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SUMMIT CALLS FOR ENERGY PARTNERSHIP WITH IRISH NEIGHBOURS

Today (22 October 2009), business leaders from Scotland, Ireland and Northern Ireland will call on energy ministers to commit to a plan to link National electricity networks and bolster the renewables sector through improved cooperation.

During an unprecedented Energy Summit at Dynamic Earth, Edinburgh, energy ministers from the three countries will join the business leaders to discuss the challenges and opportunities facing the energy and electricity sectors.

The event is organised by the Joint Business Council which links members of the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) with the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and will set out a roadmap for greater collaboration between the countries to meet ambitious energy targets and improve regional competitiveness.

Reg McCabe, JBC Chief Executive said: "The benefits of a joint approach on energy are clear. By combining our efforts the regions will be in a much stronger position to attract investment and compete in the global marketplace. We'll more easily be able to more effectively utilise existing electricity networks while pushing ahead with investments in indigenous renewable alternatives.

"All three regions have huge potential to dramatically grow investment in renewable energy and to benefit from a new wave of green jobs. By working together we will link regional electricity markets more effectively and be well positioned to meet challenging EU and international climate change targets."

Renewable energy and electricity supply will be key focuses of the summit. The Joint Business Council hopes to take the first steps towards encouraging much closer links between the UK's and Ireland's electricity markets with a view to longer term integration.

It also wants to build on the regions' growing renewable energy research capacity and believes the exploitation of new technologies related to wave, tidal and wind resources will play a key role in achieving this.

JBC will be pushing for improved grid access and planning legislation to maximize wind generation while exploring the potential of the Irish Sea and Atlantic seaboard as hubs for offshore renewable energy. Delegates will be asked to consider the benefits of setting up a cross-regional research and development partnership focused on commercializing emerging technology.

The conference will be addressed by Scotland's Energy Minister Jim Mather MSP, Irish Energy Minister Eamon Ryan TD and Northern Ireland Assembly Minister Arlene Foster MLA as well as representatives from the Joint Council, European Commission and the International Energy Agency. Other speakers include Glenn Allison, Group Managing Director of Stewart Milne Group, Ian Marchant, Chief Executive of Scottish and Southern Energy and Gareth Williams of the Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI).

Minister Ryan said: "In energy, like in any policy area, cooperation is crucial. Ireland, like Scotland and Northern Ireland, has vast renewable resources that we must develop to our environmental and economic gain. Working together will help us to realise our ambitions and further develop our global reputation in the clean energy sector.

This energy summit will provide a valuable platform to plan for future energy opportunities and challenges. I look forward to discussing these with my Ministerial counterparts and business leaders."

A series of forums involving politicians and other delegates will discuss a range of energy and business-related topics. These will include the opportunities to improve co-operation between the regions during the development of energy policy, the practical challenges facing the delivery of a joined-up approach on areas such as infrastructure, interconnection and pricing while also addressing other concerns such as growth and jobs.

Reg McCabe will be available for interview during the summit. To arrange a time for this please contact Alison Cran on 01224 80660/07988050980 or acran@webershandwick.com

Ends

Notes to Editors:

IBEC

IBEC is the national umbrella organisation for business and employers in Ireland. With a membership base of more than 7500 companies and organisations the Confederation has a particular focus on Human Resource management. IBEC staff offer a range of practical practical employer services and in addition provide the opportunity to network and lobby at an industry level through a web of more than 60 business sector associations.

CBI

The CBI is the UK's leading business organisation, speaking for some 240,000 businesses that together employ around a third of the private sector workforce. With offices across the UK as well as representation in Brussels, Washington, Beijing and Delhi the CBI communicates the British business voice around the world.