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NI links up to underwater cable

Northern Ireland is to be linked to an underwater transatlantic communications cable for the first time.

The fibre optic cable, a telecommunications link which runs along the seabed, connects North America with Europe.

It will improve the speed and extent to which firms in NI can trade information with the rest of the world.

A new 22-mile extension will be built from an existing cable and will come ashore near Portrush.



Northern Ireland will be linked to an underwater communications cable

Access to the new telecommunications will be available in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, according to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment. Enterprise Minister Arlene Foster said the 30m euro investment (£28m) "would provide opportunities for Northern Ireland companies selling goods and services overseas and also improve our attractiveness to knowledge based inward investment".

"Northern Ireland businesses are competing more than ever for business in global markets," she said. "This project will deliver the kind of international telecommunications, companies located in London, Amsterdam, Dublin and New York already depend on."

The department said Project Kelvin would involve connecting a new submarine cable to the Hibernia North Transatlantic cable located 22 miles off the north coast of Northern Ireland. It said the new cable would come ashore in the Portrush area initially and then go onto a location where it could interconnect with Northern Ireland's existing telecoms infrastructure. The department added that the new link could be interconnected at a number of different locations including Armagh, Ballymena, Belfast, Coleraine, Londonderry, Omagh, Portadown and Strabane.

The contract to construct the link to North America has been awarded to Hibernia Atlantic Limited.

The project is being funded by the European Union and the British and Irish governments.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/foyle_and_west/7812757.stm