



Senior Executive Officer,
Planning Department,
Meath County Council,
Buvinda House, Dublin Road,
Navan, Co. Meath, C15 Y291
Via online submission only

17th November 2025

Re: Pre-Draft Strategic Issues Paper

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Institute of Geologists of Ireland (“IGI”) is the Chartering Body for geologists in Ireland. Its aims are to promote and advance the science of geology and its professional application across the island of Ireland. Accordingly, the IGI makes the following observations and wishes to highlight several matters for your consideration in drafting the Meath County Development Plan.

The County Development Plan provides the framework for future development within Meath but must operate in compliance with current national and EU legislation. Ireland adopted the EU’s Critical Raw Materials Act (“CRMA”) in 2024, which includes a target objective to increase raw material extraction within the EU. The Department of the Climate, Energy and the Environment’s (“DCEE”) Minerals Policy Statement outlines the goal of responsible and sustainable extraction in Ireland.

The current Meath County Development Plan (2021 – 2027) recognises that the extractive industry is one of the county’s traditional economic bases, while also acknowledging the need for careful consideration of the industry. County Meath, through the mining operations at the Tara Mine is, and has been for many decades, one of Europe’s primary sources of zinc, lead and silver. Furthermore, the potential for the discovery of additional resources is recognized globally, as is evidenced by ongoing systematic exploration. This underscores the importance of recognising mining’s role in the Plan with respect to county, national, and EU objectives.

Security of supply of critical raw materials has gained global attention in recent years particularly in light of threatened US tariffs on China over Rare Earth Elements (“REE”). These raw materials, such as lithium, copper, and REE, are essential to many key economic sectors and are almost exclusively mined. The EU has identified thirty-four critical and strategic raw materials vital to the energy, digital, and defence sectors. These materials are components in countless products, including smartphones, batteries, electrical cabling, and radar systems.

Given the increasing demand for these materials, the fact that most existing stock will remain in use for the next two decades, and the limited capacity for end-of-life recycling, mining will remain their primary source of supply for years to come.

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Other mined materials, while not on the EU's critical list, remain essential. For example, zinc—a metal with a long history of production in Ireland—is used to galvanise steel, thereby extending the lifespan of structures such as wind turbines.

Ireland, and each county within it, faces a significant need to expand housing and to modernise existing infrastructure. These projects will require substantial volumes of raw materials, often more complex than in the past. Including consideration of raw material sources and availability in the County Development Plan will help prepare Meath for potential supply shocks and price fluctuations.

While metals typically involve complex international supply chains, aggregates can often be sourced locally, provided sufficient quarry development exists to meet demand.

Mining differs from the aggregates industry in that the pre-mining phase (prospecting) is governed and regulated at the national level.

Approval for the development of a mine is subject to acquiring four permissions: (i) planning permission from the planning authority, (ii) an Integrated Pollution Control (IPC) licence and (iii) abstraction licence from the EPA and (iv) a mine lease or licence from DCEE. Public participation processes are integrated into each of these permissions.

Unlike with most of the aggregate industry, control of emissions from a mine is a function of an IPC licence including ongoing monitoring and enforcement of the licence by the EPA.

A recommended first step for County Councils is to understand what mineral resources may be present within their borders. Establishing resource availability—both minerals and aggregates—can help prevent future land-use conflicts and streamline the planning and permitting process. Geological Survey Ireland, part of DCEE, provides datasets and information on your county's known [mineral and aggregate](#) potential in its [Geoscience for Planning](#) pages which contains useful information for preparing plans, policies and environmental assessments.

The public often has concerns about mining and are commonly unaware of modern mining and processing methods. For example, the extraction of mercury is prohibited in Ireland under the Minamata Convention and the use of sulphuric acid in ore concentration is subject to consideration and control by an IPC licence and is in line with European best practice. Sulphuric acid is also used within a mine water treatment plant in the same way sulphuric acid is used in Ireland's drinking water treatment plants.

The IGI is available as a source of information, with members across a range of geological disciplines, to help clarify such issues. For more information, please find attached the IGI's factsheets on the CRMA and mining in Ireland.



Should you wish to engage further, representatives from the IGI are available to meet and discuss the impact of mineral exploration and mining on development within your county.

Please contact me if you have any questions. I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Emer Blackwell PGeo

Chair, Minerals Information Working Group
Institute of Geologists of Ireland

