

# In the pipeline

## Gas to the West news



A major energy infrastructure project to extend the benefits of natural gas to Coalisland, Cookstown, Derrylin, Dungannon, Enniskillen, Magherafelt, Omagh and Strabane.

Issue no.10 • April 2018



"Welcome to the 10th edition of our Gas to the West project newsletter. We hope you continue to find a newsletter a useful way of keeping up to date with progress in relation to the project as we develop the high pressure, cross country gas pipeline and the intermediate pressure pipelines which will bring gas to the town gates. While the recent adverse weather has led to challenging conditions on the ground, our construction teams are continuing to work hard to bring gas to homes and businesses across the west as soon as possible. This work may have resulted in some inconvenience to you as you go about your daily business, in terms of roadworks and delays. Our contractors are doing all they can to keep these to a minimum and we appreciate the patience and understanding of the local communities in which we operate as we seek to deliver this major energy infrastructure project in a timely fashion."

Paddy Larkin  
Chief Executive  
Mutual Energy

Danny O'Malley  
Director  
SGN Natural Gas

### Gas to the West in numbers...

By the end of February 2018:

- ✓ 45km of right of way fencing erected (HP)
- ✓ 7.3km topsoil stripped (HP)
- ✓ 5.3km of pipeline welded (HP)
- ✓ 9 road crossings completed (HP)
- ✓ 34km pipeline installed (IP)
- ✓ 49 ecological surveys (HP)
- ✓ 58 environmental site inspections (HP)
- ✓ 338,814 contractor man hours worked
- ✓ 0 recorded lost time incidents

\*HP = high pressure, IP = intermediate pressure

## Gas to the West project update

Construction work is now well underway on both the high pressure, cross country, gas pipeline and the intermediate pressure pipeline. Teams are working across the project area, with roadworks in place at a number of locations. The road works include a combination of road and lane closures and traffic controls, designed to provide a safe environment for those constructing the pipeline and road users.

On the high-pressure pipeline, hedge clearance, right of way fencing, pre-construction drainage and topsoil stripping are continuing to prepare the spread for pipeline construction. Poor weather has had a significant impact on progress leaving areas of ground waterlogged and delaying some drainage and topsoil stripping activities. Where conditions allow, pipeline stringing and welding continues ahead of pipeline ditching which is expected to commence in late March 2018.

Civil works are continuing for the Above Ground Installations at Portadown, Tullykenney and Tullybroom.

Intermediate pipeline crews are at work across a number of locations, using a combination of open cut and horizontal directional drilling techniques. The weather continues to make working conditions difficult at times slowing progress, with extra crews being mobilised to mitigate against this. A total of 34km of pipeline has been installed to date.

Engagement is ongoing across the project with our statutory consultees including organisations such as Department for Infrastructure / Transport NI, Northern Ireland Environment Agency, Strategic Planning Division and local councils to ensure that all planning conditions and consents are being properly discharged.

See box left for some of the facts and figures around the project's progress. ▶

## What's next?

Looking ahead, on the high-pressure pipeline, major activities to take place over coming weeks include mobilisation of an additional horizontal directional drilling team to start work on the pipeline crossings of Lough Erne and the M1 motorway. Work will continue on securing the right of way and pre-construction drainage along the pipeline spread in preparation of ramping up the pipeline construction activity as soon as the ground conditions allow.

## Customer and supplier engagement

Meetings and conversations with customers and potential customers are ongoing across the network area to progress potential conversions from the customers' perspectives. These have included meetings with customers' consultants, energy managers and Gas Safe Registered Installers. Engagement with suppliers is also continuing including attendance at a recent Gas Market Opening Group meeting where an update was provided on the progress of the project. As the number of customers connecting to the network increases, engagement with all of the active suppliers will continue on a regular basis.



Pipeline stringing along the spread.



Welded pipeline ahead of ditching.



## Gas to the West information sessions take place

A series of Gas to the West Information Sessions took place in early March to update the public about the construction of the gas network. With the main construction phase currently underway, 220 subcontractors are working at key locations to bring natural gas to a total of eight towns in counties Tyrone, Fermanagh and Derry.

The informal, drop-in sessions were held in Cookstown, Enniskillen, Omagh and Lisnaskea and provided an opportunity for the project team to engage directly with local residents and businesses

in these areas. Project contractors were also in attendance and were available to answer questions on everything from roadworks to the benefits of natural gas. The project team were delighted with the number of people who attended the sessions and David Butler, Head of Engineering for the SGN Natural Gas Network commented: "These sessions represent an important opportunity for us in the project team to engage directly with the communities in which we are working. We are pleased that so many people took time to come along and we are encouraged by the positive support we continue to receive for this important energy infrastructure project".

