EIA Quality Mark Case Study

North – South Interconnector

<table>
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<th>Key Issues:</th>
<th>Purpose of the project:</th>
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<td>The key challenges were in the selection of the overhead line route, emerging methodologies during assessment and ensuring a robust assessment.</td>
<td>This proposed development is a major cross-border transmission infrastructure development. The scheme comprises key augmentation of the transmission infrastructure within the island of Ireland.</td>
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<td>The route selection began in 2005 and as a cross-border project with separate project teams, this required significant co-ordination. The route selection started on the macro-level and covered technology and location – all along the border of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The selection was then focused and refocused down to possible corridors, preferred route and then individual tower locations, taking into account social, economic, engineering and environmental factors.</td>
<td>The North-South Interconnector will help reduce network operating costs, strengthen electricity supply and facilitate the connection of renewable energy to the network.</td>
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<td>The project ran for over 10 years due to project changes and legal challenges. Due to the length of the programme, the EIA was required to be updated on a number of occasions. This was to ensure up-to-date information and to take account of emerging guidelines and legislation. This made certain of a robust assessment for a continuous project.</td>
<td>Description of the project: AECOM was appointed by SONI (formerly NIE) to undertake the EIA and public inquiry for 35kms of new 400kV overhead transmission line between a new substation in Northern Ireland and the border with the Republic of Ireland. AECOM also undertook environmental services for the project in the Republic of Ireland, including noise, landscape, photomontages and led on the transboundary Joint Environmental Report.</td>
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EIA Learning Outcomes

Lessons learnt:

For most projects involving transboundary effects, the EIA Report (ES/EIS) that is prepared as part of the national planning application process is considered to also serve the function of the Espoo Convention. This is the case as long as the cumulative effects are fully assessed and all parties are properly informed of the applications in the respective countries.

In May 2013, the European Commission published Guidance on the application of EIA procedure for large-scale transboundary projects.

Lessons learnt continued:

An observation made of the Espoo Convention has been that it did not grasp truly transboundary projects (i.e. where the development crosses a border), but instead focused on a project within one state having an indirect or secondary impact on another.

The projects focused on and defined in the new guidance are those which are “physically located in more than one country”.

When it had been decided to prepare a Joint Environmental Report under the EC guidance, the ES in Northern Ireland and the EIS in the Republic of Ireland had already been prepared. Each followed national guidelines and legislation but did coordinate on approach.

A combined approach was required to the methodology to ensure that a report could cut through the differing national issues and present a flowing report with consistent terms.

The published Joint Environmental Report was one of the first written under EC guidance and so required significant interpretation of the guidelines to produce an actual report.

The Report was published in both jurisdictions and sat overarching the ES and EIS. The Report helped to deliver a robust assessment and ensured the transboundary and cumulative assessment was covered to the requirements of all statutory consultees.

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