

Irish and Scottish ministers aim for joint offshore grid

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A new offshore grid could be developed between Scotland and Ireland to further the development of renewable energy projects, it was announced yesterday.

The Scottish government, Irish government and the Northern Ireland Executive are to launch a £1.6 million feasibility study later this year looking at the potential for a new transmission system linking up the two mainlands.

A grid could be developed from the west coast of Scotland to the Northern Irish shore, taking in the Irish sea and also Ireland's west coast.

The announcement came as Scotland's energy minister Jim Mather met his Irish counterpart Eamon Ryan in Glasgow, to discuss mutual energy interests.

Mr Mather said: "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,"

Mr Ryan said Ireland and Scotland had a "distinct advantage" in meeting their renewable energy targets because of their location in the Atlantic and North Sea.

He said: "We have a vast wealth of free natural resources that we can harness to provide ourselves with a clean and sustainable source of energy. It is imperative that we develop an effective grid system that will allow us to work in partnership."

The three administrations have already commissioned a pre-scoping grid study, supported by funding from European Union programme Interreg, to pave the way for the full feasibility study.

The feasibility study - to be called the ISLES project (Irish-Scottish Links on Energy Study) will be launched later this year, the Scottish government said.

The study will explore technological, economic, construction and regulatory factors associated with the development of such an offshore transmission network.

The Scottish government said the ISLES project would contribute towards the general European evidence base for the development of offshore grids, complementing work like Airtricity's proposals for a European super-grid.

Mr Ryan said: "Today's announcement is part of a wider programme as we are already developing grid connections with Northern Ireland and there are plans for an East West Interconnector to connect Ireland with Northern Wales. I was particularly interested in Minister Mather's update on Scotland's plan to connect with Norway as part of a 'super grid' concept that would see island countries like ours with an energy connection to Europe."

Source: NewEnergyFocus.com