

Seawater energy proposal for Mayo

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A RENEWABLE energy company is preparing a planning application for a seawater pumped hydroelectric energy scheme at Glinsk on the north Mayo coastline.

Organic Power Ltd, a Cork-based company, has already begun site investigations at Glinsk, near Belderrig.

The firm intends to lodge a planning application with Mayo County Council in June.

Glinsk had been identified over two years ago by three north Mayo priests and several Erris community groups as a compromise site for the Corrib gas terminal.

The location was rejected on a number of grounds by Shell EP Ireland which has almost completed construction of the terminal at Ballinaboy.

Maurice McCarthy of Organic Power Ltd said that his project aims to store excess energy from the electricity grid, and would be located close to a number of approved windfarms which have not yet been built.

“It is an established technology worldwide, with hundreds of schemes such as Turlough Hill in Wicklow, in successful and safe operation,” he explained.

The Atlantic would be used as the “lower reservoir” to a land-based structure on the Glinsk upland, with visibility confined to a reservoir embankment and access roads.

He said that a similar-type sea-water-pumped hydroelectric energy storage scheme has been working successfully in a national park in Japan since 1991.

He said that, if it was approved, the design of the 480 MW scheme would store excess power in the reservoir system during off-peak night-time hours, or when generation exceeds demand.

“The stored energy will be returned to the grid through turbines for use during peak times in the morning and evening, or generation emergencies, thus significantly reducing the national need for imported fossil fuels that are required to keep gas-, coal- and oil-fired power stations running,” Mr McCarthy said.

The scheme is designed to accept up to one-third of the projected surplus night-time wind power produced in Ireland when the national target of 5,000MW of wind turbines is achieved under Government policy by 2020, he said. It should significantly expedite the delivery of the wind energy target by providing a high-voltage transmission grid connection to the northwest, he said.

At the heart of the proposal is a new high-voltage transmission line to deliver the area’s potential wind and ocean energy to the existing high-voltage network.

This will be achieved via an undersea cable. Such a solution would facilitate avoiding any issues associated with overhead power lines, he said.

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