

UlsterUnionists

5 October, 2004

Mr Douglas McIlldoon
OFREG

Dear Mr McIlldoon,

Consultation on SNIP mutualisation

I would like on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party to provide some views on the above transaction, in accordance with the advertisement for public consultation issued by your office.

During devolution my Party established as a priority the need to reduce energy costs for Northern Ireland consumers. We recognised however that few mechanisms were available other than the excellent work you have undertaken in regulating costs. One of the means we encouraged was the mutualisation of the Moyle Interconnector and we were pleased to see that successfully managed by Team Northern Ireland. I understand that already significant sums are being rebated to consumers.

We would fully support the extension of this concept to the mutualisation of the natural gas interconnector and associated infrastructure and would commend Team Northern Ireland for again taking the initiative in this regard. We would advocate that the mutual company should have the authority to explore and develop energy-related business opportunities with the caveat that at all times the consumer should be the prime beneficiary.

We would not support the concept of the mutual company being operated, or its members and directors appointed, after the fashion of a quango. This will only serve to stifle and suppress business talent from being attracted to serve. One of the key priorities of the Review of Public Administration was to move Northern Ireland away from government by quangos. We should not allow this mutual company to be stifled. I have every confidence that Team Northern Ireland can recruit a membership and Board of Directors that can represent consumer interests across Northern Ireland and also bring business and commercial expertise to developing a significant energy company in Northern Ireland that benefits the consumers and helps in our overall objective of reducing the cost of energy.

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon David Trimble, MP, MLA
Party Leader

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