Northern Ireland Electricity plc

Consultation on Vacant Sites Within the NIE Land Bank (13 May 2010)

NIE’s Response

21 July 2010.
In NIE’s view, the retention within the Land Bank of the Belfast West, Coolkeeragh (Adjoining Lands) and Kilroot (Adjoining Lands) sites for potential future power generation use is very much in the public interest. These unoccupied sites are all strategically located, with local access to the Electricity Transmission network. In addition, all are coastline sites and therefore offer great potential for future power generation development. Owing to the scarcity of sites within Northern Ireland that are suitable for power generation development it is considered that retention of these sites by NIAUR is necessary to ensure that suitable sites are available for new generation, either by existing generators or new entrants.

We note the Utility Regulator’s intention to include pre-conditions which any future generation development proposal in respect of a Land Bank site will be required to meet. This would seem essential if the value of the Land Bank is to be optimised for Northern Ireland’s electricity consumers. In this regard, appropriate criteria might include a minimum term for the site lease and minimum plant capacity. The need to retain these sites may become more evident into the future as the requirement emerges for alternative generation technologies to support the connection of higher levels of renewable generation to the electricity network. To this end, whilst we consider that these land bank sites should be retained for electricity generation, the pre-conditions which the Authority intends to set in respect of development proposals should not preclude their use for energy storage devices or infrastructure to support high levels of renewable generation.