

Anchors away for Wales - Ireland electricity link

2011-11-25 09:00:00 by Rons_ROV_Links



Plans to link the electricity networks of Wales and Ireland have taken a significant leap forward as work begins to lay the cables under the sea bed. The East West Interconnector project is being developed by EirGrid - the independent electricity transmission system operator in the Republic of Ireland. It involves the laying of undersea and underground cables to enable the flow of electricity in both directions between the two countries.

With most of the underground cables now laid, the laying of the cables at sea is the next significant step in the €600 million project.

The cable-laying ship *Nostag 10* anchored off Prestatyn's Barkby Beach where the underground cable is linked to the 180km length that will travel to a coastal site near Dublin.



Local people flock to see the *Nostag 10* at Barkby Beach as it connects the cables that will travel out to sea to Ireland. As it makes its way across the sea, the cable will be carefully lowered into the water and laid in a narrow trench which will be opened and closed by a remote controlled vehicle operating on the sea bed. The cable laying work is expected to take approximately eight months to complete.

Sean Meagher, EirGrid's Wales project manager, said: "This is a very exciting stage in the project and probably one of the most challenging, too. We carried out a detailed marine survey ahead of work starting to identify a route for the undersea cable that would have the least impact on marine life.

"After a lot of hard work and planning it is great to see the cable finally beginning to be laid at sea, which is a major moment in this project."

The Interconnector is scheduled to be operational by 2012.

Sean added: "The Interconnector will have a capacity to carry 500MW and will be able to transport power in bulk and high quality in both directions between Ireland and Wales. This will provide benefits to electricity consumers on both sides of the Irish Sea as it will have the potential to create access to a new market for energy generated in Wales, supporting the energy sector in adapting to meet the challenges posed by climate change and fuel security."

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