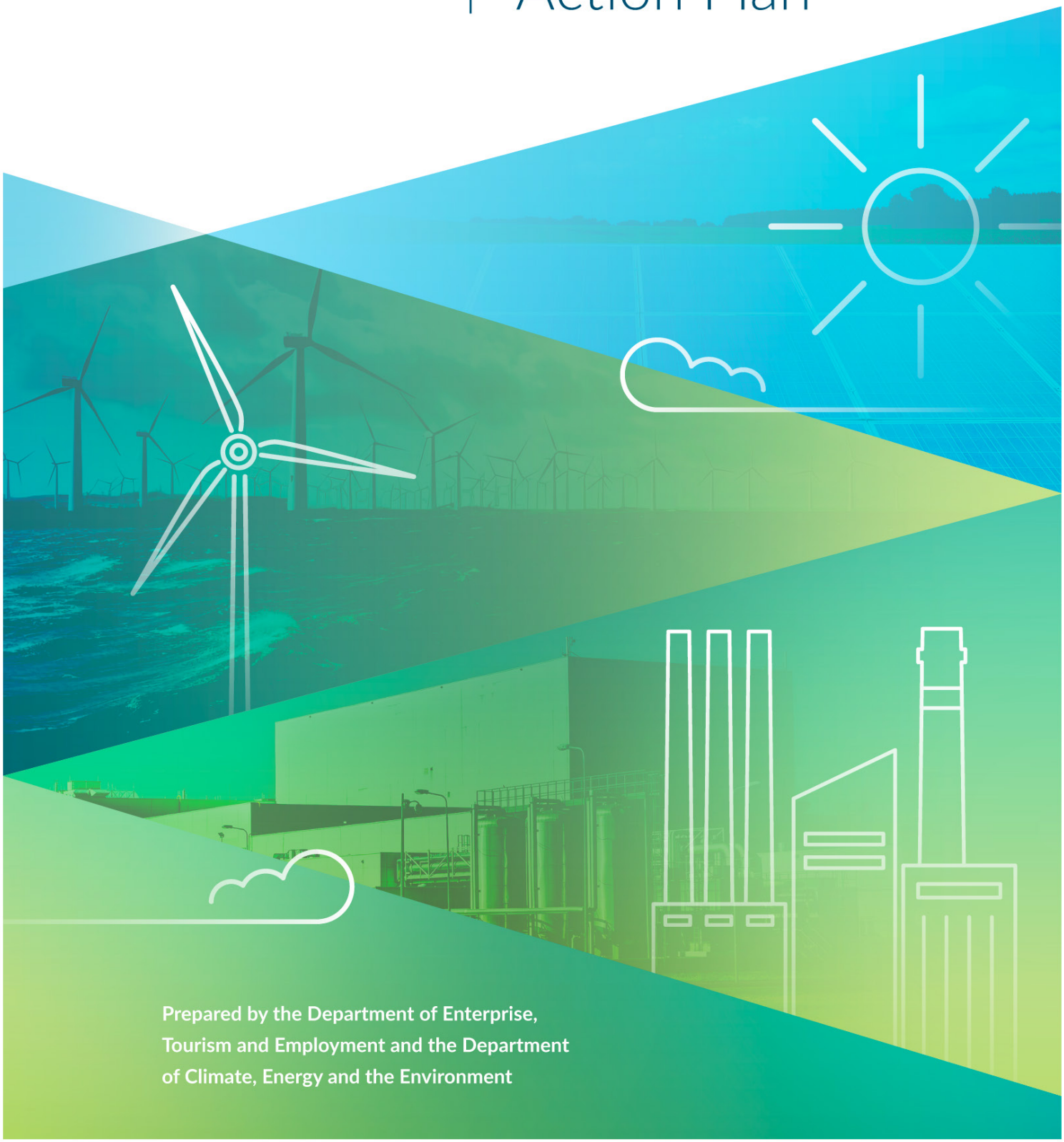
Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland

A strategy for energy intensive industries, unlocking Ireland's renewable energy opportunity

LEAP | Large Energy-User Action Plan



Prepared by the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment and the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment

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Foreword by the Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, Peter Burke TD, and the Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment, Darragh O'Brien TD.

As Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment, and Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment, we are cognisant and highly alert to the increasingly critical and strategic interdependence between our industrial sectors and our energy system. More than ever, energy system transformation and future industrial investment opportunities are interwoven. We see this as a huge opportunity for Ireland.

We are well underway in the transition to an energy system where renewable energy and indigenous natural resources will provide the majority of our energy needs. At the same time, energy-intensive industries – such as semiconductor manufacturers, data centres and life sciences – require more strategic forward-planning to identify the right locations for a new type and scale of industrial investment, with an emphasis on digitalisation, AI, energy security and decarbonisation. Ireland is extraordinarily well-placed to capture these opportunities, and to deliver prosperity, sustainable employment and high-value economic activities across our regions for decades to come.

The actions and approach set out in this Large Energy User Action Plan (LEAP) provide a clear set of policy steps to unlock those opportunities. In particular, this will allow for greater co-location of energy-intensive sectors with the supply of renewable energy generation within green energy parks. LEAP sets out clearly that greater coordination on the delivery of energy infrastructure and energy-intensive industry can deliver significant benefits for energy utilities, industry and all energy customers, including through enabling a faster green transition. Implementation of the actions in this document will position industry and our infrastructure providers for success, through structured ongoing coordination, the creation of a shared spatial plan and a strategic industrial policy approach.

On behalf of both of our Departments, we want to thank our industry and energy sector stakeholders for their collaboration, innovation and willingness to work together on the opportunities before us.

The approach outlined in this document will underscore and enhance Ireland's proposition as a world-class place to do business, where a secure, sustainable energy system supports innovation, investment and long-term industrial growth.

Go raibh maith agaibh.

Peter Burke T.D.
Minister for Enterprise, Tourism & Employment

Darragh O'Brien T.D.
Minister for Climate, Energy and the Environment

Executive Summary

This Large Energy-User Action Plan (LEAP) sets out the Government's approach to planning for sustainable new energy intensive industrial developments. It prepares for a plan-led approach to the location of very large energy user (LEU) sectors, especially in the period beyond 2030, including through identifying green energy park locations. This will facilitate co-locating the most energy intensive industrial developments with indigenous renewable energy supply.

