

In its capacity as system operator

Red Eléctrica has been endorsed as owner of the Salto de Chira power station by the European Commission

- The Commission has acknowledged the request of the Spanish Government and recognises Red Eléctrica as the owner of the pumped storage hydroelectric power stations in the Canary Islands as they are necessary to ensure the security of supply and the integration of renewable energy.

Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 18 January 2024

The European Commission has endorsed Red Eléctrica, in its capacity as system operator, as the owner of pumped-storage hydroelectric power facilities in the Canary Islands, such as the Salto de Chira power station in Gran Canaria, thus reaffirming the existing national regulation.

In a recently adopted decision, the EU executive commission recognises the system operator's ownership of these facilities in the archipelago as they are considered "necessary to ensure security of supply and the integration of renewable energy sources" given that the Canary Islands electricity system has limited options to achieve flexibility in low-carbon energy generation.

The European Commission has based its decision on the ultraperipheral nature of the Canary Islands, which makes its incorporation into the EU electricity market impossible. It also stresses that the interconnection of the islands is complex due to their topography, "as they are volcanic islands with a very steep seabed". For the European Commission, this technology is considered essential in the Canary Islands as a lever for the optimal integration of intermittent renewables (e.g., wind and solar).

This is the case of the Salto de Chira pumped storage hydroelectric power station in Gran Canaria, whose construction by Red Eléctrica is ongoing. Once it is commissioned, it will be a tool at the service of the electricity system and will provide fundamental support for the guarantee and security of supply and an important boost for the island's green transition.

The Commission's decision recognises the derogation requested by the Spanish Government from certain provisions of Directive 2019/944 and Regulation 2019/943. These regulations make it possible for transmission system operators to own energy storage facilities under certain circumstances. The Spanish Government requested the derogation taking into account the challenges related to the implementation of renewables in the Canary Islands and the potential of pumped storage hydroelectric as a tool that can act as a flexible renewable energy source for the system.

This derogation will apply for an unlimited period of time, covering both Salto de Chira and future pumped storage hydropower projects under Red Eléctrica's ownership in the Canary Islands.

Salto de Chira: a strategic project for Gran Canaria

Work on the Salto de Chira pumped storage hydroelectric power station project in Gran Canaria is progressing according to plan. The main actions are underway, such as the seawater desalination plant, the desalinated water pipeline, excavation of the access tunnels to the facility and laying the power line to evacuate electricity.

The Company began construction work in 2022, after having obtained all the necessary permits and authorisations and complying with the legal mandate that since 2013 (Law 17/2013) grants the system operator ownership of those pumped storage hydro facilities in non-mainland systems whose main purpose is to guarantee supply, system security and the integration of non-manageable renewable energy.

Work at Salto de Chira is being undertaken following the environmental monitoring plan and the Environmental Impact Statement, which led to the creation of the Technical Environmental Commission. The existence of this Commission, which supervises the work, enables a detailed analysis of any situations that may arise during the execution of the project.