National Grid chooses corridor for North West Coast Connections after extensive public consultation

• National Grid has chosen a corridor running overland around the coast of Cumbria and under Morecambe Bay for connecting new sources of electricity generation into 'the grid'

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• Corridor selected after thousands of conversations with people across Cumbria and North Lancashire

• Work will now start on planning the exact line of the route within this corridor and this will see some existing power lines taken down and replaced with higher capacity ones

• A route running mainly offshore has been ruled out due to obstacles on the sea bed and concerns about the use of technology which hasn't been used to connect a nuclear power station before

National Grid has chosen a corridor option for the connection, which will link new sources of electricity including the proposed new nuclear power station at Moorside into 'the grid' in Cumbria and Lancashire.

Work is now getting underway on the next important stage of the project which is to plan the exact line along this corridor option that the connection will take, the technologies that will be used to build it, any other necessary works and the methods that can be used to reduce its impact on the landscape.

The company has chosen the corridor after five years of discussions with key national and regional bodies and thousands of conversations with people during a consultation exercise last autumn.

Moorside will be connected at two points on the existing National Grid network to ensure security of supply. The chosen corridor runs from Harker substation near Carlisle largely following the path of existing low voltage power lines around the Cumbrian coast to Moorside. It then heads from Moorside to the Furness peninsula where it goes under Morecambe Bay to emerge at Middleton substation near Heysham, in Lancashire.

There will be the opportunity for National Grid to take down some existing low voltage power lines owned by Electricity North West and to replace them with its own high voltage ones.

National Grid selected the corridor after listening to peoples' views at a series of 33 consultation events and considering over 1,200 written responses, including 70 from local authorities and parish councils and 80 from a wide range of other bodies including the Lake District National Park, Friends of the Lake District, Natural England,

English Heritage and the Environment Agency.

The report on the consultation exercise, containing all the feedback submitted, is published today at 12.30pm on the project website: www.northwestcoastconnections.com

Robert Powell, Project Manager said: “We had thousands of conversations with people during autumn of last year and some key themes have emerged.

“People understand how important it is for us to connect new sources of generation into the grid and the task we face in doing this in a region with some of the most spectacular landscapes in the country.

“Many people think that following the path of existing power lines and taking these down to replace them with our own equipment is a good idea. There is support for our plan to cross under Morecambe Bay and this would avoid building a connection through the South Lakes.

“There are also a lot of people who would like us to put cables out of sight on the sea bed between Moorside and the Lancashire coast. We explained at the start of consultation that this wasn’t our preferred option. We’re not taking this forward for several reasons.

“NuGen, the company which is building Moorside, prefers the route we have chosen. They share our concern that offshore HVDC (high voltage direct current) cables have never been used to connect a nuclear power station. Using this untried technology could introduce risks for the Moorside project.

“The sea bed in this area is already congested with cables, gas pipes and wind turbines. There are thousands of rounds of unexploded ordinance out at sea from the Ministry of Defence’s Eskmeals firing range. Also, if an offshore cable develops a fault, it can take up to six months to repair.”

National Grid is now starting to talk to landowners and communities along the corridor it has selected about the technologies it can use to build the connection and possible locations for the equipment. Several areas were identified during the consultation as requiring further close study including the Duddon Estuary and near to Whitehaven.

Robert said: “The conversations we are continuing to have with people remain very important as we start to pinpoint the exact route that the connection will take.

We’re starting discussions with landowners that will help us put a line within the corridor to show exactly where the new connection could run. We will be holding a series of community events in the autumn to share a draft version of this line along the corridor so people can give us any information that could influence the design of the route."

“This will allow us to refine the alignment further before we start more formal consultations next year.”

The company aims to submit an application for consent to build the new connection to the Planning Inspectorate in 2017. A decision will then be made by the Secretary of State for the Department of Energy and Climate Change. If consent is granted, construction work is expected to start in 2019. National Grid is required to provide Nugen with the first phase of the connection into its transmission network by 2024.

People can register their details on the North West Coast Connections website to make sure they get updates on the project and are informed when the community events in the autumn are taking place: www.northwestcoastconnections.com

For further information about the project, please contact the project team direct using any of the following methods:

- Freephone: 0800 876 6990
- Email:nationalgrid@northwestcoastconnections.com
- Freepost: Freepost NG NWCC.

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Notes for editors

Notes to Editors:

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National Grid in the UK:

- We own and operate the electricity transmission network in England and Wales, with day-to-day responsibility for balancing supply and demand. We also operate, but do not own, the Scottish networks. Our networks comprise approximately 7,200 kilometres (4,474 miles) of overhead line, 1,500 kilometres (932 miles) of underground cable and 342 substations.
- We own and operate the gas National Transmission System in Great Britain, with day-to-day responsibility for balancing supply and demand. Our network comprises approximately 7,660 kilometres (4,760 miles) of high-pressure pipe and 618 above-ground installations.
- As Great Britain's System Operator (SO) we make sure gas and electricity is transported safely and efficiently from where it is produced to where it is consumed. From April 2019, Electricity System Operator (ESO) is a new standalone business within National Grid, legally separate from all other parts of the National Grid Group. This will provide the right environment to deliver a balanced and impartial ESO that can realise real benefits for consumers as we transition to a more decentralised, decarbonised electricity system.

- Other UK activities mainly relate to businesses operating in competitive markets outside of our core regulated businesses; including interconnectors, gas metering activities and a liquefied natural gas (LNG) importation terminal – all of which are now part of National Grid Ventures. National Grid Property is responsible for the management, clean-up and disposal of surplus sites in the UK. Most of these are former gas works.

Find out more about the energy challenge and how National Grid is helping find solutions to some of the challenges we face at https://www.nationalgrid.com/group/news

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