LEAP will:

- Enable Ireland to attract the next generation of investment in energy intensive sectors, such as life sciences, semiconductors, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data centres. This will drive economic opportunities, innovation, and digitalisation across our economy over the coming decades.
- Provide further national planning policy, to build on the policy direction of the National Planning Framework, in relation to green energy parks and sustainable energy-intensive industrial developments.
- Ensure cross-Government collaboration to inform and implement a plan-led approach.
- Align future LEU development with Ireland's renewable energy resources, bolster our green energy transition and energy security, and unlock regional economic opportunities.
- Facilitate opportunities for developer-led LEU investments in green energy park settings that complement and are supported by existing infrastructure.
- Promote regional data centre projects which are consistent with the Government Statement on Data Centres and the Commission for Regulation of Utilities' (CRU) connection policy.
- Initiate enhanced collaboration between Government, energy System Operators, and industry, exploring the potential for limited development opportunities within the greater Dublin area. It is acknowledged that these opportunities will be limited in the short-term.

LEAP sets out **17 enabling actions** to deliver this – key measures include:

- Preparation of a **National Planning Statement** for Green Energy Parks.
- Pro-active consultation by Government and energy System Operators on opportunities for sustainable **Green Energy Parks**, including with LEU developers.
- Promoting greater **demand side flexibility** by LEUs, through innovative grid connection contracts, to unlock sustainable LEU and green energy park developments.
- Modelling LEU development scenarios to **inform a plan-led** approach to co-locating industry and energy opportunities.
- Development of IDA 'Next Generation Sites'.

This strategic approach will maximise the economic opportunities associated with the sustainable future growth of LEUs, including data centres, while ensuring alignment with the green transition. It will support robust energy security, cost competitiveness and affordability for all energy customers.

Pro-active planning to co-locate very energy-intensive industrial sites with renewable energy generation and other energy infrastructure will substantially improve coordination of private and public investment decisions. It will provide predictability and transparency in the planning process, and enable accelerated delivery of key infrastructure, including electricity and gas networks, water, renewable energy, storage and dispatchable electricity generation. The approach will be consistent with the objectives of the National Planning Framework (NPF), including economic and regional employment development, and aligned with the delivery of housing and transport infrastructure. Likewise, this approach will be aligned with the objectives of the Accelerating Infrastructure Action Plan, which sets out an ambitious vision for transformative reform of the delivery of critical infrastructure in Ireland, including electricity networks.

This approach to strategic green energy parks will focus on the most energy intensive industrial sectors in the period after 2030, including data centres, semiconductors, life sciences and chemicals, with plan-led sites likely to be of the scale of hundreds of megawatts capacity. LEAP will prioritise locating LEUs where they support investment in renewables, effective grid utilisation and economic development, and are consistent with Ireland's legally binding climate objectives. Strategic Green Energy Parks, which may comprise individual landbanks or wider geographical areas, may be privately developed, or comprise industrial investments coordinated by a State body, consistent with the approach set out in a National Planning Statement.

LEAP does not preclude LEU developments outside of strategic plan-led locations. Developments which are consistent with the NPF and Government policy, across all regions, will remain possible and desirable in the period before and beyond 2030. However, LEAP anticipates that a number of very large energy intensive projects will be best facilitated through these strategically prepared, nationally planned locations.

Data centre developments will continue to adhere to the principles of the 2022 Government Statement on the Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Strategy, which prioritises co-location with renewables. The revised LEU Connection Policy decision published by the CRU in December 2025 sets out criteria for the connection of proposed new data centres to our electricity network. This Connection Policy requires provision of additional dispatchable generation, and aligned with the principles of the National Biomethane Strategy, there is an opportunity that some of this could be provided utilising indigenous biogas. The Government Statement on Data Centres will also remain applicable in respect of 'islanded' data centres, which are not in line with national policy objectives; Ireland intends to facilitate data centre operations that play a pro-active and positive role in our energy system, its long-term security, and its transition to renewable electricity.

There will be opportunities for LEU developments in the coming years where there is existing or planned energy network capacity, though these will be limited by available grid infrastructure, pending delivery of grid investment. Opportunities for new LEU locations nonetheless may include instances such as where existing grid infrastructure is underutilised, a connection agreement is transferred, or where new capacity becomes available through infrastructure development or other non-wires alternatives. As part of LEAP, Government and the electricity System Operators will engage with industry to explore opportunities for developer-led LEU investment pre-2030, primarily in green energy parks, where this aligns with national planning, energy, climate and enterprise policy.

As set out in the Programme for Government and the Action Plan on Competitiveness and Productivity, LEAP represents a key strategic industrial policy in support of the Government's objective to accelerate renewable energy deployment, expedite grid investment and streamline planning for the next wave of industrial development. LEAP will provide certainty for industries making energy intensive investments in alignment with our decarbonisation objectives, and growing Ireland's high-tech economy.

Planning for energy intensive sectors of the future

Ireland has a proven record in attracting and developing high-value, cutting edge industry to locate and invest across our regions, including within energy intensive sectors such as data centres, manufacturing, life sciences and semiconductors. These create sustainable regional employment, drive innovation, attract FDI at scale, and contribute to our national prosperity.

Global demand for energy intensive digitalisation and associated LEU developments, including for data centres, AI, and semiconductors, is rising sharply. At the same time, the energy and infrastructure requirements of these energy intensive industries have made them increasingly complex to plan and deliver.

A report published by the International Energy Agency (IEA) in April 2025 notes that global investment in data centres has nearly doubled since 2022 and amounted to half a trillion dollars in 2024. According to the IEA, data centres accounted for around 1.5% of the world's electricity consumption in 2024, or 415 terawatt-hours (TWh), and is forecast to more than double by the end of this decade. In Ireland, data centres accounted for 22% of metered electricity consumption in 2024.

At EU level, the response to these economic opportunities has included the European Chips Act 2023, which aims to double the region's semiconductor chips market share by 2030. Ireland has subsequently published its own Semiconductor Strategy in 2025 – "Silicon Island" - setting out significant ambition for this sector. The EU Clean Industrial Deal published in February 2025 is designed to align environmental, climate, and industrial policies, to expand investment in clean energy infrastructure, digitalisation, and to scale-up low-carbon industries.

The 2024 National Competitiveness and Productivity Council (NCPC) report outlined energy-related challenges to Ireland's competitiveness and productivity over the medium term, including infrastructure delivery, energy price inflation and security of supply concerns. As noted by the NCPC, these challenges, if unaddressed, could undermine the attractiveness of Ireland as a home to these sectors and a destination for FDI.

Reflecting the increased scale of recent and projected LEU development in key sectors, in both investment value and energy demand terms, LEAP sets out a process that will prepare for these developments in Ireland, in order to capture future decades of industrial opportunity. Through LEAP and other Government initiatives, Ireland will continue to attract investment in high-quality, strategic and sustainable sectors. LEAP will ensure that associated energy needs are met through indigenous renewable energy to the greatest extent possible and allow for planned alignment of LEUs with our infrastructure, strategically positioning Ireland's industry for a net zero carbon future.

