

CER Media Release

North-South Interconnector Planning Application Oral Hearing

Monday, 14th March 2015: The Commission for Energy Regulation today made its presentation to An Bord Pleanála at the oral hearing regarding the planning application for the proposed North-South 400 kV Interconnection Development between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The CER is the independent economic regulator responsible for the natural gas and electricity sectors in Ireland. The CER's remit is to ensure the security of supply of Ireland's electricity system and that Irish consumers have access to fair and reasonable electricity prices.

The CER is also a member of the Single Electricity Market Committee which is the body responsible for implementing and overseeing the electricity markets of Ireland and Northern Ireland as a single All Island electricity market (**SEM**), and thus must protect consumers across the island.

The CER reviews and monitors the expenditure of EirGrid, which has a statutory role to develop the electricity transmission network, to ensure that these are delivered efficiently and so minimise the costs to the Irish and all-island consumer.

As both the independent Irish energy regulator, and as a member of the all-island Single Electricity Market Committee, the CER believes that the North South Interconnector is an important development for the electricity network and will provide a range of benefits for the electricity consumers in both Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The North South Interconnector will increase the security of supply of electricity against both long term and short term events.

It will also help reduce the wholesale cost of electricity on the Island of Ireland, by allowing the system operator to have better access to the most efficient set of electricity generators for the whole Island, benefitting both Irish and Northern Irish electricity consumers.

The CER has approved an allowance for the expenditure on this project on the basis of the application EirGrid has submitted to An Bord Pleanála. We will encourage EirGrid to ensure all transmission developments, including this one, are delivered in a cost effective manner.

On the basis of those benefits, the CER considers there is a clear need for the construction and commissioning of the North South Interconnector. Material delay of the North South Interconnector is, in the CER's view, against the interests of Irish and all-island electricity consumers.

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Notes to editors

EirGrid and SONI (as the transmission System Operators of Ireland and Northern Ireland) are proposing to build a second electricity Interconnector between the existing Woodland sub-station in Co Meath running north to a proposed new sub-station at Turleenan in Tyrone in Northern Ireland.

The Interconnector is proposed to be a 400kV AC Over Head Line transmission line. The Interconnector will be able to carry 1,500 MW of power between Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The proposed Interconnector will be in addition to the current double circuit AC OHL 275kv transmission line that runs on a single set of pylons between the Louth sub-station in Ireland and Tandragee in Northern Ireland.

EirGrid has established a website for the proposed Interconnector at <http://www.eirgridnorthsouthinterconnector.ie/>

In January 2014 the Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources appointed an Independent Expert Panel (IEP) to oversee and facilitate a —comparative analysis of underground and overhead alternatives for the Grid West and Grid Link projects. In addition, the IEP was tasked with providing an opinion to the Minister on —“the compatibility of the methodologies to be employed on the GW and GL projects with what has already been done (i.e. up to 2 May 2014, being the date the Panel decided to examine the N/S project) on the North South Transmission Line project”.

In July 2014 the Panel, which is made up of Mrs Justice Catherine McGuinness, Chairperson, Professor Keith Bell, Professor John Fitzgerald, Dr. Karen Foley and Mr. Colm McCarthy provided its opinion on the matter and this has been published by the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources. The IEP is of the opinion that the work completed to date on the North-South 400 kV Interconnection Development is compatible with the Terms of Reference to be employed on the Grid West and Grid Link projects: —

“Having considered and discussed all of the material, the Panel is unanimously of the opinion that, in all material respects, what has already been done on the N/S project is compatible with the methodologies now being employed on the GW and GL projects. While the Panel acknowledges that no two grid infrastructure projects are identical, and that some non-comparability’s are likely to arise when assessing the potential environmental impacts, technical efficacy and cost factors, the Panel is of the opinion that no material differences in the methodologies arise.”