# Court of Appeal Quashes Approval for Controversial Gas Storage Project off Co Antrim Coast



The Court of Appeal has ordered that a former Stormont minister's decision to approve a significant gas storage development off the Co Antrim coast be quashed. Senior judges had previously determined that Edwin Poots acted irrationally by approving the construction of caverns beneath Larne Lough without referring the project to the Executive Committee. Lady Chief Justice Dame Siobhan Keegan confirmed that his decision will now be legally invalid, and the proposals have been sent back to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for reconsideration.

The case centers around a project by Islandmagee Energy Ltd, which involved creating seven large underground caverns at a depth of 1,350 meters below sea level using solution mining. The project, located in a protected area, was expected to last for 40 years. Local groups, including No Gas Caverns and Friends of the Earth Northern Ireland, legally challenged the marine licence permit, arguing that it would perpetuate fossil fuel dependency and adversely affect the environment.

In August 2022, their initial application for judicial review was dismissed. However, the Court of Appeal later ruled that the decision was significant and controversial enough to require referral to the Executive, thus identifying a breach of the Ministerial Code. Today, it was confirmed that the ministerial approval for the project’s various licenses will be quashed. The Department or Islandmagee Energy may still appeal this judgment to the Supreme Court in London.