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**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Sunday 23 October 2022 19:23  
**To:** Energy Consultation  
**Subject:** Private citizen submission to Energy Security Review

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## ENERGY SECURITY REVIEW

I am making this submission as a private citizen and resident of [REDACTED] town.

I note, as introduction, that in this part of the country most people rely on oil boilers for home heating, and there are a lot of older properties which badly need to be insulated to keep people warm in their homes. The current SEAI grant scheme is skewed towards people making a huge, often impossible, outlay for a deep retrofit, and is thus of little use in helping households change to better energy efficiency and lower emissions.

As a citizen and parent I am concerned about the current vulnerability of our energy supply, but also of many interlinked systems on which we rely for basic needs such as food, water and health. Any energy security strategy must take account of these if it is to be viable in the long term.

It is our reliance on fossil fuel which has created the current crisis, making much of Europe vulnerable to aggressive and volatile supply states such as Russia. It is also causing climate destabilisation and environmental collapse, which will cause further shocks to food and water systems and geopolitical stability. <https://www.wfp.org/stories/act-now-climate-crisis-or-millions-more-will-be-pushed-hunger-and-famine>

For this reason it is critical that the right decisions are made now on a way forward that does no further damage and secures a robust, independent supply of power to support both our basic needs and wellbeing as citizens, and a thriving economy.

Every crisis is also an opportunity. This is our opportunity to change to clean, secure forms of energy production. From personal research and looking through the expert CEPA Security of Supply report, I conclude that we need to:

### **- URGENTLY DECOUPLE ENERGY SUPPLY FROM FOSSIL FUELS:**

- **DOUBLE DOWN ON OFFSHORE WIND AND SOLAR:** Ireland has the potential to be a leader in offshore wind, but only if we move quickly. Renewables offer the chance to cut costs, create local jobs and reduce our dependence on imports for energy. We're moving that way, but not fast enough. Build out the infrastructure as if it was a national emergency - which it is - and create incentives for investment and R&D.
- **CUT RED TAPE ON RENEWABLES PLANNING:** This seems to be a problem in both wind and solar development. Eg, Rose Mary McDonagh of the IFA says tax laws remain a barrier to many farmers leasing their land to solar energy developers. <https://www.businesspost.ie/news-focus/lorcan-allen-after-a-late-start-ireland-finally-turns-its-face-to-the-sun/>

- **CATCH UP WITH SCOTLAND:** Scotland has been stealing a march on us in the development of offshore wind, set to reap €30bn in the next decade and totally decarbonising its energy supply. We need to invest hugely and bravely, and overhaul our planning regulations quickly, as such infrastructure takes at least a decade to build.

<https://www.businesspost.ie/news-focus/lorcan-allen-ireland-trailing-as-scotland-leads-the-way-on-wind-power/>

They are also investing in storage capacity <https://electrek.co/2022/01/26/europes-largest-grid-connected-battery-storage-facilities-will-be-set-up-in-scotland/>

- **INVEST IN STORAGE SOLUTIONS AND INTERCONNECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE:** Storage is the biggest stumbling block for renewables, but it can be overcome. Invest in storage capacity and in researching more options for same. The more interconnectors we have with neighbours the more energy will be able to flow between jurisdictions to offset any flagging in the local grid supply.

- **ENCOURAGE SMALL-SCALE GREEN PRODUCERS:** make it tax-free for first five years so it's cheaper for customers to switch to local/community microgenerators, make it easy for them to sell to the national grid. In the same way that SMEs collectively contribute hugely to the economy, small energy producers could significantly bolster the grid (SMEs account for 99.8% of all enterprises, 67.5% of jobs, and generate 46.2% of all turnover in the country)

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-syi/statisticalyearbookofireland2021part2/bus/businessinireland/>

#### **- STOP WASTING TIME AND MONEY ON FALSE SOLUTIONS:**

- **MAKE MORATORIUM ON LNG TERMINALS PERMANENT:** Such terminals will be used to import fracked gas from the US, the extraction of which we banned in Ireland as dangerous for both people and environment. The CEPA report ruled out commercial LNG ports as unviable, along with further gas exploration. The prospective developers of Shannon LNG terminal are the US firm Fortress Energy, and US gas is increasingly produced through fracking.

