

## Scotland and Ireland to launch joint renewable energy study

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Scotland and Ireland are to work together to harness the power of the wind, the waves and tides between the two countries from Cork to Kintyre.

A feasibility study into offshore renewable energy projects, and how the power they generate could be transmitted to the respective national grids, is to be conducted by the Scottish Government in partnership with the Irish government and the Northern Ireland Executive.

It was announced yesterday that the appropriately titled Isles project (Irish-Scottish Links on Energy Study) would be launched later this year. It will receive almost £1.5m of the £1.6m cost from Inter-reg, an EU-funded programme that helps Europe's regions work together on common projects. The Scottish Government will contribute £130,000.

Jim Mather, the Scottish Energy Minister, said the study would explore the potential for the transmission of electricity generated by projects off the west coast of Scotland, the north and east coasts of Northern Ireland, the Irish Sea and the west coast of the Republic of Ireland.

The announcement came as Mr Mather met Eamon Ryan, Irish Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, in Glasgow to discuss the two countries' mutual energy interests.

Mr Mather said: "This government has an ambitious target to generate 50% of Scotland's electricity from renewable sources by 2020. To realise the potential of the huge wind, wave and tidal resources at our disposal, we need to examine the longer-term development of our grid infrastructure in partnership with government in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

"The feasibility study will allow us to explore the various challenges associated with the development of an offshore transmission network and help make the case for commercial investment. Renewable energy is at the heart of the Scottish Government's vision of increasing sustainable economic growth."

Mr Ryan had a similar message: "Ireland, like Scotland and indeed Northern Ireland, has ambitious renewables targets to meet and I believe that our governments can work together to achieve these.

"Our shared location, on the periphery of Europe and close to both the Atlantic and North Sea, gives us a distinct advantage. We have a vast wealth of free natural resources that we can harness to provide ourselves with a clean and sustainable source of energy."

He said it was imperative to develop an effective grid system to allow a working partnership.

Jason Ormiston, Chief Executive of Scottish Renewables, the green energy trade body, welcomed the development: "This proposed feasibility study into Irish Sea and west coast connections, along with other studies looking at the North Sea, is an important early milestone for delivering Scotland's incredible renewable electricity potential." Source: TheHerald.co.uk