

Renewables Firms Welcome Long Overdue Northern Ireland Electricity Network Upgrade

Everun and PAC Group leaders say investment plans will kickstart efforts to achieve net zero goal

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Leading renewable industry companies, [Everun](#) and [PAC Group](#), have welcomed plans for a £3bn investment by NIE Networks (NIEN) to upgrade Northern Ireland's electricity network.

The two companies have been calling for urgent developments in the existing grid to enable renewable energy sources to support the 2030 target to have 80% of all the country's energy needs from renewables.

Managing director of Everun, Michael Thompson said that for too long the ageing electricity grid had hampered the development of the sector.

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Michael Thompson, managing director, Everun

“In welcoming this investment we now need to see rapid action by the regulator and a full action plan for implementation,” he said.

“There is a demand across businesses to develop wind turbines and solar generation, and connectivity to wider renewable sources.

“NIE Network's announcement is the first step, and now we

need the regulator to press ahead with approval and for the swift progress of the wider energy strategy at NI Executive level.”



From left managing director of Everun, Michael Thompson and business development director of PAC Group Darren Leslie

Under the investment plans electricity customers will be able to connect with low carbon technology from NIE Networks lines, pylons and substations.

Business development director at PAC Group, Darren Leslie, said more and more businesses are not only seeing the need for action on climate change, but the economic benefits of switching to renewable energy.

“There are too many obstructions in Northern Ireland at present to have it rolling it out across more and more businesses, not least the planning and application processes and assessment of the grid having the correct infrastructure in place,” he said.

“That is not the case in many areas, and even with this investment, it will not be there for several years without action at executive level to drive it forward.”

NIE Networks does not generate electricity nor sell power to homes and businesses but warned that the investment could add an additional £10 to £20 a year to bills.

Mr Thompson said a cross-government approach is needed to address the challenges such as planning that are hindering the country from achieving the climate goals agreed.

“While pressure on household and business bills should be avoided, this investment will enable NI to take further control of its own energy security and ultimately reduce costs,” he said.

“We have a great opportunity to become a powerhouse in the generation and distribution of renewable energy, utilising our preferential location for wind resources and creating thousands of well-paid engineering-based jobs.”

Both Everun and PAC Group have been calling for action on the infrastructure for some time and expressed frustration that the climate change goals may not be met, and will restrict business development.

“Business planning for their energy is part of a five-year cycle,” said Mr Leslie.

“It is not something that owners can push back, and it is not something anyone can afford to ignore any further.

“The reality is that there will be frustrations, but these frustrations should be a driver towards solutions. The renewables industry in Northern Ireland have these solutions to hand, and we see, from the growing number of enquiries for sustainable energy production.

“Northern Ireland’s Climate Action Plan has set ambitious targets that may or not be met, however, businesses must not see that as their driver, but rather what they can do to benefit themselves, employees, and owners.”

The Centre of Advanced Sustainable Energy (Case), hosted by Queens University, believes targets for climate action could not be realised without this injection into the infrastructure.

"In the long-term, we would see many benefits being realised through this investment," said Martin Doherty from Case.

"Alongside the positive economic impact on the supply chain and wider industry, this will go a long way to enabling Northern Ireland to meet the target of 80% of electricity coming from renewable sources by 2030 which, in turn, could ease the pressure on energy bills."

Under the investment plan there will be 1,000 jobs created by NIE Networks. Both Mr Thompson and Mr Leslie believe that the renewables industry will in turn be recruiting more staff in engineering to meet the demands.

Within their eight divisions PAC Group supports the renewables sector through PAC Electrical with solar and EV charging and via PAC Enviro in the water and wastewater industry.

Everun specialises in managing large scale wind farms as well as the installation of wind and solar energy solutions, EV charging, smart motors such as TurnTide and renewable switchovers.

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