LEAP Strategy

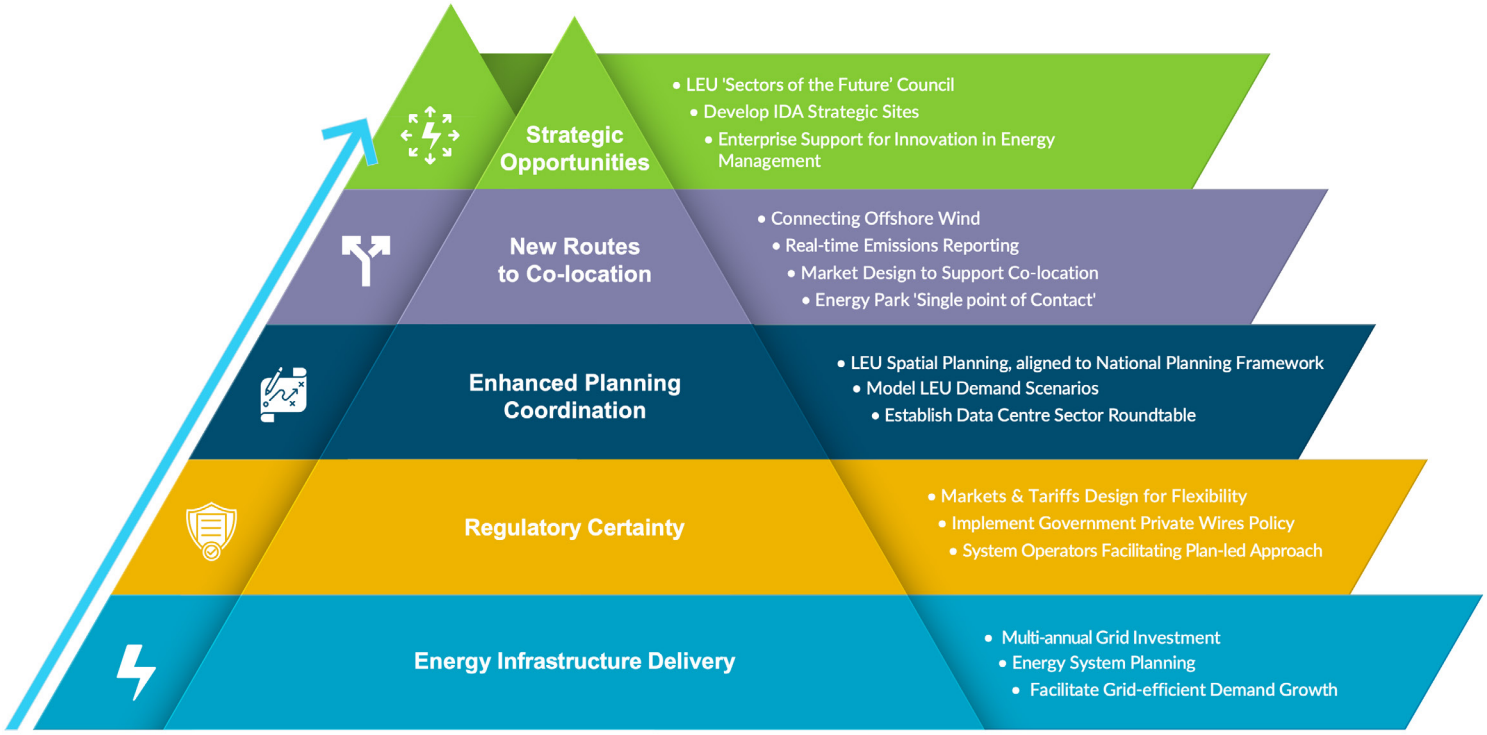
To support opportunities for developer-led green energy parks and facilitate plan-led energy intensive LEU developments beyond 2030, LEAP includes a suite of enabling actions, to be delivered on a cross-Government basis.

These actions are categorised across five themes. The foundational layers, such as delivering infrastructure investment, efficient regulation and a predictable planning regime, will be pre-requisites to achieving the more strategic objectives.

LEAP therefore initiates a transformative strategy, co-locating energy intensive developments with renewable energy supply, unlocking opportunities for LEU sectors of the future. The pyramid below gives a broad overview of the approach. The five themes will be progressed concurrently and a timeline for implementation is set out.

Delivery of LEAP also requires ongoing implementation of relevant Government policies, plans and strategies, including Climate Action, Energy Security in Ireland to 2030, Roadmap for Decarbonisation of Industrial Heat, Powering Prosperity – Ireland's Offshore Wind Industrial Strategy, the revised National Planning Framework and policy actions to expedite infrastructure delivery. For clarity on the additional interventions proposed in LEAP, these are not repeated below.

LEAP Delivery Model



Actions

Energy Infrastructure Delivery

	Objective	Timeframe	Lead	Action
1.	Deliver electricity grid investment	From 2026	EirGrid, ESB Networks, DCEE, CRU	**Progress multi-annual investment in electricity infrastructure**

- The electricity System Operators will invest at unprecedented levels in grid infrastructure in the Price Review 6 (PR6) period up to 2030. This investment is in line with Shaping our Electricity Future, Ireland's 80% renewable energy target and delivery of key priorities including housing, decarbonisation and economic growth – it does not provide for additional infrastructure to facilitate data centre demand-loads beyond those already with connection contracts.
- The Accelerating Renewable Electricity Taskforce will receive quarterly updates on the key PR6 strategic energy infrastructure projects as they progress from design to planning to delivery, with co-dependencies, delivery risks and timeframes.
- In the medium-term, beyond PR6, Action 7 (below) will inform an assessment of the costs and opportunities of pre-emptive, anticipatory investments in infrastructure, for example to facilitate green energy parks in specific locations. The need for greater adoption of anticipatory grid investments is a recommendation of the IEA's energy security report, 2025.
- Plan-led investments may also require Government to consider new infrastructure funding models to ensure Ireland is an attractive investment location for industry, while providing fairness for all energy customers, and economic return for the State. This would require the approval by Government.

	Objective	Timeframe	Lead	Action
2.	Energy system planning	2027	DCEE and System Operators	**Create an energy system plan with centralised spatial demand and generation projections, including new LEUs, across electricity and gas System Operators.**

- DCEE will ensure that electricity and gas System Operators develop, plan and operate, on the basis of an agreed and shared set of objectives, including forecast supply and demand drivers, and a common approach to national spatial planning. This process should be informed by the IEA Energy Security Review, and independent of any single System Operator.
- The Minister with responsibility for Energy will have opportunity to convey the Government's central policy objectives to this planning process and to interrogate the trade-offs inherent in the shared assumptions and objectives determined; for example demand forecasts by sector (including industry), spatial development assumptions, generation mix requirements and consistency of gas and electricity infrastructure objectives, subject to independent regulatory processes.
- As part of this process, Government policy will outline national ambition for green energy parks, which will feed into wider energy network development and system planning.
- This integrated process will further meet the requirements for joint scenario development across electricity, gas, renewable gas, hydrogen and district heating as set out in the revised EU Gas Package measures; and for joint systems assessments under Action 22 in the Energy Security Package of November 2023.
- This new process does not replace or replicate the existing planning functions and responsibilities of the SOs, and will build on the processes that exist, such as the All-Island Resource Adequacy Assessment, the Network Development Plan, EirGrid's Tomorrow's Energy Scenarios processes and Flexibility Needs Assessment.

