK INC \(FB\) Operating Profits By Year And By Quarter \(netcials.com\)](#)

<sup>11</sup> Veritas (2015). THE DATABERG REPORT: SEE WHAT OTHERS DON'T

[https://branded-image.veritas.com/Web/Veritas/%7B364a7ca5-e05c-4fce-971b-88e18c62eafb%7D\\_45145\\_EMEA\\_Veritas\\_Strike\\_Report\\_Gulf.pdf](https://branded-image.veritas.com/Web/Veritas/%7B364a7ca5-e05c-4fce-971b-88e18c62eafb%7D_45145_EMEA_Veritas_Strike_Report_Gulf.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> [Data centre giants warn minister over delays to back-up energy permits | Business Post](#)

non-fossil-fuel based backup, energy storage technology, and demand flexibility and should be required to power their data centres entirely by either of the following:

1. On site direct renewable power source generation combined with renewable and reliable energy storage
2. Off site renewable power source and energy storage with dedicated grid connection, while avoiding questionable Renewable Energy Certificates.

We urge you to refuse this licence.

Sincerely,

Angela Deegan

On behalf of *Not Here Not Anywhere*