

ULSTER FARMERS' UNION NEWS RELEASE**Date: 23 July 2010****Cyclo No: PR109/10****SALE OF NIE TO IMPACT UPON RENEWABLES**

Confirmation that ESB, the main electricity company in the Irish Republic is to buy Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE) for just over £1bn is positive news for the Northern Ireland renewable sector according to the Ulster Farmers' Union.

NIE will continue to operate under its own brand but ESB has said the link will help both the Irish and Northern Irish governments to hit their policy and environmental objectives in developing renewable generation and smart metering, and ensuring security of supply.

UFU Rural Enterprise Chairman David McElrea said; "Over the past ten years, ESB has spent €6bn on refurbishing the Republic's energy infrastructure. This will be great news for the renewable sector if it is reciprocated here in Northern Ireland.

"One of the changes the UFU have been seeking is a review of the grid infrastructure and if we are to meet our targets and obligations, one of the ways is to have an efficient and compatible grid infrastructure".

ESB already has a presence in Northern Ireland through the Coolkeeragh power plant near Londonderry. It is also buying the power generated by the SeaGen tidal turbine in Strangford Lough.

Completion of the transaction is subject to a number of conditions, including conditions relating to Irish and UK competition clearances.

ENDS//...**Media Contact: Michelle Ferguson 028 9037 0222**