	Objective	Timeframe	Lead	Action
3.	Demand flexibility	2027	CRU, EirGrid, ESB Networks	**Design flexible or 'non-firm' contracts and hybrid connections for LEUs that maximise utilisation of available grid and renewable electricity use.**

- Existing and new infrastructure will be more efficient, cheaper for customers and have lower carbon intensity if LEUs, including data centres, can use grid power when renewables are plentiful, and reduce grid demand when they are not and/or the grid is constrained (i.e. operate flexibly). The design of contractual arrangements for this behaviour will facilitate efficient, low-carbon growth.
- The CRU also consider and implement, as appropriate, measures that incentivise SOs to deliver flexible demand connections for LEUs, to the benefit of all grid users.
- This should include consideration of opportunities for cost effective flexible LEU demand connections, and/or hybrid connections, in respect of existing grid infrastructure and new infrastructure to be delivered under Price Reviews or possible alternative grid development frameworks.
- The need to optimise use of grid infrastructure through operational and contractual arrangements, such as flexible grid connections, is a recommendation of the IEA's Energy Security Report 2025.
- The development of a framework for System Operators to offer the possibility of establishing flexible connection agreements in areas where there is limited or no network capacity availability for new connections is a requirement of EU Directive 2024/1711.

Providing Regulatory Certainty

	Objective	Timeframe	Lead	Action
4.	Markets and Tariffs that unlock demand flexibility	As per a revised and expedited National Energy Demand Strategy (publication 2026)	CRU	**Energy Network Tariffs, market operation and grid code redesign to deliver LEU demand flexibility**

- Due to the intermittency of renewables, and network constraints, electricity market design and tariff structures which incentivise demand flexibility by LEUs is essential. This will provide for greater consumption of electricity at times when there is an abundance of renewable energy available and reduced consumption during peak demand periods. In addition to bolstering energy security, this enhanced flexibility has the effect of reducing carbon emissions, lowering the cost of energy, and making efficient use of the grid. Demand flexibility can further improve the investment case for renewables and reduces peak demand when electricity may be more expensive and have higher associated emissions.
- The NEDS sets out a series of actions to be implemented by the Regulator, and electricity and gas SOs in order to unlock this opportunity. Within the forthcoming revised NEDS due in 2026, Government and the CRU will accelerate and build on these actions.
- The NEDS will assess reforms to network tariffs, day-ahead and inter-day wholesale market trading, grid code, storage and flexibility procurement (plus capacity markets if required), and set out a pathway to future implementation.
- The need to unlock greater LEU demand side flexibility through “connection requirements and market mechanisms such as incentives for workload shifting, onsite storage and operational optimisation” is a recommendation of the Draft IEA Energy Security Report, 2025.

	Objective	Timeframe	Lead	Action
5.	System Operators empowered to facilitate plan-led approach	2027 – position paper, followed by new legislation if required	DCEE, CRU, EirGrid, ESB Networks, GNI	**Assess powers of System Operators and the CRU to facilitate plan-led demand locations, and associated enhanced anticipatory infrastructure investments and/or prioritised connection types**
	• In order to provide for a strategic plan-led approach to energy intensive LEUs and establishment of green energy parks, an assessment of the legal powers and responsibilities of the System Operators and their regulators is required. • A strategic approach to facilitate co-location of demand load, generation and/or storage, would be a change from the current 'developer led' system of grid planning and connections policy. • Consideration will be given to the appropriate funding mechanisms to enable infrastructure investment for plan led approach.			
6.	Legislate Government Private Wires Policy	2026	DCEE	**Legislate for Ireland's new Private Wire Policy**
	• Allowing private actors to install private electricity infrastructure to a standard consistent with national infrastructure will enable expedited infrastructure delivery, deployment of 'proximate' renewables and storage, and allow for innovative energy park systems to emerge in certain locations. • A new Private Wires policy was approved by Government in July 2025, which will be legislated for during 2026. While emphasising the primacy of the national grid for delivering secure, decarbonised energy to all customers, the policy highlights a number of scenarios where development of Private Wires will be permitted.			

Enhanced Planning Coordination

	Objective	Timeframe	Lead	Action
7.	Model LEU demand scenarios	Q2 2026	DCEE, Eirgrid, ESB Networks, GNI, DETE	**Model a range of plan-led LEU development scenarios and locations to inform policy choices**

- As part of ongoing grid planning exercises, such as EirGrid's Tomorrow's Energy Scenarios (TES), the Long-Term Generation and Network Adequacy Study and GNI Network Development Plan a set of scenarios relating to LEU development will be modelled and considered.
- This exercise will provide an initial opportunity to consider plan-led industrial development opportunities and interdependencies within TSO and DSO grid planning.
- This exercise should ultimately inform a more integrated approach to a plan-led energy system agreed across SOs, the regulator and Government, as described in Action 2.
- Energy System Planning will include assessment of the required level of gas generation and the adequacy of the Irish gas and electricity network to support peak electricity demand under a range of economic and sectoral growth scenarios.

	Objective	Timeframe	Lead	Action
8.	Embed LEAP strategy in national spatial planning policy	2026	DHLGH, DETE, DCEE	**Prepare a National Planning Statement on Green Energy Park development**
	• Preparation of a National Planning Statement for Green Energy Parks will allow consideration of the co-location of LEUs and generation; this may include both developer-led and plan-led strategic green energy park developments, consistent with the objectives of the revised National Planning Framework. • The National Planning Statement will provide more clarity on large energy intensive sectors in green energy park developments and will not be sector prescriptive. Nonetheless, where it relates to data centre developments it will further give effect to the Government Statement on the Role of Data Centres in Enterprise Strategy (2022), or equivalent updated policy. • In cooperation with DHLGH, DETE will establish a technical working group to progress analysis and drafting of a National Planning Statement.			
9.	Establish Data Centre Sector Roundtable	2026 & onwards	D/Taoiseach DCEE, DETE, IDA, EirGrid, ESB Networks, GNI, CRU	**Convene Annual Data Centre Sector Roundtable for greater sectoral and government engagement**
	• Government Departments and energy System Operators will engage annually with representatives of the data centre sector to update on the implementation of LEAP, provide policy updates, receive sector feedback and escalate challenges.			

