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7 March, 2022

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Department of Environment, Climate and Communications

- 1. Policy Statement on Mineral Exploration and Mining in Ireland (July 2021)**
- 2. Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2022 – 2023**
- 3. Geothermal Energy in Ireland: A roadmap for a policy and regulatory framework (2020)**

1. Policy Statement on Mineral Exploration and Mining in Ireland (July 2021)

Department of Environment, Climate and Communications

Underlines the importance of Mineral exploration and mining and their role in:

- Ireland's and the European Union's transition to the **circular economy** and **net-zero greenhouse gas** emissions;
- Supporting primary and secondary **economic activity** and associated jobs creation; and
- Progressing many of our national, European and international policies and commitments.

Demand

*“An energy system powered by **clean energy** technologies differs profoundly from one fuelled by traditional hydrocarbon resources.....A typical **electric car** requires **six times** the **mineral inputs** of a conventional car, and an **onshore wind plant** requires **nine times** more **mineral resources** than a gas-fired power plant. Since 2010, the average amount of minerals needed for a new unit of **power generation** capacity has increased by 50% as the share of **renewables** has risen.”*

[The International Energy Agency]

Supply

*“The need to secure a **sustainable supply** of raw materials, and in particular critical raw materials, has become an ever increasing issue of importance for the EU. In addition, in **politically unstable** areas of the world, the minerals trade can be used to finance armed groups,, and **support corruption and money laundering**, increasing the need to ensure that we are responsible about where we source minerals. Furthermore, the same **stringent environmental standards** which apply in Ireland and the EU are not necessarily applied in particular areas of the world where minerals are being mined. “*

*“Metal demand cannot be met solely from recycling currently – **mining will continue to be necessary to meet demand for critical metals for some time** - recycling, including the recycling of minerals and metals, can contribute significantly to the security of supply and help improve circularity of materials...”*

Further legislation or amendments to Irish legislation (e.g. Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), Mining, exploration, Environmental and/or Planning)?

Minerals Development Act, 2017 – to be commenced in 2022?

2. Whole of Government Circular Economy Strategy 2022 - 2023

Department of Environment, Climate and Communications

- To provide a **national policy framework** for Ireland's transition to a circular economy and to promote public sector leadership in adopting circular policies and practices.
- Today's global economy is overwhelmingly based on a linear ('**take-make-waste**') model of production and consumption.
- **Circular Economy**: keep resources in use for as long as possible, extract the maximum value from them whilst in use, then recover and regenerate products and materials at the end of life.
- A more ambitious, transformative approach to **production and consumption** is needed to achieve a systemically circular economy, one in which waste and resource use are minimised by default, in which **good design** preserves **product value** for as long as possible, via durability and repair and where, when a product has reached the end of its life, its parts can be **readily used again** and again to create further useful products.

Strategy sets out framework for future policy leading to legislation.

3. Geothermal Energy in Ireland: A roadmap for a policy and regulatory framework (2020)

Department of Environment, Climate and Communications

Geothermal energy is a secure, environmentally sustainable and cost-effective source of **renewable energy**.

The EU defines geothermal energy as “*energy stored in the form of heat beneath the surface of solid Earth*”. Geothermal installations heat and cool homes and businesses.

Harnessing of geothermal resources is usually termed as either:

- direct use (taking energy directly from geothermal fluids such as pore waters for space heating, cooling, balneology or industrial applications) or
- indirect use (converting heat from geothermal fluids into electricity or for adsorption cooling systems).

“... usually accessed by **drilling deep boreholes**, which can be several kilometres deep below the ground. These new technologies and our improved understanding of the subsurface mean this energy source **could now be viable in Ireland.**”

However, while Ireland’s deeper geothermal resources are not fully understood, research conducted to date indicates that there is **significant potential for the increased development of geothermal resources onshore Ireland.**

Carboniferous basins in the East, Midlands and Southwest of Ireland, **while Wicklow, Wexford, Waterford and Cork** show presence of deep untapped reservoirs of geothermal heat.

Next Steps:

- development of a Policy and Regulatory Framework.
- legislation