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## **Hydrogen as an economic factor: district takes on pioneering role**

**Minister for Economic Affairs, Grant Hendrik Tonne, virtually attends signing of contract to connect to hydrogen core network**

**Emsland. The district of Emsland has its sights firmly set on the future: together with gas network operator Open Grid Europe GmbH (OGE), it has planned and finalised the link-up with OGE's Nordsee-Ruhr-Link III hydrogen transmission pipeline, thereby securing the region's connection to the future nationwide hydrogen infrastructure.**

In the presence of guests from politics, associations, the Emsland municipalities and the regional economy, chief administrative officer Marc-André Burgdorf and Detlef Brüggemeyer, member of the OGE management board, signed the contract for 13 tie-in points, known as "tees", to the Nordsee-Ruhr-Link III hydrogen transmission pipeline. Lower Saxony's Minister for Economic Affairs, Grant Hendrik Tonne, attended the ceremony by video link.

### **Hydrogen as the basis for energy transformation**

The closing of the gap to the A31 motorway, the broadband initiative and now the option to connect the region to the nationwide hydrogen core network are some of the chapters in the gradual development of the Emsland economic region. The district of Emsland was among the first to focus on hydrogen, receiving the Hydrogen Valley of the Year title in 2024. The integration of hydrogen into the regional economy has progressed with great foresight, and further steps are now being taken: "We clearly see the advantages of being among the first to be connected and have now created the strategic and infrastructural conditions for a direct link to Germany's future hydrogen transmission network," chief administrative officer Marc-André Burgdorf said. A cluster of local authorities and regional businesses has begun raising awareness, facilitating exchange and networking, and ultimately identifying hydrogen potential. "We took the initiative to plan and coordinate a total of 13 tees and prepare project financing in close cooperation with the municipalities. Through this partnership, we are strengthening the basis for the energy transformation of the Emsland region," Burgdorf added.

Lower Saxony's Minister for Economic Affairs, Grant Hendrik Tonne, highlighted the commitment of the Emsland district, particularly with regard to Germany's security of supply: "Emsland is positioning itself as Germany's hydrogen hub and is actively driving the energy transition with major industrial and infrastructure projects. Significant investment in electrolysers, pipelines and innovative applications is creating a key region for renewable hydrogen here. This will strengthen Germany's security of supply and significantly advance the development of a national hydrogen network, which is a prerequisite for the decarbonisation of German industry."

### **Infrastructure provides reliability for investments**

For OGE CTO Detlef Brüggemeyer, too, the district of Emsland is playing a pioneering role in the development of the hydrogen future: "The hydrogen ramp-up is like a rock band just before a big concert. Everyone has their role to play: producers, consumers, infrastructure, the region and politicians. If everyone does their own thing, it's chaos. But if everything and everyone works in time to the exact same drum beat, there is impact and harmony."

In October 2024, the Federal Network Agency and the German government commissioned OGE and other gas transmission system operators to build the hydrogen core network. According to Detlef Brüggemeyer, OGE is now developing the infrastructure for a functioning hydrogen market and setting the pace. It sees hydrogen not as a supplement, but as the future. "By establishing an efficient hydrogen transmission infrastructure, we are creating reliability – the fundamental prerequisite for investment," Detlef Brüggemeyer said in his keynote speech. The state of Lower Saxony is a central component of the hydrogen "band" because the coast, imports, industry and storage facilities all come together here. OGE is developing the hydrogen core network here because real infrastructure is being created in Lower Saxony. Together with the Wilhelmshaven coast pipeline and North Sea-Ruhr Link I, the North Sea-Ruhr Link III pipeline forms the central corridor for future hydrogen transportation from the coast to northwestern Germany. But that alone is not enough for the hydrogen ramp-up. "Much is already in place for a hydrogen future, and the state of Lower Saxony and the district of Emsland are playing a central role here. But clear political support for the ramp-up of hydrogen production will continue to be needed. When politics, business and regions collaborate, this can be accomplished," Brüggemeyer said.

The district of Emsland is a prime example of close collaboration between politics, business and the region. The early focus on interconnecting the economy with hydrogen is contributing to the energy transformation here, and the signing of the contract now makes the decision to invest in connecting the region to Nordsee-Ruhr-Link III a reality.

**About Nordsee-Ruhr-Link III:** The Nordsee-Ruhr-Link III hydrogen transmission pipeline, which is being built by OGE, runs from Bunde to Wettringen in North Rhine-Westphalia. It is approx. 122 km long, has a diameter of DN 1,200 mm and is scheduled for commissioning in 2027. According to the current plans, construction will start at the end of Q3 2026. The main construction phase will then be in 2027.

**Image:** (Photo: Emsland district)