

Gas to the West

INFORMATION LEAFLET APRIL 2016



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1. INTRODUCTION

This Gas to the West Project is a major energy infrastructure project to extend the benefits of natural gas to thousands more homes and businesses in the west of Northern Ireland.

Mutual Energy Limited (MEL) and SGN were awarded licences by the Utility Regulator for Northern Ireland to build and operate the high pressure and low pressure gas pipelines which will extend the natural gas network into the west of Northern Ireland.

2. BACKGROUND TO MUTUAL ENERGY AND SGN

The two licence holders for the Gas to the West project are Mutual Energy which has been awarded the high-pressure licence and SGN which has been awarded the low-pressure licence. The two companies already have a successful track-record of working together in Northern Ireland.

The Mutual Energy-SGN partnership Working together for Northern Ireland - the MEL and SGN partnership brings a range of benefits to the people of Northern Ireland, drawing on the complementary skills and strengths of the two parties.

MEL's key assets are:

- The Moyle electricity interconnector linking the electricity grids of Northern Ireland and Scotland through submarine cables
- The Scotland-Northern Ireland Pipeline (SNIP) subsea pipeline which transports gas to Ballylumford power station, where it is used to generate up to half of Northern Ireland's electricity. All of the gas used in Northern Ireland is currently transported from Scotland through the SNIP
- The Belfast Gas Transmission Pipeline which transports natural gas from Ballylumford to the Greater Belfast and Larne gas markets

Mutual Energy Limited (MEL) is an established and substantial player in the Northern Ireland energy sector. As a mutual company, Mutual Energy manages strategic energy assets in the long term interest of Northern Ireland's energy consumers. Having no shareholders, any financial surpluses are for the benefit of energy consumers. This combined with the long term secure finance has allowed the company to manage major energy assets at a very low cost to consumers.

SGN is a major player in the UK energy market and owns two of the eight gas distribution networks in Great Britain. The company operates some 74,000km of gas mains and infrastructure and delivers natural gas to approximately 5.9 million domestic and business customers across central southern and south-east England

and throughout Scotland. In 2012/13 alone, SGN installed mains equivalent to a third of the total Greater Belfast natural gas distribution network.

The company has been an active participant in the development of the gas market in Northern Ireland since 2005 and SGN teams were responsible for commissioning the existing major transmission pipelines. SGN has been providing technical expertise to GNI, Firmus Energy and Mutual Energy for many years, providing maintenance, emergency response and gas control services.

3. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The planning application will seek permission to construct new gas pipeline networks to deliver natural gas to a number of towns located in the west of Northern Ireland and will entail construction of substantial new gas pipeline infrastructure comprising:

- A. A new High Pressure (HP) gas transmission pipeline approximately 80 km in length to be built between Portadown and Tullykenneye (just west of Fivemiletown). The HP network will comprise a new 400/300mm, 85 bar HP pipeline and will run from an existing (GNI Ltd) off-take at Portadown across to the west of Northern Ireland providing further off-takes for Dungannon, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Omagh, Enniskillen and Derrylin;
- B. New Intermediate Pressure (IP) gas pipelines, approximately 100 kilometres in length. The IP pipeline will be laid to serve Cookstown/Magherafelt, Coalisland, Omagh and down to Enniskillen and Derrylin. The IP pipelines will be provided, primarily (except where obstacles otherwise might dictate at crossing points) within highway carriageway and will have a design pressure of 7 bar.

Works involved in construction of the pipeline are summarised as follows:

- Fencing of the temporary working width, (the working area will be fenced off in a strip up to 30m wide) known as the 'spread', between site accesses within which site traffic and construction operations will be confined
- Removal of field boundaries as required and associated storage of stripped topsoil. Storage will be facilitated to one side of the spread
- Appropriate trench excavation to accommodate the pipe. Associated spoil will be stored on the other side of the spread
- Delivery and storage of individual pipe lengths within the spread, where they will be positioned for welding together to form pipe 'strings' which will subsequently be lowered into the excavated trench using specialised plant. All welds will radiographically or ultra-sonically tested and the entire pipeline is hydrostatically pressure tested
- Once the pipe is lowered into place the trench is backfilled, in reverse order of excavation, with compaction to ensure subsidence does not occur
- The topsoil is then redistributed over the working spread, all field boundaries replaced as original and the land is returned to its former use as quickly as possible. Any field drainage disturbed during the construction works will be reinstated in accordance with the standard Code of Practice

Where the pipeline crosses roads, rivers or railways two main installation methods can be employed; open cut or trenchless (non-open cut). At the majority of crossings such as minor roads and smaller watercourses, open cut methods will be used with appropriate traffic management in place to ensure access is maintained.