# Gas to the West stakeholder engagement continues

Now that the project has entered the construction phase, the project team felt it was an opportune time to meet with some of the key project stakeholders, to provide an update on progress with the project and answer any questions that they may have. A series of stakeholder engagement meetings was organised to take place throughout February and March and included discussions with:

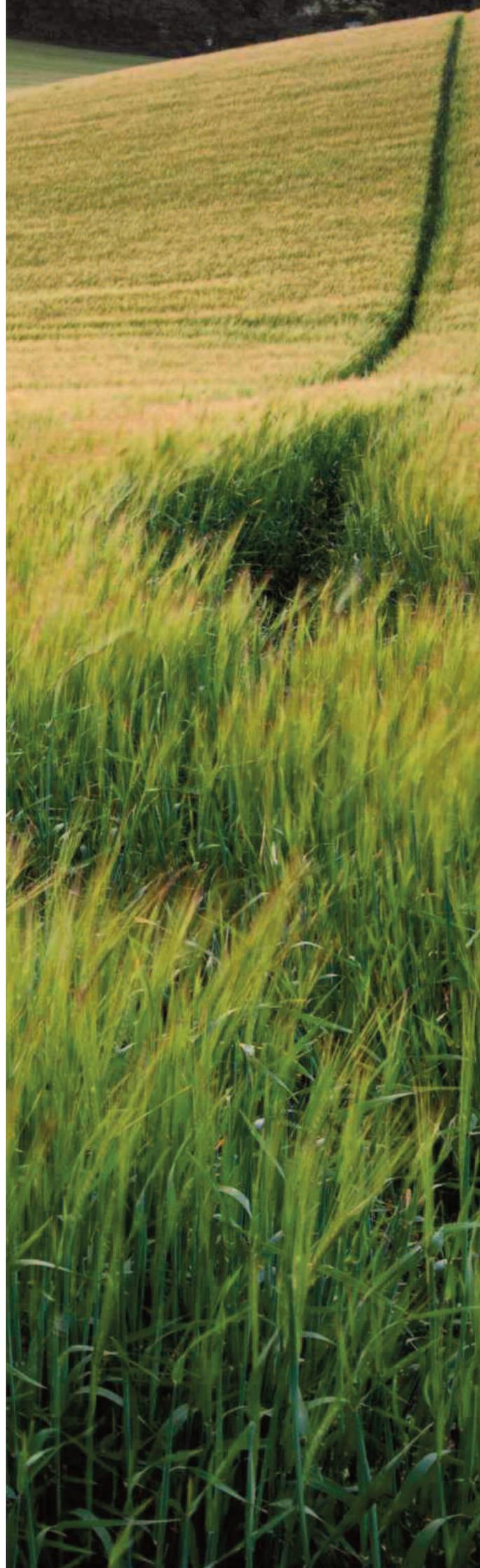
- Angela McGowan, Northern Ireland Director, CBI;
- Stephen Kelly, Chief Executive, Manufacturing NI;
- Kirsty McManus, Northern Ireland Director and Lisa Maltman, Business Development Manager, IoD;
- Kevin Neeson and Dale Shirlow, Inspectors, Health and Safety Executive;
- Lorraine McKnight, Policy Officer and Ivor Ferguson, Deputy President, Ulster Farmers' Union;
- David Small, Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Environment Agency.

The feedback from the meetings was very positive, with all stakeholders expressing their appreciation at us taking time to meet with them and provide them with an opportunity to obtain up to date information in relation to the project.

At her request, the project team also met with Arlene Foster in her office at Parliament Buildings. As the Minister who launched the project and a local MLA for Fermanagh and South Tyrone, she retains a keen interest in how the project is progressing.

Engagement with other key stakeholders such as Transport NI, NIE Networks and Northern Ireland Water is continuing at a local level as construction proceeds. Local elected representatives are also being kept informed of issues at a local level, such as roadworks, and engagement via our project teams on the ground and our contractors is ongoing.

If you have any questions regarding Gas to the West, or would like further information regarding the project, please contact us on 0800 975 2322 or email [info@gastothewest.com](mailto:info@gastothewest.com).



# Taking a proactive approach to managing the environment



Daniel Hogan, Senior Scientist, RPS.

As with most cross country pipeline construction projects, the work activity train follows a particular sequence, with each activity posing a different potential to impact the environment, a series of risks that need to be managed from conceptual design right through to construction.

So what are the environmental risks associated with the construction of the Gas to the West Pipeline and how are these risks being managed?