New Routes to Co-Location

	Objective	Timeframe	Lead	Action
10.	'Single point of contact' for Green Energy Parks	2027	DETE	**Consider development of a 'Single Point of Contact' mechanism for plan-led Green Energy Park developments**
	• Design of a 'single point of contact' approach for potential developer-led and plan-led green energy park development to coordinate permit granting procedures will be considered. • A Single Point of Contact, such as envisaged under the Renewable Energy Directive III and the Net Zero Industry Act, and other provisions of EU Clean Industrial Deal, may also facilitate consolidation or prioritisation of development within a green energy park to support development opportunities that would maximise the economic and environmental benefits for the State.			
11.	Connect Offshore Wind to Green Energy Parks	2027	DCEE, CRU, EirGrid	**Support the further development of a CPPA 'Route to Market' for offshore wind to supply Green Energy Parks**
	• A plan-led approach to LEU development should ensure that new developments are powered primarily from renewable energy, and therefore in some locations it will be necessary for industrial developers to contract with 'merchant' offshore wind developments through corporate power purchase agreements (CPPAs). • There may also be opportunities for private procurement of renewable energy through CPPAs alongside the generation supported by the Offshore Renewable Electricity Support Scheme (ORESS) or its equivalent successor scheme, exploiting economies of scale to secure cheaper energy for all electricity customers. • This action will be progressed as part of DCEE's ongoing review of CPPA policy and through the ongoing review of the RESS.			

	Objective	Timeframe	Lead	Action
12.	LEU Efficiency and Emissions Reporting	2026	DCEE, DETE, SEAI	**Establish and mandate LEU efficiency reporting aligned with EU legislation, and review opportunity for real-time emissions reporting framework**

- To ensure ongoing decarbonisation of the electricity system, and of LEU demand loads in particular, a near 'real-time' emissions measurement is required.
- Advance and support measures in-line with existing and emerging EU legislation to drive energy efficiency improvements, demand-side flexibility and emissions reporting, including:
  - Article 12 of the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED) to increase transparency and drive energy efficiency improvements in the data centre industry.
  - EED Article 26 to promote the utilisation of waste heat from data centres in nearby facilities and heat networks.
  - The EU Commission rating scheme and minimum performance standards.
  - Encourage adoption of new designs and energy efficiency developments in both new and existing facilities, with refence to the most recent version of the European code of conduct on data center energy efficiency.
- The emissions associated with electricity use is determined by the mix of generation technologies, including storage and renewables, including renewable gases, at the time of consumption and location of their energy use compared to the time and availability of renewable energy generation and storage.
- Consider opportunity for real-time emissions reporting data infrastructure, to enable accurate emissions data, aggregation and reporting, and obligating its use by LEUs.

	Objective	Timeframe	Lead	Action
13.	Market design to support co-location	2028 and ongoing	CRU, DCEE, EirGrid, ESB Networks	**Electricity tariff and system services markets that enable co-location and incentivise demand-flexibility**

- Implementation of the revised NEDS will consider new tariff and market structures that are required to unlock demand flexibility and efficient use of grid infrastructure, enhancing economic incentives for green energy park developments.
- Prospective green energy park developments should have access to a package of 'stackable' revenue-making opportunities and grid connections that appropriately reflect their efficient use of grid infrastructure and provision of additional services that benefit national energy system operation, including storage and provision of demand flexibility.
- This will clarify economic opportunities for green energy park developments, while also providing for more efficient energy system management, including through benefits associated with co-location, efficient use of grid infrastructure, and reduced renewable energy curtailment.

Preparing for Strategic Opportunities

	Objective	Timeframe	Lead	Action
14.	Support opportunities aligned with national policy	2026 & onwards	DCEE, DETE, EirGrid, ESB Networks, GNI	**Facilitate Direct Engagement with Regional "Green Energy Park" Proposers**
	• To inform implementation steps within LEAP, Government Departments and energy System Operators will engage directly with proposers of developer-led green energy park projects.			
15.	Develop IDA Strategic site proposals	Proposals 2025; Investments from 2030	DETE, IDA	**Progress IDA Ireland 'Next Generation Sites'**
	• IDA will progress and assess how proposed development of Next Generation Sites can complement, while utilising the plan-led approach to green energy park concepts described in this strategy. • IDA's Regional Property Programme seeks to provide land and advanced building and infrastructure solutions to both IDA and EI clients companies. These agencies could play a pre-investment, convening or coordinating role in energy park instigation – subject to an appropriate business case and, where appropriate, Government approval.			

	Objective	Timeframe	Lead	Action
16.	Enterprise support for innovation in energy management	2025 Workplan; 2026 implementation	EI, IDA	**Support innovation in the areas of energy management and storage for LEUs, and consider use of regulatory sandbox**

- DETE will engage EI and IDA on approaches to support the expert suppliers and service providers to LEU sectors, and determine how the agencies can best assist innovation particularly in the areas of energy management, efficiency, renewables integration and energy storage in these specialist Irish suppliers.
- Consider the use of regulatory sandboxes to facilitate innovation in energy management.

	Objective	Timeframe	Lead	Action
17.	Establish 'Sectors of the Future' Council	2026	DETE, DHLGH	**Establish an LEU 'Sectors of the Future' expert Council to inform industrial policy approach to energy parks**

- A plan-led approach to LEU development will allow for policy considerations as to what types of LEU would provide most advantageous broad economic and social return for Ireland.
- DETE and its agencies will progress analysis on economy-wide return on infrastructure investment across multiple potential decarbonised LEU sectors. This will include establishment of an expert advisory panel.
- This work will inform any business case to support targeting of particular sectors, with consideration given to their likely impacts on employment, domestic value-added, skills spillovers, 'stickiness', environmental and economic sustainability.
- DETE will assess whether EU or international regional designations such as 'hydrogen valleys' / 'innovation valleys' or similar concepts offer opportunities to enhance green energy parks. In particular, this will include assessment of whether it would facilitate access to EU funding initiatives such as the Innovation Fund, Competitiveness Fund, Hydrogen bank, IPCEIs or other EU/global research and/or innovation opportunities.

Implementation

LEAP will be progressed on a cross-Government basis, with regular updates on implementation provided to a Senior Officials Group and the Cabinet Committee on Economy, Trade and Competitiveness.

Implementation oversight will include:

- Revised National Energy Demand Strategy implementation group (Action 4)
- Technical Working Group to support the preparation of a National Planning Statement, setting our clear policy and guidance relation to Green Energy Parks to extensively support the planning system in identifying such sites, including necessary infrastructure required (Action 8)
- Annual Data Centre sector Roundtable (Action 9)
- Engagement with Developer-led green energy park proposals by Departments, State Agencies and System Operators (Action 14)
- 'Sectors of the Future' Council (Action 17)

Timeline

The actions described will be progressed concurrently, under three areas of activity.

1: Expediting delivery of infrastructure and unlocking innovation.