In addition to the pipe laying operations, pressure reduction/regulator stations will be required at either end of the HP pipeline and for the Dungannon and Omagh IP pipeline off-takes. The exact location of these stations will be determined as part of the route corridor options assessment.

4. PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

As the project is deemed to be regionally significant, the planning application will be submitted to the Department of the Environment Strategic Planning Division under Section 26 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011. The planning application will be accompanied by a comprehensive Environmental Statement and a Pre-Application Community Consultation Report.

A series of individual environmental assessments will be conducted and drawn together to form the overall Environmental Statement for the Project. Each potential issue will be addressed in the context of the existing environment, with desktop studies, consultations and baseline field surveys undertaken as necessary.

The timing of surveys, particularly ecological surveys, can be seasonally restricted and consequently some of these have already commenced to ensure adequate time is allowed for the collection of the baseline information.

The survey data collected will inform the Environmental Impact Assessment and allow its completion within the overall delivery programme.

The key topics to be addressed in the Environmental Impact Assessment include:

- Landscape and visual
- Socio-economic
- Noise and vibration
- Environmental modelling
- Hydrogeology and hydrology
- Geology / soil characteristics
- Water quality
- Aquatic ecology and fisheries
- Terrestrial flora and fauna
- Traffic
- Hazards and waste management
- Atmospheric emissions
- Land use
- Air quality / climate
- Archaeology, architectural and cultural heritage

The likely impacts of the project will be fully assessed and mitigating measures presented where required. The priority is the protection of significant environmental features through the elimination or effective mitigation of any significant impacts identified. Where necessary, monitoring programmes will be designed and implemented to address construction and operational impacts.

5. PROJECT TIMEFRAME

Gas to the West is a major energy infrastructure project - obviously the delivery of these types of construction projects on schedule is subject to a number of risks, many of which are beyond the control of the project partners. These include:

- Regulatory risk
- Attainment of necessary consents
- Landowner access
- Weather
- Planning process

Our target is to deliver Gas to the West in-line with the project schedule, but in many cases, this requires a smooth path through the planning, regulatory and consents process.



6. BENEFITS OF NATURAL GAS

There are very significant benefits associated with the availability of natural gas.

- The cleanest fossil fuel – best for the environment
- Competitive and quiet
- Reliable and a constant supply
- Easy to budget
- Energy efficient – save money with natural gas appliances and heating controls
- Versatile, convenient, controllable
- Often a pre-requisite for other industrial investment
- Jobs: The £250m investment in Gas to the West will support around 200 jobs during the construction phase.

Thereafter the new gas infrastructure will sustain a significant number of ongoing jobs for installation sub-contractors and other related functions.

7. CONSTRUCTION METHODS

The pipelines will be laid below ground generally by open cut and laying the pipe in a mechanically dug trench. Major road and river crossings may require the pipe to be laid by tunnelling or drilling.

The majority of the main transmission pipeline will be laid across open country and the arterial legs feeding the towns will be laid in the roadways where possible.

The pipelines to be laid across open country, will have a working area fenced off in a strip up to 30m wide along the length of the pipeline and pre-construction drainage installed. The top soil will be carefully removed and stored within the working width. The steel pipes will then be laid out and welded together onside with breaks in the pipes for road and river crossings.

As each section is welded and coated, the trench is dug and the pipe is placed carefully into it. The trench will be left open for the minimum amount of time for safety reasons and to prevent the likelihood of it being affected by adverse weather.

The trench will then be filled back in, post-construction drainage will be installed and the land will be reinstated in the original layers that were removed.

8. WORKING HOURS

Planned working hours during construction of the pipeline will be 7am to 7pm Monday to Saturday, subject to engineering and/or external requirements from statutory bodies, the time-of-year and daylight hours available. Occasional evening and Sunday working may be required but this will be kept to a minimum.