The Gas to the West Pipeline Planning Corridor incorporates a complex environmental system made up of many different environmental constraints that required careful planning and consideration during the pipeline routing stage, and from the appointed contractors during construction. On the High Pressure pipeline alone there are 22 Very High and Medium Sensitivity Watercourses, six Northern Ireland Priority Habitats (NIPH) in addition to several badger setts, bat roosts, nesting/breeding bird areas, nesting raptors and of course the potential to uncover archaeology during topsoil stripping. This article lists some of the ways that impacts are being managed through project planning and design:

## Sensitive Watercourses

The installation of the gas pipeline has the potential to have an impact

on water quality which can be particularly detrimental to the aquatic ecology within any watercourse but is even more of a concern in Sensitive Watercourse. Impacts to sensitive watercourses have been minimised by project planning and design.

During the planning stage of the GTTW Project extensive fisheries surveys were carried out across all rivers and streams within the planning corridor. During this stage it was determined that a number of watercourses were of very high sensitivity (i.e. a watercourse containing salmonids or supporting a fishery or river ecosystem of at least national, and in some instances, international importance). For these watercourses design was such that the pipe installation is to be undertaken using trenchless techniques such as Horizontal Direction Drilling (HDD) or Auger Boring to minimise the potential for direct impact on these highly sensitive watercourses.

There are also a number of watercourses considered to be of moderate sensitivity (ie watercourses containing trout and upstream of locally important fishery or river ecosystem) and the options for pipe installation include either open cut methods carried out under a Section 48 licence outside the salmonid migration season between May and September or trenchless methods.

## Northern Ireland Priority Habitats (NIPHS)

Northern Ireland priority habitats are those habitats which require conservation action and careful planning consideration because of their decline, rarity and importance. Priority habitats are extremely vulnerable and are often impacted by changes in land-use caused by development. A total of nine Northern Ireland Priority Habitats (NIPH) were identified along the route of the High Pressure Pipeline corridor. Of the nine NIPHS, six have the potential to be impacted during pipeline construction the others have been avoided by pipeline routing. These include: lowland fens; lowland meadows; mixed ashwoods; purple moor grass and rush pasture; traditional orchards; and wet woodland.

Potential impacts to these six NIPHS have been minimised by detailed project design. In most instances on the Gas to the West Project the contractor has proposed trenchless techniques (HDD) to avoid the NIPHS. Where avoidance by trenchless techniques is not possible, the contractor has proposed to minimise disturbance to the NIPH by design (reduced land take, bogmat roads etc) and by preparing and adhering to a site specific Habitat Management Plan which details the approach to construction and reinstatement of the habitat post construction. ▶



## Taking a proactive approach to managing the environment (cont)

### Terrestrial Ecology:

SGN is being proactive in minimising impacts to terrestrial ecology during the routing of the pipeline. Main badger setts, confirmed and potential bat roosts and known nesting raptor areas have been avoided as far as possible in the selection of the route corridor.

During the construction stage, the contractors have strived to reduce impacts to terrestrial ecology through careful planning and ongoing ecological surveys.

- Impacts on birds has been minimised by undertaking all hedgerow removal and tree felling outside of the bird nesting season.
- Impacts to bats has been minimised by avoiding known or potential bat roosts and if necessary only felling trees after conducting Bat roost inspections under licence to check for the presence of bats.
- Impacts to badgers has been minimised by avoidance of all known main badger setts and where avoidance of outlier setts has not been possible carrying out closures under licence.

### Archaeology

The construction of the pipeline will pose no direct impact on recorded cultural heritage however potential impacts during the construction phase may occur to previously unrecorded archaeology which is encountered during ground works. The planning corridor has been selected (in consultation with the project archaeologist) to avoid known archaeological monuments, other cultural heritage features and areas of high archaeological potential based on surrounding

landscape, detailed analysis of earth observation data and walking the entire length of the proposed route. The gas pipeline route, in avoiding for the most part the drumlin ridges, may also avoid the most extensive prehistoric and later previously unrecorded archaeology. Prior to the commencement of construction archaeological testing was undertaken to assess the areas of highest archaeological potential. During construction all topsoil stripping is being undertaken under an Archaeological Watching Brief to ensure archaeological remains are identified, investigated and recorded before development.

### Environmental Management

In addition to measures employed at the planning and design stage, impacts to the environment are minimised through the presence of the project's Environmental Management Team (SGN and Contractor). The Environmental Managers on-site make certain that all environmental risks associated with the construction of the project are being properly managed through good environmental practice. The environmental management team ensures that all construction activities are compliant with environmental legislation and that all mitigation measures specified in the Environmental Statement, Project Construction Environmental Management Plan and Planning Permission Consent have been implemented and where necessary train staff at all levels on the environmental issues.