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OPAL: Brandenburg grants first building permit

Planning approval complete for the natural gas pipeline in North Brandenburg / Construction work to begin in the coming days

Cottbus/Kassel. Planning approval notice clears the way for construction work in North Brandenburg: with a positive ruling, the local State Office for Mining, Geology and Raw Materials (LBGR) has now completed the first public approval process for the OPAL natural gas pipeline in Brandenburg and issued the permit for a 148-kilometer-long route section. "The planning approval for the northern section in Brandenburg represents another milestone for the OPAL project. And we are confident that we will also receive the final permit, for the southern part of Brandenburg, in February," said a delighted Bernd Vogel, Head of OPAL NEL TRANSPORT GmbH, upon handover of the approval documentation. OPAL NEL TRANSPORT GmbH is part of the WINGAS Group and will be responsible for operating the OPAL network.

With the planning approval notice, the State Office defined all details for the construction and subsequent operation of OPAL. The natural gas pipeline will pass through Brandenburg on a route with a total length of 273 kilometers. Due to the length of this route, the approval process was subdivided into two sections in Brandenburg: the northern section encompasses the districts of Uckermark, Barnim, Märkisch-Oderland and Oder-Spree, while the southern section includes the districts of Dahme-Spreewald, Teltow-Fläming, Elbe-Elster and Oberspreewald-Lausitz. Construction work for the OPAL pipeline in North Brandenburg is already set to begin in the coming days.

OPAL is currently the largest German natural gas infrastructure project. This pipeline is to connect the Nord Stream Baltic Sea Pipeline with the European gas pipeline network. From Lubmin, near Greifswald, the OPAL route extends over around 470 kilometers, through Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Brandenburg and Saxony, all the way to the Czech Republic. Parallel work on the route sections in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Saxony, each around 100 kilometers long, already began in early fall 2009. Since then, the topsoil has been cleared on more than 160 kilometers of the OPAL pipeline route in total, over 40 kilometers of piping have now been welded and the first kilometers of these pipeline sections have been

laid. The natural gas pipeline is scheduled to go into operation in October 2011. The pipeline is being built by WINGAS, as commissioned by OPAL NEL TRANSPORT GmbH and E.ON Ruhrgas AG.

***OPAL NEL TRANSPORT GmbH** will be the OPAL network operator. The company is part of the WINGAS Group, which also includes the gas supplier, WINGAS, and WINGAS TRANSPORT, which operates a gas pipeline over 2,000 kilometers long across the whole of Germany. It is planned to connect OPAL with WINGAS TRANSPORT's long-distance gas pipeline network.*

For further information go to **www.opal-pipeline.de**.