

Comhairle Contae na Mí



Meath County Council

Geothermal Consultation

Geoscience Policy Division

Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications

29-31 Adelaide Road

Dublin,

D02 X285

Planning Department,

28th February 2022

Dear Sir/Madam,

Meath County Council welcome the publication of the draft policy statement on Geothermal Energy and acknowledge the potential for Geothermal energy to make a significant contribution to the decarbonisation of the energy sector in Ireland. The publication of a policy statement is therefore both timely and welcome.

The mitigation of the causes and impacts of climate change is one of the cross-cutting themes of the current Meath County Development Plan, 2021-2027. The importance of reducing energy requirements associated with the built environment is highlighted as a particular challenge. The Development Plan sets out policy support for the exploitation of renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, geothermal, hydro and bio-energy at suitable locations within the County.

The Geological Survey of Ireland (GSI) have developed a geothermal suitability map viewer. This mapping indicates that parts of County Meath are suitable for the generation of geothermal energy.

Consultation with all stakeholders including Local Authorities and local communities should form a central part of the final policy statement. It is noted that Section 4.3 refers to access to land. This is a key issue which will require significant engagement with landowners and the wider public. It is essential that this is managed appropriately in order to deliver the necessary buy-in from the public.

It is noted in Section 5 of the draft policy statement that the extent of Ireland's geothermal resources and the extent to which recovery is possible is yet to be defined. Substantial additional research in this area would be welcomed.

Section 6 discusses the regulatory framework for future projects. Section 3 of the Planning and Development Act 2000-2021 defines development as follows:

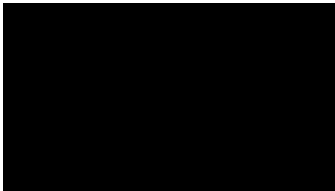
'the carrying out of any works on, in, over or under land or the making of any material change in the use of any structures or other land.'

It is essential that there is greater clarity as to how the planning requirements of these projects are to be fulfilled, for example is it intended that these projects would fall within the remit of the Strategic Infrastructure Development process whereby a planning application is made directly to An Bord

Pleanala. Significant inputs will be required from Local Authorities for these projects which will have work force planning implications.

In conclusion, Meath County Council support the preparation of a policy statement for Geothermal Energy. The Council requests that the above comments are considered, and if deemed appropriate, incorporated in the draft policy. The Council looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with the Department and awaits the publication of the finalised policy statement.

Yours Sincerely,

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