2: Informing a Plan-Led Approach

3: Embedding a Plan-led Approach

Some Actions are already underway, while others can start immediately. Collectively, they ensure delivery against existing infrastructure needs and committed regulation, and provide for a new national approach to energy and industrial planning for LEU sectors. The actions will allow Government to consider a robust evidence-base, and cost-benefit analysis, for plan-led opportunities for LEU development, for example, assessing pre-emptive energy infrastructure costs for planned green energy park developments. Ultimately the actions should further allow that Government, through the appropriate Minister, may choose to propose or support specific spatial plans that deliver on the objectives set out.

LEAP

Timelines for Large Energy User Action Plan

Delivering Infrastructure and Unlocking Innovation

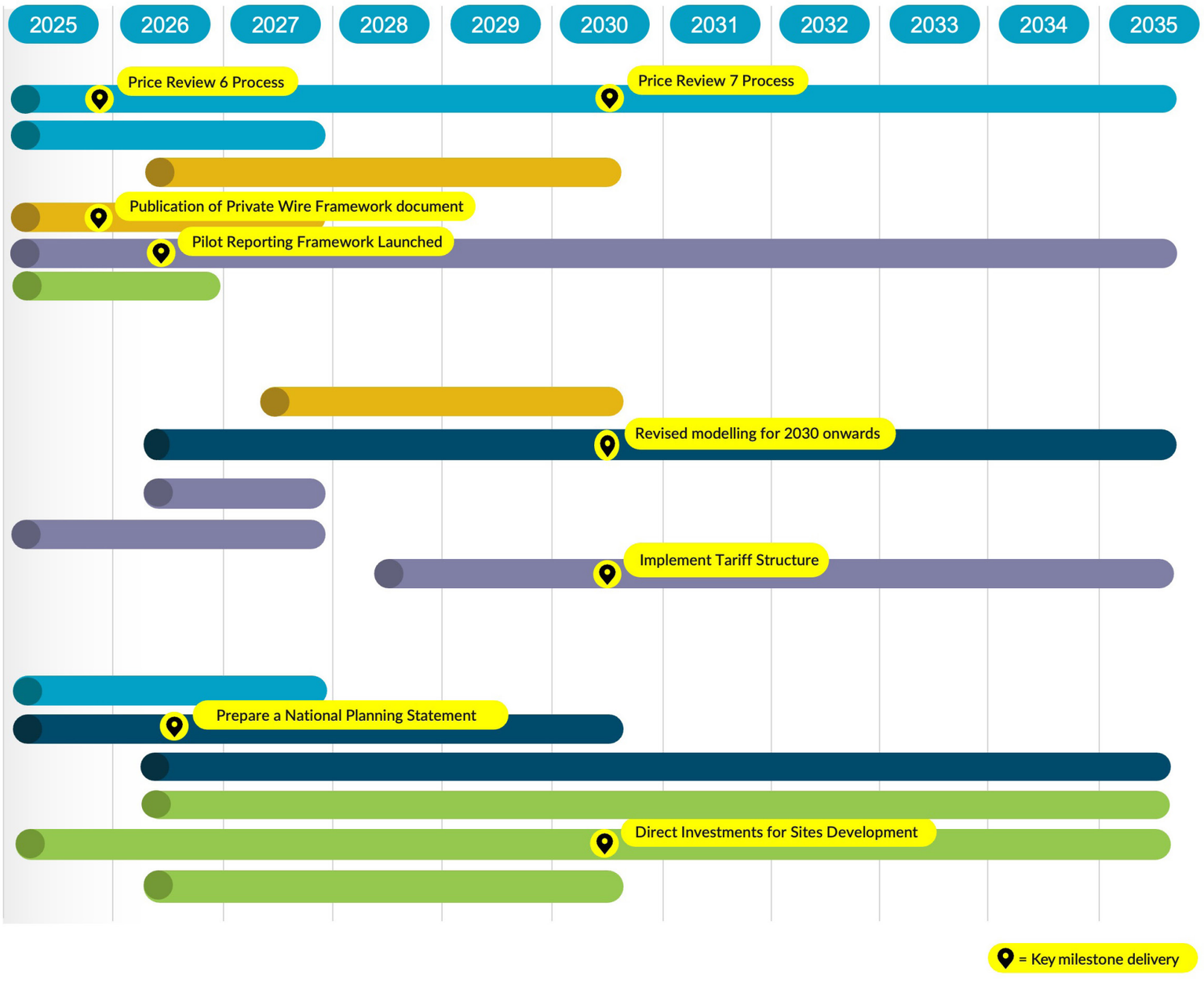
- 1 Multi-annual investment in electricity infrastructure
- 3 Design flexible or "non-firm" contracts for LEU connections
- 4 Energy Network Tariffs, market operation and grid code redesign to deliver LEU demand flexibility
- 6 Legislate for and implement new Private Wire Policy
- 12 Establish real-time emissions reporting framework for LEUs
- 16 Enterprise support for innovation in energy management

Informing a plan-led Approach

- 5 Assess powers of system operators and CRU to facilitate plan-led demand locations
- 7 Model a range of LEU development scenarios
- 10 Develop a 'Single Point of Contact' for Green Energy Parks
- 11 Support the further development of a CPPA "Route to Market" for offshore wind to supply green energy parks
- 13 Market Design to Support Co-location

Enabling a plan-led Approach

- 2 Create an energy system plan
- 8 Embed LEAP strategy in national spatial planning policy
- 9 Establish Annual Data Centre Sector Roundtable
- 14 Facilitate direct engagement with regional Green Energy Park proposers
- 15 Develop IDA Ireland "Next Generation Strategic Sites"
- 17 Establish an LEU "Sectors of the Future" Council



Unlocking Additional Renewable Energy Opportunities

The Government has ambitious targets for the deployment of offshore renewable energy (ORE), in addition to further expansion of onshore wind and solar PV generation capacity, biomethane and green hydrogen. This will support low or zero emissions economic development. The scale of this opportunity requires enhanced energy system planning and careful consideration of the allocation of infrastructure costs, not least to ensure future energy affordability for Irish households and businesses.

In recent years, growth in energy demand and development of renewables has outstripped our ability to deliver the complex electricity grid infrastructure required to underpin a secure and increasingly low-carbon electricity system. LEAP creates a process to align the location of new LEU energy demand with both grid infrastructure and renewable generation, and this is critical to unlocking efficiencies and opportunities. The energy system will also need more dispatchable generation and storage capacity to underpin Ireland's rising proportion of intermittent renewables, consistent with Ireland's pathway to a net zero economy and robust energy security.

In March 2024, the Government published Powering Prosperity – Ireland's Offshore Wind Industrial Strategy, to ensure that Ireland develops the supply chain to deliver an offshore wind sector of scale and maximises the associated economic benefits. Amongst the core pillars of this strategy is a focus on future demand and opportunities in aligning growing enterprise activity with the development of renewable energy supply. The strategy set out a vision for industrial parks primarily powered by green energy from offshore wind, and an expert report informing this approach is published alongside LEAP.

