

EirGrid Awards Contract for Construction of the East West Interconnector

**For Immediate Release
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The Government has approved the development of the new electricity interconnector between Ireland and Wales, which is due to be constructed over the next three years, in an investment by EirGrid of approximately €600 million, it was announced today.

The new interconnector will have a capacity of 500MW and will be able to transport power in bulk and high quality in both directions. It will involve the construction of a 260km cable and other infrastructure linking Ireland and North Wales, which will enable power to be exported and imported, providing a market for the growing renewable energy sector in Ireland, as well as increasing competition to aid consumers, and supporting secure power supplies.

EirGrid Chief Executive Dermot Byrne said “The new Interconnector to the UK is absolutely vital for Ireland. It will help to ensure that Ireland has enough electricity to meet our needs into the future in a sustainable manner. Importantly, the interconnector will also support the energy sector in adapting to meet the challenges posed by climate change and fuel security.”

Swedish Engineering firm ABB has been awarded the contract to design, manufacture and install EirGrid's East West Electricity Interconnector. It is understood construction of this project will involve specialist international construction staff, and will also result in up to 100 jobs in Ireland during the construction period.

“We are delighted to partner Eirgrid for this project,” said Peter Leupp, head of ABB's Power Systems division. “ABB's HVDC Light technology will enhance the stability of both the Irish and U.K transmission grids, and also expand capacity for the use of renewable power.”

The proposed East West Interconnector is of strategic importance for Ireland and EirGrid has been progressing the Project as quickly as possible to deliver this critical infrastructure. The Project is currently awaiting planning approval following a recent oral hearing of An Bord Pleanála.

Michael G. Tutty, Chairman of the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) has welcomed today's contract signing and the progress being made on delivery of this vital piece of national infrastructure. Mr. Tutty said, "Increasing Ireland's interconnection with our neighbouring electricity markets has been a priority for the CER, particularly from a competition and security of supply point of view. Reaching today's milestone is a significant achievement and the CER now looks forward to overseeing the delivery of this interconnector and the benefits it will bring to Ireland."

Editors Notes

In the National Development Plan 2007 – 2013, the Irish Government has identified the need for a strategic energy link, in the form of an electrical High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) interconnector, to be developed between Ireland and the UK. The interconnector is a major infrastructure initiative, which will involve the construction of approximately 260 km, 500 MW (HVDC) interconnector cable between Ireland and Britain. EirGrid, together with the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER) was appointed the task of arranging a competition to secure the construction of the East West Interconnector.

ABB is a leader in power and automation technologies that enable utility and industry customers to improve performance while lowering environmental impact. The ABB Group of companies operates in around 100 countries and employs about 120,000 people.