

Biogas facility to be located beside Arklow data centre

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Biocore produces biogas from anaerobic digestion processes

Irish data centre owner, Echelon, and renewable power producer, Biocore Environmental, have agreed the co-location of a biogas facility next to Echelon's new data centre in Arklow Co Wicklow.

The move opens up the possibility of Biocore providing renewable backup power, created from the production of methane gas through anaerobic digestion, to supply the data centre.

The development is part of Echelon's commitment to using clean and sustainable power in its six sites in Ireland and the UK.

"The inconvenient truth is that data centres are huge consumers of power – but equally inconvenient is the fact that without them, we would not be enjoying – relying on – the benefits of 5G, e-commerce, the Internet of Things, artificial intelligence (machine learning) and virtual reality," said Niall Molloy, CEO of Echelon Data Centres.

"Given, therefore, that data centres are here to stay, it's up to us – the facilities' owners and operators – to make provision to power them sustainably, cleanly and with least impact on the grid."

The Arklow data centre, known as DUB20, is a 100MW facility.

"We recently signed an agreement with SSE Renewables to co-locate a substation on our DUB20 (Arklow) site which will facilitate the development of Ireland's largest off-shore windfarm, supplying some 520MW of renewable power through the substation to the national grid," Mr Molloy added.

The substation will also supply power to the data centre, he stated.

Biocore described its relationship with Echelon as symbiotic, as the heat from the data centre can be used in the biogas production process and the gas itself can then be used for back up power through the use of batteries.

"Biogas production is a virtuous circle – we take organic materials that can, themselves, become environmental pollutants, and transform them into gas either for supply to the gas network, or for use in generating power," said Declan Murray, Managing Director of Biocore Environmental Ltd.

"The residue from the production process is dried and re-supplied to the farms from which much of our organic feedstock can be sourced. This residue makes an excellent fertiliser – and means that none of the organic material goes to waste."