

Work begins on the Salto de Chira, the first major energy storage system in the Canary Islands

- The Third Vice-President of the Government and Minister for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge, Teresa Ribera; the President of the Canary Islands, Ángel Victor Torres; the President of the Island Council of Gran Canaria, Antonio Morales; the Chairwoman of Red Eléctrica de España, Beatriz Corredor and the Mayoresses of Mogán and San Bartolomé, Onalia Bueno and Concepción Narváez, participated today in the special ceremony held to launch the construction works of the project.
- The Salto de Chira will strengthen Gran Canaria's security of supply and increase the integration of renewable energies into the system, and it is estimated that by 2026 it will increase production from this type of energy source by 37% and reduce CO₂ emissions by 20%.
- The works, which will last 70 months, will involve an investment of over €400 million and will generate more than 4,300 jobs, including more than 3,500 on the island of Gran Canaria.

Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, 17 February 2022

Construction has begun on the Salto de Chira pumped-storage hydroelectric power station on the island Gran Canaria. This is the first large-scale energy storage project in the Canary Islands that will enhance and facilitate the operation of the electricity system in the Islands by providing greater security of supply and increasing the integration of renewable energy.

The Government of the Canary Islands, the Ministry for Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge, the Island Government of Gran Canaria, Red Eléctrica de España and the local councils of Mogán and San Bartolomé de Tirajana, participated today in a ceremony to launch the commencement of the construction works of the project, which will last 70 months. This milestone marks the culmination of the administrative permitting process that began in October 2016.

The event was held at the head offices of the Canary Islands Trade Fair Institution and was attended by the Third Vice-President of the Government and Minister for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge, Teresa Ribera; the President of the Canary Islands, Ángel Victor Torres; the President of the Island Council of Gran Canaria, Antonio Morales; the Chairwoman of Red Eléctrica de España (REE), Beatriz Corredor; the Mayors and Mayoresses of Gran Canaria, members of national and regional parliaments, as well as a wide range of business representatives and social agents from the university, civil associations, irrigation associations and the industry sector in Gran Canaria and the Canary Islands.

The Third Vice-President of the Government and Minister for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge, Teresa Ribera, stressed that "the Salto de Chira project is a great example of the path we must follow to continue promoting a model of clean, inexpensive and efficient energy. Energy storage is going to be one of the key elements in the energy transition, both for its contribution to electrification and for its capacity to enable enhanced management of renewable energy, which is especially important in non-interconnected systems such as the islands. This is where the Salto de Chira will represent a major step forward, improving the guarantee of supply, increasing the security of the electricity system and boosting the penetration of renewables. With projects like this, and the firm commitment to renewables, decarbonisation and the reduction of energy dependence, in the coming years we will be able to reach a situation where the islands are 100% sustainable".



For the President of the Canary Islands, Ángel Victor Torres, "this joyful day will be remembered as a turning point for the future of Gran Canaria and the Canary Islands as a whole. Because this power station represents progress towards achieving many of the fundamental objectives of the Canary Islands 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Today, Salto de Chira takes the decisive step towards becoming a reality after a process that has not been without its complexities, due to its size and innovative nature. But every effort is worthwhile if it is to realise the aspirations of the Agenda, the Climate Emergency Declaration and the future Law on Climate Change and Energy Transition, which envisages the decarbonisation of the Islands by 2040. This is the path that Salto de Chira, a key facility for achieving energy sovereignty in the Canary Islands and for mitigating the effects of climate change, is beginning to follow".

For his part, the President of the Island Council of Gran Canaria, Antonio Morales, stressed that "today we are celebrating not only the beginning of a major construction project, but the beginning of a new era that has been long awaited: the guarantee that an eco-island model is possible and that we will be able to bequeath to future generations a land that we are obliged to protect. Salto de Chira is an essential tool that paves the way for a model of eco-social progress that guarantees our long-term survival."

In her speech, the Chairwoman of REE, Beatriz Corredor, highlighted that "Red Eléctrica will commission Salto de Chira in compliance with the legal mandate that in 2013 granted the system operator the responsibility for these pumped-storage facilities in non-mainland systems" and highlighted that the power station will be "an instrument at the service of society in Gran Canaria and an energy storage tool for each and every one of us".

Also taking part in the ceremony were the Mayoresses of Mogán, Onalia Bueno, and of San Bartolomé, Concepción Narváez, which represent the municipalities in which the future facilities will be built. Ms. Bueno stressed that the project "will improve the quality of life of the residents of Barranco de Arguineguín because it will promote economic diversification, while improving communications and job opportunities." For her part, Ms. Narváez, stressed that "changing the current energy model is something urgent that we cannot put off and leave to other generations. One of our greatest challenges must be to generate the instruments for storing the clean energies that we generate today."

The Salto de Chira power station, declared of general interest by the Government of the Canary Islands, takes advantage of the existence of two large inland reservoirs (the Chira and Soria dams) located on the island in order to build between them a 200-MW pumped-storage hydroelectric power station (equivalent to approximately 36% of the peak demand of Gran Canaria) and an energy storage capacity of 3.5 GWh. Additionally, the project includes the construction of a seawater desalination plant and the associated marine works, as well as the necessary facilities for connection to the transmission grid.

Water will be an essential element for the operation of the new infrastructure, but it is also a scarce resource in the archipelago. Therefore, the facility will use the water desalination plant to be installed in the municipality of Arguineguín in order to guarantee the necessary water flow to the reservoirs, in order to fulfil its mission as an energy storage tool.

Key infrastructure for the Canary Islands electricity system.

The Salto de Chira power station, which has been designed with the utmost respect for the environment, guarantees its integration into the surroundings and reduces the visual impact of the infrastructure to a minimum, as 91% will be located underground. This infrastructure will bolster the security of supply in Gran Canaria by increasing installed power capacity in the Island's electricity system. This undoubtedly a fundamental aspect for an electrically isolated system, such as the one of the Canary Islands, and which is therefore more vulnerable. Furthermore, in the event of a supply interruption, the facility will make it possible to speed up and drastically reduce restoration times.



Additionally, it will increase the integration of renewable energies into the system, as it will make use of the surplus from this type of source thanks to its energy storage capacity. In this way, it is estimated that, by 2026, the Salto de Chira power station will contribute to increasing the integration of renewable energy production on the island by 37%, raising the average annual coverage of demand with this type of generation to 51%, which at specific times may be much higher. Moreover, this will lead to a 20% reduction in CO₂ emissions.

With an investment of more than €400 million, the facility will generate estimated savings of €122 million per year for the electricity system by promoting the island's energy independence and reducing imports of fossil fuels. Furthermore, it will generate more than 4,300 jobs, including more than 3,500 on the island of Gran Canaria and will contribute to the sustainable economic recovery of the Canary Islands in alignment with the principles of the European Green Deal and the strategic lines and basic principles of the Pact for the Social and Economic Reactivation of the Canary Islands.

Halving fossil fuel use in the Canary Islands by 2030

In recent years, wind power in the Canary Islands has tripled its installed capacity which, together with solar photovoltaic capacity, now totals 615 MW of renewable power capacity. This has allowed demand coverage with renewables to rise from 7.8% in 2017 to 19.9% in 2021.

In this context, the construction of the Salto de Chira pumped-storage hydroelectric power station will be key to driving the energy transition in the Canary Islands and moving towards a new, safer, more efficient, decarbonised and environmentally friendly energy model.