

Thank you a Cathaoirleach for hosting this meeting. Members of the committee and chair of the committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak before you today. We, as young people in modern times, are speaking out across the world in strong numbers because we must convey the importance of a message. That climate change is here and change needs to be made. To some degree the message has been heard but not enough is being done.

I may be here to speak on only one aspect of this issue but I am speaking here today as a collective with my peers. A combined voice. I am asking each person listening to take in what we have to say with the future of young people in mind. The issue under the broad umbrella of Climate Action and the Environment I will speak about today is the energy versus emissions crisis in this country, the crisis of energy production.

Ireland has long been conscious of the effect of energy production on the environment. In its history Ireland used to be a nation that led the world in this area; it was ambitious, as we can see with the cases of Ardnacrusha and Turlough Hill, two world leading hydroelectric power plants in their time. These projects were questioned and some opposed them but they fulfilled a vital need for clean energy.

The issue that the world faces is climate change and Ireland has missed several of its emission targets towards combatting this issue. This makes the necessary goal of net zero emissions by 2050 look more and more unlikely to actually happen. This goal is vital to sustaining the future of young people, and globally sustaining the future of our planet. Though Ireland should be commended for its rapid investment into wind, solar and hydroelectric energy production, it isn't reaching the heights needed to combat climate change.

If we look closer at recent events and compare our situation to that of our European partners it is clear to see that we are not secure in our position as a country. Ireland is heavily reliant on natural gas for its energy production: 52% of it in fact is reliant on natural gas. The Minister has projected that without change, Ireland's natural gas supply will be 90% imported by 2030. This is not sustainable for the future of Ireland as it means the majority of our energy will be dependent on the supply from one country. As recent events with fuel supply for energy production have shown us, such a reliance on a single source of natural gas is not a good thing for the security of Ireland's energy. You need only look as far as Germany's situation with Russia to see an example of the effects of relying predominantly on one country for energy.

Another issue Ireland faces is how to cost effectively produce energy where there is increasing demand for it. Compromising greenhouse gas emissions by having to reopen another power plant supplied by non renewable sources is not an option. The solution the government has been pursuing is wind, solar and hydroelectricity. The problem is that these solutions do not give us energy on demand, when there is a need for more

energy at a specific time. These forms of energy production do not provide what is needed because they rely on uncontrollable factors to work. In an easier way of explaining it, if the wind stops blowing or if the sun is covered by a cloud there is no more energy produced by the turbines or the solar panels.

To make sure we have energy when there is no wind or shine, we use batteries. These batteries have a strongly negative impact on the environment: at the moment they are not recycled in the numbers that they should be, not to mention the costly environmental and human tolls in some countries for extracting the raw materials they are made from.

One country that may be a prime example for Ireland to follow is France. Already a Celtic Interconnector Project has been planned, joining the French and Irish power grids. What's more than that, is France is a pioneer of another type of clean energy that Ireland will be using once this interconnector is complete: nuclear energy.

Nuclear energy could be one possible solution to the Irish energy versus emissions crisis. Already, this type of energy was considered at Carnsore Point but was instead passed up for a coal fired plant. The concerns of the Fukushima and Chernobyl accidents have long been dispelled in new reactor designs and international safety protocols. Ireland is a prime candidate for nuclear energy, thanks to our low seismic activity, our proximity and good relations with world leading experts on the subject, and the fact that we are a neutral country.

The advances in this area of clean energy could be explored with the potential of solving the issue Ireland faces. There have been leaps and bounds made in this area over the last few decades, making nuclear energy production much safer and greener for the environment.

In the battle between energy and emissions with international policies and an ever-growing demand for energy, I do not envy your position, but as a young person I am concerned about my future as are many like me. As young people we have a right to influence and have meaningful input on climate policies that damage the future, so that there is a future for young people.

In closing, renewable energy is everything in modern society and it is the only thing we as young people will accept because it means there is a world to continue living in. We might be on the right path, but it's a matter of getting there on time.

Thank you.