

Iberdrola gets the green light on the UK's undersea energy 'mega highway'

- The Eastern Link will link Scotland and England via two high-voltage submarine cables, with a combined capacity of up to 4GW and an investment of £3.4 billion.
- According to Ofgem, the construction of the infrastructure will clearly benefit British consumers as it will enable the deployment of offshore wind energy in the North Sea.

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The UK electricity market regulator Ofgem has granted the consortium formed by Iberdrola, through its subsidiary ScottishPower Energy Networks and National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET), provisional approval to build the 2-gigawatt (GW) power line linking Scotland to the north-east of England.

It is one of two submarine cables that make up the Eastern Link project, which includes another cable of the same nature and capacity being developed by the consortium between the electricity utility SSE and National Grid.

According to Ofgem, this new transmission infrastructure is needed to improve the capacity of the interconnection network between Scotland and England and enable renewable energy produced in Scotland to reach the country's most energy-intensive regions. At an estimated cost of £3.4 billion for the two links, Eastern Link would be the largest electricity transmission investment project in Britain's recent history.

Together, the two cables will form an undersea superhighway capable of carrying enough electricity to meet the demand of around four million UK homes. The Iberdrola and National Grid project will run between Torness (Scotland) and Hawthorn Pit (England), while the SSE and NGET project will link Peterhead (Scotland) and Selby (England).

Ofgem has stated that progress on interconnections, essential to the UK's energy transition, represents a clear benefit for consumers. Ofgem's decision will also accelerate investment in renewable energy sources, essential for decarbonisation and the country's energy independence.

On the other hand, Scotland's offshore wind capacity is expected to increase significantly over the next decade. This will ensure that the large volume of energy expected to be generated can be delivered to where it is needed.

Scotland's east coast is already home to operational offshore wind farms with a capacity of 1 GW and has a further 4.4 GW in the pipeline. In addition, a further 10 GW is planned following the outcome of Scotland's next offshore wind bidding round, ScotWind.

This multi-billion-pound investment is expected to secure hundreds of green jobs in both the construction and operation of the project.