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Submission from

[REDACTED]

The overwhelming risk to all discussions of energy security must be Climate Change. The war in Ukraine is disastrous, but even it is only a blip in the face of the climate disasters facing us, and growing more imminent as we delay taking climate action.

All plans for our energy security must align with our climate obligations which require us to be at zero carbon emissions by 2050. This means we must also reach our interim 2030 targets. So all infrastructure must be assessed in terms of its alignment with our carbon emission budgets, moving us securely towards full decarbonisation.

Liquefied Natural Gas is not a useful answer to our current crisis. It would simply introduce a new dependence while producing neither improved energy security nor sustainability. Instead it would entail locking us into fossil fuels for decades. The independent CEPA analysis specifically rules out LNG terminals built on land; and supports floating LNG terminals only as a state-owned back-up facility and not as a commercial enterprise.

Legislation should be introduced to make the current moratorium on LNG permanent.

The CEPA report also rules out additional gas reserves from existing exploration licences. Such exploration would also lock Ireland into fossil fuels and would not be consistent with reaching our climate targets.

The problem of energy demand and supply is also an issue. The media report repeatedly on supply difficulties but this is not balanced by reporting on the reduction of demand. Reducing demand across all sectors must be a priority. The increase of demand from data centres is extremely problematic. People are threatened with unheated houses while data centres are permitted to increase their usage. Any connection to new data centres, or increased usage, should be halted, at least until the current crisis is dealt with; or until we can be confident that we have plans in place to meet our climate targets.

For this to be possible, we must prioritise energy efficiency. We have the technology and the resources to produce solar, offshore wind, battery storage, further interconnectors for renewable energy. Any further dependence on fossil fuels at this time when every week brings us further news of disastrous climate-related events is unacceptable. Only energy efficiency based on clean and renewable energy can give us energy security into the future. There is no longer any time to delay making this happen.

At household level, the current grant system is not enough for most people to be able to afford to effectively retrofit or insulate their homes. The government must support and protect households by finding measures to save energy quickly. This is a priority for people still reliant on coal or turf. All such households should be offered measures to retrofit their homes immediately.

The sale and use of fossil fuel boilers need to be phased out, and access improved for all to energy efficient measures provided. This should include the provision of PV panels for all roofs, especially on public buildings, including all our schools.

Along with all the above, a campaign of public information (the government has already shown in the Covid 19 crisis how this can be done very successfully!) should be mounted to ensure that every citizen is aware of not only the current problems with energy supply, but with the reasons for the critical urgency to develop our energy sustainability, and the ways in which this can, and must, be achieved.