

## **COMMISSION AND EIRGRID MOVING FORWARD WITH EAST WEST INTERCONNECTION PROJECT.**

Detailed planning and feasibility studies are in progress for a new undersea electricity link from Ireland to Britain which will be developed over the next five years.

Arising from a decision by the Government, the Commission for Energy Regulation is arranging the design of a competition to secure the construction of a new East West Interconnector. The Government has also decided that EirGrid, the independent transmission system operator, will own the Interconnector.

The Commission has appointed John O'Connell ([joconnell@cer.ie](mailto:joconnell@cer.ie)) as its project manager for the interconnector competition. EirGrid has appointed John Fitzgerald ([john.fitzgerald@eirgrid.com](mailto:john.fitzgerald@eirgrid.com)) as project manager for the day to day running of the East West Interconnector Project.

The interconnector will have a capacity of 500 MW (megawatts) – greater than the largest generator in Ireland. It will utilise High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) technology, similar to that used between France and Britain, for the Moyle Interconnector and for Scandinavian links.

The interconnector is scheduled to become operational not later than 2012 utilising the most economic and feasible routing and technology solution whilst meeting technical and environmental standards. The connection to the electricity system in Britain will also involve liaison and co-operation with the National Grid Company (UK) and Ofgem, the UK regulator.

The Government and the Commission are convinced that the interconnector will bring long-term net benefits to the Irish consumer, particularly in terms of enhancing security of electricity supply, developing competition and enabling the integration of Ireland into a wider regional electricity market. The interconnector also has the potential to facilitate the development of the indigenous renewable energy sector. It will provide access for generators and supply companies to both imports from, and exports to Britain.

The development of the interconnector is consistent with moves towards more European electricity links and regional markets, as espoused by the European Commission. The East West Interconnector is identified as being of critical national strategic importance as part of the National Development Plan 2007 - 2013. It is also a designated project of European interest under the EU Priority Interconnection Plan.

The Commission and Eirgrid are working closely together on the interconnector project. The primary focus at this stage is on:

- finalising the preferred route taking account of, among other things, sub sea conditions
- securing connection points on both the Irish and UK transmission systems
- drawing up all necessary technical specifications and
- designing the competition process and the criteria to be followed.

These issues will be resolved in the coming months. It is anticipated that the competition structure and associated competition documentation will be finalised no later than the third quarter of 2007 and tenders invited shortly thereafter.

In the meanwhile, both the Commission and Eirgrid will keep interested parties fully abreast of developments through regular notices on their websites. Queries can also be made to the respective project managers identified above.

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