

Response to Ofgem Public Consultation re.

"GreenLink Cap and floor regime: Update on our Initial Project Assessment of the Greenlink inter-connector"

closing date: Friday 11th September 2015

There is much evidence that the Irish Planning authorities, Government and Banks have learnt little or nothing from the recent economic crash which was fueled significantly by speculative development chasing potential profits rather than well planned and assessed strategic development based on needs and efficient expenditure of resources.

Greenwire / Greenlink is no different - speculative development on a massive scale.

Greenlink is effectively the electrical connection for the Greenwire windfarms proposed for development across the Irish Midlands. These are two aspects of the same project since the windfarms are of no use without the electrical connection, and an electrical connection from the UK grid to a proposed development site with no windfarm or grid infrastructure is equally useless.

1. The Irish Planning system is weak and inconsistent. As a result of this, windfarm projects are rightly being regularly challenged both at planning level and through the Irish courts and being rejected for significant procedural breaches. (note that the UN Aarhus compliance Committee are also investigating such breaches). As such, the likelihood of the Greenwire windfarm projects receiving planning permission is in doubt. How has Ofgem's assessment considered the risk / impact should the Greenlink interconnector proceed but the Greenwire (windfarms) not proceed in full or at all?
2. There appear to be certain assumptions that Ofgem have made in assessing what exactly the Greenlink is connecting to.

Greenwire has been marketed to the Irish public as a private export project that is entirely independent of the Irish Grid and Irish Taxpayer as is stated on their website¹:

- *"All cabling underground, all infrastructure independent of Irish grid*
- *At zero cost to Irish taxpayer, a clean green industry can be established in the Midlands to rival the Irish dairy industry in due course"*

Planning permissions and associated Environmental Impact Assessments have been carried out on this basis. As such, how can Ofgem possibly consider that a stand alone windfarm development project that is independent of the Irish Grid will provide any kind of support or stability to the UK system?

So, which is it? The Greenwire project definitely will or won't be an integral part of the Irish Grid? This is a fundamental assumption and it appears that Element Power are telling Ofgem one story while telling the Irish Public another - but ultimately it cannot be both ways.

¹ see Annex 1 which includes an extract from the Greenwire project webpage.

3. The Greenwire windfarms, which are proposed to be developed across the midlands of Ireland do not have public support, indeed, there is widespread public opposition. Under the requirements of the Aarhus convention this must be taken into account in this trans-boundary decision-making process where the 'benefits' to UK consumers is being assessed but the real impact of the resulting supply end of the project will be experienced in Ireland.

I note that none of the meetings that Ofgem conducted appear to have involved consultation with the Irish Public who will be impacted by the development of the windfarms to feed the renewable electricity to the proposed interconnector. Meetings were however conducted with the developer who wants to make money from our state lands and resources. As such, merely putting a note up on a website not frequented by the Irish public is not sufficient to alert the Irish public that this consultation and decision which will affect them is even ongoing.

Please can you confirm how the Irish Public were alerted to the potential impacts that this decision would have for them and that this consultation process was even underway?

4. The 'About us' page on Ofgem's website confirms that the principles of sustainability are enshrined in your assessment process i.e.

"We continually seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our approach. This includes setting out the costs and benefits, as well as the social and environmental impacts, of all major decisions"

As such, can you please advise how the social and environmental impacts of this decision on the Irish people and environment have been captured and assessed / evaluated? It seems unlikely that the Irish Public are even aware of this consultation or that their views and the impacts have been captured in your economic model.

5. The alluring promise of guaranteed income will effectively and relentlessly drive this project forward and in effect set the framework for future development. The written promise of a market will underpin a wave of turbine and electrical developments across the midlands of Ireland. For a decision of this nature which will effectively set the trans-boundary framework for the speculative development of massive numbers of turbines and associated infrastructure in Ireland (and thereby will have a significant impact on the environment in Ireland), a Strategic Environmental Assessment in accordance with National and European law and the Aarhus convention is mandated before any such strategic decision is made and in order to inform that decision.
6. If the UK is going to rely on the Irish Transmission network for stability in any format, it is clear that this will involve long term energy commitments on behalf of the Irish State. Element Power as a third party developer have no authority to offer such a commitment. Neither do EirGrid or the Commission for Energy Regulation (CER), and in the absence of a legally compliant SEA, neither does the Irish State. Because the development and operation of an energy system is recognised to have very significant environmental impacts it necessitates a Strategic Environmental Assessment prior to any decisions being taken. Such an assessment must be in accordance with International, European and National law and must involve full participation of those who will be affected by the decision.

Unfortunately, there has never been a Strategic Environmental Assessment carried out for the proposed Greenwire/Greenlink project, a wind export project or the cumulative impact that it would have in conjunction with the ongoing doubling in capacity of the Irish Grid (GRID25) which the Irish public have been informed is required for Ireland's own and separate renewable energy plans (which themselves are the subject of UN investigation).

It is presumed that Ofgem operates a system of due diligence and will not under any circumstances accept any form of interconnection which has not demonstrated full compliance with the applicable National, European and International legislation. I would appreciate if you could confirm same.

Environmental Action Alliance - Ireland (EAA-I) is involved in promoting sustainable development through a process of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law. EAA-I have complaints with the European Commission, the European Charter of Human Rights, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the European Investment Bank. All of these involve companies seeking funding and development consent for projects pertaining to energy without complying with the relevant European law.

In accordance with the provisions of the Aarhus Convention EAA-I is requesting that Ofgem contact EAA-I directly regarding any future public consultation / participation regarding the Greenlink/Greenwire project or other energy projects with trans-boundary effects.



Yours Sincerely,

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Appendix 1 - Extract from Element Power Website²

greenwire.ie Links Downloads Common Queries Contact Us

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HOME ABOUT GREENWIRE ECONOMICS LOCAL BENEFITS ELEMENT POWER WIND ENERGY TRANSMISSION & PCI

ABOUT GREENWIRE

- Counties
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PROJECT SUMMARY

Greenwire – project summary

- Proposed development of up to 40 wind farm clusters across five counties
- Establishing a new export industry from a free surplus natural resource
- 12,000 additional megawatts of renewable energy required by Britain by 2020
- Greenwire supports Irish Government policy to export renewable energy
- Memorandum of understanding signed between British and Irish Governments to facilitate renewable energy trading
- First Irish provider to sign contracts with UK National Grid to supply up to 3,000 megawatts by 2018
- At zero cost to Irish taxpayer, a clean green industry can be established in the Midlands to rival the Irish dairy industry in due course
- Up to 10,000 jobs supported during three year construction phase of 3GW project, 3,000 medium-term jobs
- Up to 750 turbines spread across Kildare, Laois, Meath, Offaly and Westmeath
- €1.25 billion in rental & rate payments over 25 year project lifespan
- €250million in multi-faceted Community Benefit Programme
- All cabling underground, all infrastructure independent of Irish grid
- Connection to single EU electricity market will bring improved energy competitiveness for Irish consumers
- Can exist in harmony with agriculture
- €8billion project can provide almost 50% of current rate income of local authorities in Offaly, Laois and Westmeath
- 225,000 wind turbines operating successfully across 79 countries – an opportunity for Ireland to harness a new export industry
- 1,300 turbines across 191 wind farms already operating in Ireland sustaining over 3,400 jobs

² <http://greenwire.ie/greenwire-wind-energy/project-summary>