Ireland has an abundant renewable energy potential that can be deployed to support future economic and industrial development. Many renewable energy projects are supported through the PSO Levy, which is included on household and business electricity customer bills. There is also significant renewable generation now operating outside PSO Levy support schemes with a marked expansion in projects supported through CPPAs with industry, and data centres in particular. Future LEU investment can further support renewable energy targets such as the Government's target of 5.7 TWh of biomethane, and green hydrogen, through Corporate Gas Purchase Agreements, while simultaneously enhancing Ireland's energy security. LEAP's plan-led approach to energy intensive industrial developments can ensure that these developments drive new investment in, and are powered primarily by, renewable energy.

This strategy sets out a process to ensure that LEUs unlock additional renewable energy opportunities and contribute to grid flexibility by providing or supporting energy storage, peak demand management and renewables integration. Investment by LEUs in sustainable energy solutions will be vital to the continued alignment of economic growth and climate action objectives. Further, demand flexibility will be a critical enabler of low carbon future LEU growth.

This ensures renewable energy use is maximised during periods of abundant supply and reduces our peak demand when the energy system is constrained, it also improves the investment case for renewables. The National Energy Demand Strategy (NEDS) sets out a series of actions to unlock this 'demand-flexibility' opportunity, and the actions described above build on these.

Data Centre Policy

Ireland's data centre policy is set out succinctly in the Government Statement on the Role of Data Centres in Ireland's Enterprise Strategy (2022). Data centres provide important digital infrastructure for Ireland's modern economy and strengthen its position as a strategic knowledge intensive, export location for the ICT sector.

Data centres underpin the provision of often mission-critical software and digital services, from enterprise resource planning applications which help the world's largest companies to manage global supply chains, to online banking and shopping, accessing health and from accessing public services online, to streaming movies. They enable the digital transformation of global enterprise and the continued strong position of Ireland as one of the world's leading export locations for software and digital services. Data centres also enable remote working, facilitate improved work life balance for employees, and could help to balance regional development. Ireland has supported the evolution of a globally significant data centre sector, which contributes to our prosperity and employment. Data centres are now rapidly evolving to support the deployment of AI across industry and society more broadly.

Critically, data centres anchor other valuable activities in the Irish economy, including in technology, finance, security, entertainment, health and manufacturing sectors. Ireland's technology sector, underpinned by digital infrastructure in data centres, accounted for approximately €95 billion or 20% of gross value added in 2023, and employing 182,900 people in Q4 2024, equivalent to 7% of Ireland's total workforce. According to IDA, companies that operate data centres, whether as part of their own infrastructure requirements or as a provider of services to other users - in Ireland account for approximately 21,000 direct employees. The expertise that has been developed by indigenous enterprise around data centres has given an Irish data centre construction, engineering, design and electrical specialist subsectors a significant global advantage, supporting indigenous employment and exports.

Electricity demand from data centres, which accounted for 22% of metered national electricity consumption in 2024, has grown faster than the delivery of new grid infrastructure, and connection of renewable and dispatchable generation. Ireland is also set to rapidly electrify its transport and heat (both residential and commercial) sectors. Significant additional electricity grid capacity and an accelerated connection of renewables will be therefore required if further growth in LEUs is to be sustainable, and available grid capacity will act as a constraint on data centre growth in the short and medium term. There have been further technical challenges in Ireland and other jurisdictions associated with data centre integration, including the fault ride through issue, which must be resolved through innovation and engagement between System Operators and industry. LEAP sets out a process to develop a plan-led approach to maximising opportunities within these constraints.

The 2022 Government Data Centre Statement adopted a series of principles to inform decisions on future development in Ireland. These signal that Government has a preference for data centre developments associated with:

- Strong economic activity and employment;
- Efficient use of renewable energy resources;
- Efficient use of electricity grid infrastructure, using available grid capacity and alleviating constraints;
- Potential to co-locate a renewable generation facility or advanced storage with the data centre, supported by a CPPA, private wire or other arrangements.

LEAP, through the actions set out above, advances and complements the 2022 Government Statement; adopting a plan-led approach to facilitating co-location opportunities and planning for green energy parks in regional locations. This will include the preparation of a National Planning Statement, establishing clear national policies on planning matters relating to sustainable energy parks and key enabling infrastructure.

Certain types of data centre activities – such as retail, or 'co-location' development – require to be in close proximity to their customers. These developments have been concentrated in Dublin, which is at present a highly constrained area of our electricity grid. The electricity System Operators are currently delivering a significant investment programme in Dublin's electricity infrastructure, which is necessary to deliver housing, transport and public services and industrial development. LEAP will initiate enhanced collaboration between Government, System Operators and industry to explore limited opportunities within the greater Dublin area and opportunities to unlock grid capacity through demand side flexibility. However, it is important to highlight that these opportunities are likely to be extremely limited owing to existing capacity constraint.

The Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment is currently progressing an analysis to set out the economic impacts of data centres in Ireland, and the scenarios for developing the data centre landscape beyond 2030, with a view to optimising future benefits to Ireland. This analysis will inform LEAP's plan-led approach to LEU development regionally and also inform considerations as to the scale of additional Dublin energy infrastructure that might be warranted, so as to facilitate some volume of data centres that require proximity to that city.

The revised LEU Connection Policy decision by the Commission for Regulation of Utilities (CRU) has now amended the required criteria for connection of proposed new data centres to our electricity grid. As outlined in the Government Statement, 'islanded' data centres, that run primarily on fossil fuels, are not in line with national policy objectives. Ireland intends to facilitate data centre operations that play a pro-active and positive role in our energy system, its long-term security, and its transition to renewable electricity. This sets a high but necessary requirement for sustainability and reliability in this sector, reflecting the need to maintain our robust energy security and continue to reduce our energy sector emissions.

What are the opportunities of a plan-led approach?

Green energy parks, that co-locate LEUs, dispatchable generation, storage and renewable generation, are optimal to efficiently use our energy infrastructure and natural resources.

A strategic, plan-led approach to LEU development can align our planning system, infrastructure delivery, and support Ireland's capacity to attract and retain the next wave of industrial investment. It will ensure that industrial development in energy intensive sectors aligns with Government enterprise and energy policy over the coming decades, as well as our national objectives for decarbonisation, digitalisation and competitiveness. A plan-led approach will complement Government investment priorities in housing, transport, water and other public services.

LEAP establishes a framework for identifying appropriate locations, scale and composition of LEU development and enabling infrastructure, and thus de-risking project delivery. In order to ensure that a plan-led approach interacts seamlessly with spatial planning, additional policies and objectives will need to be embedded in regional and local planning, consistent with the revised NPF, and a future National Planning Statement.

