



GB regulator gives green light for Nautilus, the first hybrid interconnector between Belgium and the UK

Ofgem, the energy regulator for Great Britain (GB), has published the list of interconnectors that its analyses suggest are sufficiently mature and have a positive cost-benefit balance that supports their further development. The list includes Nautilus, the first hybrid interconnector to link the United Kingdom and Belgium. The publication is a crucial step in the further realisation of the project. Nautilus was included in the Belgian Federal Development Plan and has already received recognition from the European Commission as a Project of Mutual Interest (PMI). National Grid Ventures, the development arm of British grid operator National Grid, and Elia Transmission Belgium (ETB) can now move the project forward.

The United Kingdom carries a huge amount of offshore wind energy potential. Lots of countries are therefore interested in establishing electrical connections (known as 'interconnectors') with the country to access that renewable energy. The GB energy regulator screens all these applications in terms of their feasibility and relevance, determining which interconnectors can be developed and which cannot. The latest report reviewed seven so-called point-to-point interconnectors and two offshore hybrid interconnectors. Nautilus belongs to the latter category and has been given the green light.

Hybrid interconnector

A hybrid interconnector like Nautilus has two functions: it transports power between two countries, but it can also bring offshore wind energy back to their shores. Nautilus will provide the link between the British coast and the Princess Elisabeth Island (PEI) and thus will also be able to transport power from the PEI area. This will ensure that the transmission infrastructure is used more efficiently and will reduce impacts on coastal communities and the marine environment. Nautilus has a capacity of 1.4 GW. The Netherlands is also developing a hybrid interconnector with the United Kingdom, which is called LionLink. The latter was also given the green light by the GB regulator. These connections will form the first building blocks of a meshed offshore electricity grid.

"Nautilus is an important project for our country's energy supply. Because our own offshore wind potential is limited, we need electrical connections with countries that will produce surplus amounts of wind energy in the future, such as Britain. Nautilus will strengthen our security of supply and provide access to competitive energy prices. This will strengthen the competitiveness of our energy-intensive industry. Because of the hybrid nature of the interconnector, we are also choosing the most efficient solution."

Frédéric Dunon, CEO Elia Transmission Belgium

"Ofgem's approval of Nautilus' Initial Project Assessment is welcome news, and an important step towards building this exciting project. Consumer demand for energy is set to double in the next 25 years, and Nautilus will help ensure the UK and Belgium have enough energy to meet this need both now and in 2050. Nautilus will have the capacity to power 1.7m million homes, supplying clean, secure, renewable energy to consumers and reducing greenhouse gas emissions."

Ben Wilson, President of National Grid Ventures

Nemo Link as a little brother

Belgium is already connected to the United Kingdom through Nemo Link. Nemo Link was commissioned almost six years ago. Up to 1 GW of electricity can be exchanged between the United Kingdom and Belgium via this point-to-point interconnector. It is one of the most efficient cables in the world today. The 140 km-long undersea HVDC interconnector has an availability of 99.5%. Nemo Link supports security of supply, increases grid balancing capabilities, and provides more socioeconomic benefits for both countries.

About Elia Group

One of Europe's top five TSOs

Elia Group is a key player in electricity transmission. We ensure that production and consumption are balanced around the clock, supplying 30 million end users with electricity. Through our subsidiaries in Belgium (Elia) and the north and east of Germany (50Hertz), we operate 19,460.5 km of high-voltage connections, meaning that we are one of Europe's top 5 transmission system operators. With a reliability level of 99.99%, we provide society with a robust power grid, which is important for socioeconomic prosperity. We also aspire to be a catalyst for a successful energy transition, helping to establish a reliable, sustainable and affordable energy system.

We are making the energy transition happen

By expanding international high-voltage connections and incorporating ever-increasing amounts of renewable energy into our grid, we are promoting both the integration of the European energy market and the decarbonisation of society. We also continuously optimise our operational systems and develop new market products so that new technologies and market parties can access our grid, thus further facilitating the energy transition.

In the interest of society

As a key player in the energy system, Elia Group is committed to working in the interest of society. We are responding to the rapid increase in renewable energy by constantly adapting our transmission grid. We also ensure that investments are made on time and within budget, with a maximum focus on safety. In carrying out our projects, we manage stakeholders proactively by establishing two-way communication channels between all relevant parties very early on in the development process. We also offer our expertise to different players across the sector in order to build the energy system of the future.

International focus

In addition to its activities as a transmission system operator, Elia Group provides consulting services to international customers through its subsidiary Elia Grid International. In recent years, the Group has launched new non-regulated activities such as re.alto - the first European marketplace for the exchange of energy data via standardised energy APIs - and WindGrid, a subsidiary which will continue to expand the Group's overseas activities, contributing to the development of offshore electricity grids in Europe and beyond.

The legal entity Elia Group is a listed company whose core shareholder is the municipal holding company Publi-T.

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