

Letter to IT, 19 Jan 2026

Energy and climate targets

Sir, – It is now a common narrative that Ireland requires vast amounts of electricity to satisfy the needs of multinational companies and growing population.

What is rarely addressed is how disproportionate this demand has become. Ireland already allocates about 22 per cent of its electricity to data centres, over seven times the EU average of 3.1 per cent, yet we are told the solution to grid strain and economic risk is simply to build ever more generation.

The real question is not whether Ireland can produce more electricity, but how this level of demand can be reconciled with legally binding climate commitments, especially when the Government is placing almost all its bets on intermittent renewable energy.

The strategy for meeting this demand rests heavily on wind and solar power. While renewables are essential to decarbonisation, their intermittency cannot be ignored.

Wind turbines operate with capacity factors of around 40 – 45 per cent, while solar efficiency over a full year is closer to 10 per cent. Data centres, however, require power 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

When the wind calms and the sun stops shining, the question remains: where does the electricity come from?

Interconnection offers limited relief. Ireland's maximum import capacity is currently about 2.6GW, while all Ireland peak electricity demand already approaches 7GW and is forecast to rise sharply if current policy continues.

Battery storage can address short-term imbalances but cannot support prolonged shortages. The unavoidable implication is greater dependency on gas-fired back up, locking in fossil fuel infrastructure precisely when climate policy demands the opposite.

This raises a fundamental question: how can a state committed to legally binding carbon budgets justify policies that require ever-greater fossil fuel support simply to sustain one sectors growth?

Climate policy is being contorted to facilitate multinational energy demand, while households face higher network charges and rising bills.

If Ireland aligned even roughly with the European average, much of this pressure would disappear and our climate targets would be far more achievable.

If the rest of Europe can manage this balance, why can't we? – Yours, etc,

Una Kealy,
Tramore,
Co Waterford.

Letter to IT, 22 Jan 2026.

Data centres and energy supply.

Sir, - Una Kealy highlights that data centres account for 22 per cent of electricity demand (seven times the European average) and asks the question: if the rest of Europe can manage to balance economic growth with carbon budgets why can't we? (Letters, January 19th).

Other countries that better balance carbon emissions and economic growth benefit from a combination of favourable geography and sensible political choices. Eighty-three per cent of Ireland's energy still comes from fossil fuels. Countries with a lot of hydro and nuclear power have a much lower dependency: Sweden 29 per cent, Finland 35 per cent, and France 37 per cent.

Ireland can never have a lot of hydro and continues to wilfully ignore nuclear. Instead, we are pursuing the impossible objective of net-zero by 2050 – from a disadvantageous starting point – based, primarily, on an abundance of wind.

Whatever wind can do to meet Ireland's energy needs is continually exaggerated and misrepresented, and energy and climate policies are therefore founded on a delusion.

Ireland is an island with no indigenous energy resources that can adequately and reliably meet the countries energy needs and there is no alternative but to continue with a dependence – albeit a declining one – on fossil fuels to meet the energy demand which renewables are not capable of meeting.

This reality applies irrespective of the level of energy demand from data centres.

In 2024, data centres accounted for 5 per cent of Ireland's overall energy consumption and wind energy met 7 per cent of total demand.

It is entirely possible for Ireland to significantly reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions but

the focus on data centres as a decisive problem, or on wind as a decisive solution, are distractions from the more important challenges for Irish citizens and industry of high energy prices and parlous energy security.

Energy policy needs to move beyond wishful thinking and address these realities. – Yours,
etc,

Eamonn O'Reilly
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