

Apple's grand plan in Ireland held up by a forest

US tech giant Apple's plan to build a new €850m (\$1.0bn) data centre in Ireland is being held up by conservationists seeking to preserve the forest where it is to be built.



Image source: athenryparishheritage.com

The campaigners have begun legal action, sparking concerns in the western town of Athenry, which has a population of 4,000, that a much-needed boost to the local economy could end up being scrapped.

"If Apple can't invest here, who can?" said Paul Keane, founder of the Facebook group "Athenry for Apple", which now has thousands of followers.

Speaking to AFP, Keane said Apple's investment would be good for the region, but he expressed concern that the conservationists' protest was sending a negative message.

The project would be the biggest private investment in western Ireland.

The site is expected to cover 166,000m² in Derrydonnell Forest, which lies about 20km east of Galway, the main regional centre.

Irish Diaspora and International Development Minister Ciaran Cannon, who also represents eastern Galway in parliament,

said Thursday, 14 September, he had received assurances about the future of the project.

"I can confirm today that (Prime Minister) Leo Varadkar met with Apple executives last week and that Apple remains committed to its €850m data centre investment in Athenry," he wrote on Facebook.

Cannon said the government was "examining potential changes" to ensure that Ireland's planning and legal system "works more efficiently" for investors.

Source: AFP

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