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North Mayo in running for €500m energy plan

By Keith Bourke

MAYO County Council has lent its support to a €500m renewable energy storage reservoir for north Mayo.

The project at Glinsk, near Belderrig, could export 10 terawatt hours of "clean power" to the UK, providing around two per cent of Britain's electricity requirement by 2016.

The project is being developed by Organic Power Ltd from Skibbereen in Co Cork and it is proposed that the energy storage hub will be located on Glinsk Mountain. Organic Power Ltd's managing director Maurice McCarthy says its construction will create 200 jobs over three years. Once completed it is expected that around 10 people will be employed full-time at the site.

Mr McCarthy said the project would facilitate the construction of other wind and wave energy sites in the county with the potential for further employment.

County manager Peter Hynes says the project is still at a very preliminary stage but "in principle" the council welcomes it.

"It's one of a number of projects we would like to see move ahead in the county," said Mr Hynes.

"There is considerable potential in the renewable energy sector in the county. The key to exploiting that potential is developing an export capability and this is a project which would certainly assist in that regard," added Mr Hynes.

Mr McCarthy says Glinsk's flat-topped location, near the sea, is "as perfect as you can get". The same site was proposed almost four years ago as a compromise location for the Corrib Gas terminal.

Organic Power Ltd will use PHES technology to store off-peak electricity for peak demand. This works by moving water between reservoirs at different elevations. In the case of Glinsk,

the sea will provide the lower reservoir, with sea-water then being pumped up a cliff face to a reservoir on the mountain. The project, known as Marex 2016, could provide a minimum of two per cent of the UK's total electricity requirement by 2016 at 1,000MW, with the company forecasting a 10 per cent growth by 2025.

Mr McCarthy says his company has received letters of support from community groups and have yet to encounter any opposition to their proposals. Organic Power Ltd has raised €2 million to date. They are seeking a partnership to provide risk equity and other elements.

The company is awaiting a decision from An Bord Pleanála to designate the proposed development as strategic infrastructure, which means it could then proceed to submitting planning applications.