- **PHASE OUT CURRENT LICENCES FOR OFFSHORE EXPLORATION:** any more gas extraction will clash with our climate commitments, which we're already failing to meet. As renewables come onstream, any such infrastructure is destined to become a stranded asset.

- **FORGET CARBON CAPTURE:** unproven technologies such as carbon capture are a dangerous distraction when we need to focus our effort and investment on what we know works: renewables and storage.

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/19/a-farce-experts-dismiss-government-claims-a-controversial-and-unproven-technology-will-cut-emissions-by-15>

- **AVOID BIOMASS AND ETHANOL:** biomass is classed as green energy by the EU, but it's been shown to be partially sourced through cutting down of primary forest, in British Columbia and eastern Europe. Ethanol is often produced, similar to palm oil and soya, on plantations created by wiping out rainforest. Thus these are not green solutions per se, and would need to be heavily scrutinised and regulated if used here

<https://www.bbc.com/news/av/science-environment-63123774>

<https://news.mongabay.com/2019/11/sugarcane-threatens-amazon-forest-and-world-climate-brazilian-ethanol-is-not-clean-commentary/>

<https://news.stanford.edu/news/2009/february18/biofuels-rainforest-destruction-gibbs-021809.html>

#### **- EASE DEMAND ON THE GRID:**

- **BAN ALL NEW DATA CENTRES UNLESS THEY PROVIDE THEIR OWN GREEN ENERGY ONSITE:** ... and provide excess to the national grid: CSO figures show that data centres (14%) are now consuming more metered electricity than all of Ireland's rural homes put together. Eirgrid has said this could rise to 30% by 2030. Singapore is one of the next biggest countries in terms of the draw-down on the grid (7%) and it brought in a moratorium on data centres two years ago.

<https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2022/0815/1315804-data-centres-ireland-electricity-energy-resources-climate-change/#:~:text=The%20figures%20show%20that%20data,data%20centres%20is%20about%201%25.>

- PUT PRESSURE ON EXISTING DATA CENTRES TO PROVIDE THEIR OWN GREEN ENERGY: use tax breaks or pressure firms planning new data centres to do this with existing data centres before they can apply for new centres.
- ACCELERATE INSULATION OF BUILDINGS: the SEAI grant system is not well run and not enough. Things need to be scaled up to match the scale of the crisis. Whole streets in urban areas need to be upgraded together for economies of scale and to speed up the process. In urban areas, shared heating schemes need to be looked at properly as a solution. To stop contractor fees being hiked to the same value as grants, which is happening at the moment, the state should hire contractors directly to run large scale insulation programmes prioritising low income homes, public buildings, schools and hospitals, but overseen properly to make sure it's done to the right standard.
- OVERSEE SEAI GRANT SYSTEM BETTER: We looked into doing a one-stop-shop deep retrofit as we were keen to change over from the oil boiler in our house, but the cost was prohibitive, even though both I and my husband work in good jobs. The scheme should instead prioritise cheap measures that save energy and money quickly, and offer free advice, easily accessible.

In addition, reputable builders were refusing to work through the current grants scheme, citing unnecessary red tape and grief, arbitrary demands and delays. There needs to be more oversight of how the SEAI grants scheme is run to make sure it is working as intended, rather than lining the pockets of a few choice providers while shutting out much needed contractors and a vast number of people eager to future-proof their homes.

- GET PUBLIC BUY-IN: run public awareness campaigns, at the same time as making energy efficient measures cheaper. I recently put a smart meter in my home only to find that the tariff is higher than for a normal meter. If we are to have homes consume less electricity there needs to be 1) an information and PR campaign explaining how and why and 2) financial incentives - specifically, cheaper electricity supply.

Thank you for considering this submission,

Kind regards,



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