9. COMMUNITY CONSULTATIONS

This is the second phase of consultation reflecting the emerging preferred route. This Community Consultation process, seeks to establish the views and opinions of the community to inform the route selection, design and environmental assessment of the pipeline and their related above ground installations to assist in preparation of the associated planning application. This is the second phase of the consultation process and is being undertaken to obtain your views on the project and to gather information that may be relevant to the pipeline route selection and assessment of any potential environmental impacts.

Our aim is to construct the pipelines with minimum inconvenience to local residents and landowners and to work with all those who may be affected. Care for the environment will be a prime concern – we will work closely with the local public, community representatives, environmental specialists and statutory bodies, where applicable, throughout the process.

10. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

What are the timescales for getting gas to each of the towns?

We will be aiming to get gas to the 8 towns by the end of 2017 , followed by final reinstatement of the cross country pipeline. Prior to this there will be activity in the area as we talk to landowners and carry out ground and environmental surveys.

Where is this pipeline being laid?

The high pressure transmission pipeline is being laid from Portadown towards Enniskillen. This will be a steel pipeline and will generally be laid across country. There will have to be a number of roads crossings carried out but we will be consulting and advertising these locally nearer the time.

The intermediate pressure systems that will connect into each town will generally be laid in the roads and verges, though some small sections will be laid in the fields where required.

What will the impact of the project be?

We are laying approximately 80km of HP and 100km IP as part of this project to bring gas to the towns. There will be an additional local network of pipelines laid later within the towns to connect properties to the network. Coordinating this amount of work will be challenging and there may be some disruption caused to normal activities.

We will aim to keep this to a minimum by working closely with Transport NI, other utility companies and other agencies to co-ordinate our works.

We will ensure that we give as much warning of future works as possible to any residents, businesses and road users/commuters. We intend to hold local community meetings, with displays and information being made available at public buildings such as libraries etc.

How will I know if you are going to be laying pipes in my land?

One of our land agents/liason officers will have been in contact with you if your lands are potentially affected.

How will I get compensated for pipes laid in my land?

We have an agreed system in place for dealing with landowners, residents, tenants etc which we have developed during work in GB as well as from experience gained from working in Northern Ireland.

All aspects of the access to the land, including protection, compensation and reinstatement requirements, will be discussed with all affected parties on an individual basis.

What are the benefits of natural gas?

It is the cleanest fossil fuel, which is good for the environment. It is distributed directly to your property and is available all the time. It can be budgeted for by using pre-paid cards and it is efficient.

What are the economic benefits?

The £250m investment in Gas to the West will support around 200 jobs during the construction phase. Thereafter the new gas infrastructure will sustain a significant number of ongoing jobs for installation sub-contractors and other related functions.

Where does the gas come from?

MEL and SGN Natural Gas are extending the gas network in Northern Ireland. This transports gas which comes from Scotland through an undersea pipeline. This gas is supplied from Europe, the North Sea and the Middle East.

When will I be able to get a gas connection?

Once gas is available at each town, construction will begin on the low pressure network within each one. It is estimated that this will involve laying approximately 500km of pipes. A plan for extending this low pressure supply network has been agreed with the Utility Regulator. At present detailed designs are being developed which will include the phasing of this work in each town. Unfortunately we cannot say exactly when we will be laying in any specific area at this time.

How do I get a connection?

You will be able to apply to SGN Natural Gas for a connection as soon as gas is available in your area. For further information please visit www.sgnnaturalgas.co.uk.

WHAT NEXT ?

This is the second phase in a community consultation process and you will have additional opportunities to convey any further issues or concerns via the project website, email and telephone as detailed below.

Mutual Energy/SGN are undertaking this consultation process to seek the views of the community and public in relation to the emerging preferred alignment pipeline route, and any other issues or concerns the public may have, and to provide information on the environmental impact assessment and planning process.

A number of public events have been organised to offer all members of the local community and other interested parties an opportunity to engage directly with our staff and members of the appointed consultancy team.

If you have any questions please either speak to one of our representatives at the events as they are there to assist you in understanding the project, or raise queries through the contact details provided in this leaflet.

We would welcome your views and comments on the proposed project and invite you to submit your comments to our project team on the feedback forms provided or through the dedicated project website.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT ANY COMMENTS YOU MAKE TO US DURING THIS CONSULTATION PROCESS DO NOT AFFECT YOUR STATUTORY RIGHTS TO MAKE FURTHER REPRESENTATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT OR YOUR LOCAL COUNCIL WHENEVER THE PLANNING APPLICATION HAS BEEN SUBMITTED.



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