

Hi there,

My name is Elaine McGinty, I am a Labour Councillor on Meath County Council and Cathaoirleach of Laytown/ Bettystown Municipal District.

I attach a letter that I sent to Meath CC in relation to the second proposed Data Centre in Drogheda.

I am concerned that each party to the planning process is acting alone and the wider implications for Drogheda are not being considered. In particular, what will the future impact, if any, be on the town and existing businesses to expand. What is the existing capacity of the grid and water systems and what is in the pipeline to expand?

I am also a member of the Climate Action, Environment & Emergency Services and Planning Economic Development, Enterprise and European Affairs SPC in Meath.

This week the SPC had some excellent presentations from Eirgrid & Meath County Council.

Following the meeting it became clear to me that we also urgently need Ministerial guidance on the use of land for energy vs the use for Agri/food production. The following is a summary of my thoughts on the issues involved:

- We urgently need an Interagency approach to establish the amount of land being transferred for Solar Farms used to support expansion of the grid and our need to produce food. Some of the projects are huge and this will impact long term our ability to produce food and all the indigenous industries that depend on Agriculture. A considered and balance approach is needed for both areas to succeed.
- It will be more profitable for farmers to take money from solar energy companies than to farm the land - we can't put FDI before our own needs.
- The balance of food production/milk production – Sustainable Development Goal (STG) 7 and STG2 are in conflict.
- We need a Macro Plan covering areas such as Environment/ Agri./ Economic Impact/ Eirgrid/ Irish Water etc this has to be done in tandem with Climate Action Bill - Joined up thinking.
- Data Centres are very profitable ventures which depend on our State's national resources for their success. As with any business, we should ensure that the cost of oversight and future investment to support their existence is captured in how we charge. It's not just about rates for the council but the wider costs need to be taken into account too.

I hope that the above is of assistance to your policy review and please feel free to contact me if you need further clarification on any of the above.

Kind regards

Elaine McGinty