

Frequently asked questions

1. What is National Grid's role in Didcot for Network Rail's project to electrify the Great Western Main Line?

Our role is to connect the railway to the national grid. To do this, we need to install two underground cable routes to run from our existing substation in the north-east corner of Didcot Power Station to a new trackside substation to be built by us and Network Rail. Network Rail owns the land where the substation will be located and National Grid and Network Rail will operate the substation once it is built.

2. Why is the project happening at this location?

We need to connect the railway to a nearby substation with enough electrical capacity. Our substation at Didcot is one of the few suitable substations along the railway line between London and Cardiff where we can do this.

3. How will the cables be installed underground?

The cables will be installed in trenches. Work on the cable routes will be carried out in sections, of about 20-40m at a time. The equipment used to carry out this work will include machinery such as diggers and dumpers and will be similar to the equipment you'd see at a typical road-works site. Once the work is complete, we'll return the land to how it looked before.

On some parts of the route, such as where we need to cross the river near the sewage treatment works, we'll use a horizontal drill to install the cables. This will help reduce the impact of our work above the ground. Once the route is drilled, piping will be installed and then the cables will be pulled through these pipes.

4. How long are the routes, and what size will the trenches and working areas be?

The cable route that runs from the substation along Hawksworth Road and meets Basil Hill Road is just over 2km long, and the cable route that runs from the substation along the A4130 and Basil Hill Road is also just over 2km long.

Each cable trench will be just over a metre wide, nearly a metre deep, and will be spaced about 5m apart. This will make the total working width required approximately 10m wide. Where we drill the cables, trenches will not be required.

5. Why do the two routes split instead of running parallel to each other?

As part of our work to identify the most suitable routes, we had to consider a number of different options. We carried out assessments to see whether both cable routes could run along the A4130 and Basil Hill Road. However, due to the number of utility cables already installed under the A4130, this wasn't possible. This meant splitting the route at the Hawksworth Road roundabout.

6. How long will the project take?

The cables will take approximately six months to install. With construction beginning at the end of May, we estimate the project will end in July 2015. If timings change, we'll keep people updated.

7. Will works on the local substation disrupt local power supply?

Our work on this project is not expected to disrupt local power supply. However, if you do experience any problems, please don't hesitate to contact us via the project hotline on 0800 988 9147 or email nationalgrid@didcotgwmconnections.com.

8. Will it cause a lot of noise?

There will be some noise associated with our construction work while we're installing the underground cables. However, we'll work hard to keep any disruption to a minimum. Once installed, the underground cables will not cause any noise.

9. At what times of day will the work take place?

We'll aim to keep to normal working hours of 7.30am – 6pm, Monday to Friday, but we may also have to carry out works on some Saturdays between 7.30am – 1pm. We'll work hard to keep any disruption, including construction noise, to a minimum for local people.

10. How much construction traffic will this project create and will the works have an impact on day to day traffic?

We'll only need standard HGV lorries for our work. The amount of construction traffic we'll generate will be small and we don't expect it to cause any additional disruption to traffic on the roads in the area.

Where works are being carried out and cables laid into the ground, traffic management systems will be put in place so the flow of traffic can be maintained. One lane of traffic will always be kept open by traffic lights so no roads will be closed. In the mornings and evenings, we aim to use manned traffic lights rather than automatic lights to help further minimise any disruption.

11. Have you considered the local wildlife and environment?

We have undertaken a range of surveys in the area, including environmental and archaeological surveys, to assess any effects the project may have on the landscape and wildlife. We'll also work to minimise any short-term effect our construction work may have on the environment.

12. Will the work mean the closure of cycle and footpaths in the area?

We don't plan to close the cycle path that runs alongside Didcot Sewage Treatment Works or the one that runs alongside Didcot Power Station. Our cables will cross the cycle path that runs alongside Didcot Power Station but we'll ensure one side of the path always remains open to walkers and cyclists.

13. Will the work have any effect on the residents of Foxhall Manor Park?

We'll be working along Basil Hill Road and at the back of Foxhall Manor Park. We're speaking with residents at the Park and will keep people up to date as the project progresses. We'll work hard to keep any disruption, including construction noise, to a minimum.

14. What safety considerations will National Grid carry out while this work takes place?

Health and safety is always our top priority when undertaking any work. We follow strict health and safety regulations which are constantly monitored, meaning the health and safety of the public and our workers is our key concern at all times.

15. Does the decommissioning of Didcot Power Station have anything to do with this work?

No. Our work to connect the railway line to the national grid is not related to the work being carried out to decommission the power station and demolish its cooling towers.

16. How can we get in contact to find out more information?

You can contact us via the project hotline on 0800 988 9147 or email nationalgrid@didcotgwmconnections.com. There is also information available on the project website, which can be found at nationalgrid.com/didcotgwmconnections.