Plan-led industrial development can provide for evidence-based assessment of the costs associated with new energy infrastructure, including dispatchable generation, renewables, electricity and our gas networks. This assessment may allow for innovative or appropriate allocation of these costs to different energy users. In some locations, there may be a diminishing rationale for all electricity customers to support development of renewable assets beyond those necessary to decarbonise Ireland's domestic energy demands. This process can bolster Ireland's status as an attractive location for investing in renewables powered industry, while ensuring that the taxpayer and energy customers, are not exposed to unwarranted risks or cost.

Energy infrastructure planning and development by our energy System Operators (EirGrid, ESB Networks, GNI) typically occurs over a cycle of between 5 to 10 years, and sometimes longer. The capital programmes of our energy System Operators are defined out to 2030 and beyond. To unlock the opportunities of green energy parks and strategic LEU development early in the next decade, LEAP sets out a programme of actions and preparation that will begin immediately.

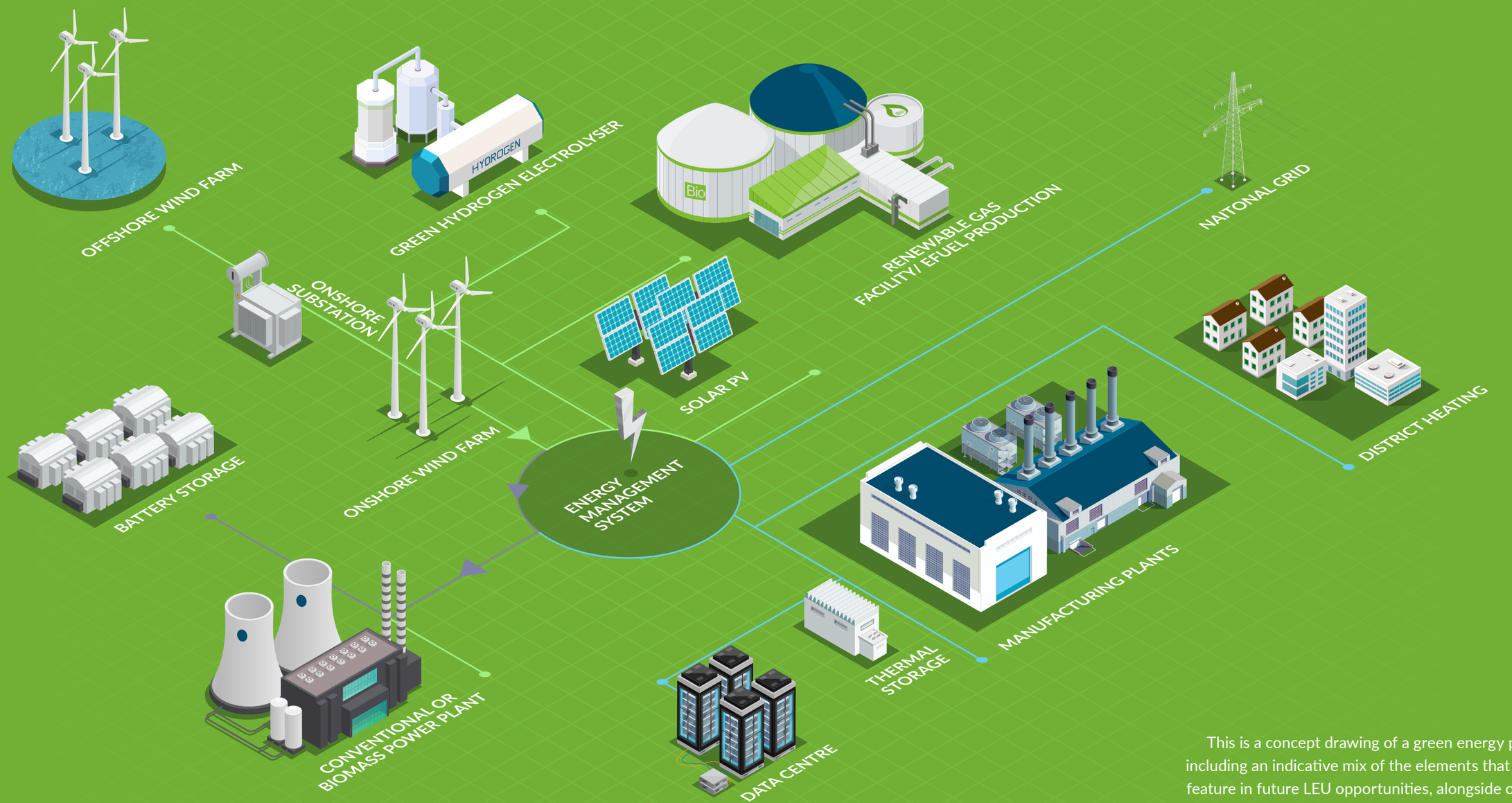
A planned approach to infrastructure delivery, including consideration of pre-investments in specified locations to facilitate targeted industrial developments, would be a change from the exclusively 'developer-led' system in place. To ensure fair and cost-effective infrastructure delivery, and competitive energy markets, further evaluation will be needed on how a plan-led approach to LEU development aligns with the regulated process for energy infrastructure development. LEAP therefore initiates assessment by relevant state agencies on available future options for the delivery of energy infrastructure within a coordinated, planned approach to future LEU development.

Green energy park concepts often develop synergies between industries in the geography, including energy storage, RD&I facilities and the development of other industrial innovations, biodiversity programmes, environmental sustainability initiatives and energy transition technologies. A planned approach may also provide opportunities for streamlined consenting processes, including through adopting provisions within existing and future EU legislative frameworks, such as a 'single point of contact' mechanism – as set out in Action 10.

A plan-led approach to green energy parks will allow for enterprise policy considerations as to what sectors or activities would provide the most advantageous broad economic and social return for Ireland. The Government and Ireland's enterprise development agencies, with the support of the newly proposed 'Sectors of the Future Council', will progress analysis to inform any business case to facilitate plan-led energy parks, with consideration of their likely impacts on employment, domestic value-added, skills spillovers, and long-term environmental and economic sustainability.

Green energy park development will also require and inspire significant innovation in energy management, energy services, and smart energy systems across complex infrastructure, generation and demand loads. Ireland's enterprise and innovation policy can ensure that this world-leading innovation is facilitated, and that Irish expertise and supply chains are preparing for this opportunity globally.

LEAP



This is a concept drawing of a green energy park, including an indicative mix of the elements that may feature in future LEU opportunities, alongside other installations including power generation plants, potentially to include Carbon Capture technologies and renewable generation.

A green energy park would not necessarily require all the elements included here, and this graphic is for illustrative purposes only.

Rialtas na hÉireann
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