

VISUAL IMPACT
PROVISION

nationalgrid

Fourth Annual Report
June 2017 – May 2018



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Foreword by Chris Baines

Chairman of the Stakeholder Advisory Group **Visual Impact Provision project**

Choosing to remove major structures from four of the most sensitive landscapes in Britain is extremely challenging, but the Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) continues to enjoy a close and creative working relationship with the technical experts in National Grid. This has been another year of listening and learning and we have made solid progress.

Whilst the initial site selection relied on objective landscape analysis and the judgement of the SAG's national experts, the refinement of proposals has been greatly influenced by local ecologists, archaeologists, countryside managers, elected politicians, community leaders and others who know the specific landscapes intimately. We are seeing strong support for the thoroughness of this consultation process. It is influencing thinking among all the stakeholders and deserves to be adopted more widely.

Landscape improvement on the scale of Visual Impact Provision (VIP) requires very careful consideration but there is a real prospect of some of our most iconic and popular landscapes being improved immeasurably in the very near future. As each of the schemes progresses through the formal planning process, I am optimistic

that VIP will be approved for implementation. SAG members are already in discussions with National Grid and Ofgem about a repeat of the VIP programme in the next financial period.

The Landscape Enhancement Initiative – VIP's provision of grants for local practical action – is already delivering improvements on the ground and there are more applications in the pipeline. The challenge now is to attract many more proposals through the National Parks and AONBs from organisations such as the Woodland Trust, the RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts and the National Trust.

Finally, I want to thank the SAG and senior colleagues in National Grid and Ofgem for their exceptional support. Their dependable personal commitment is a core strength of VIP.



Foreword by Michelle Clark

Visual Impact Provision project manager, **National Grid**

The VIP project is unique in the scale of its ambition to reduce the landscape and visual impact of electricity transmission infrastructure.

When I became VIP project manager following Hector Pearson's retirement at the end of 2017, our stakeholders' determination and enthusiasm to embrace this exceptional opportunity was immediately apparent. Their ongoing commitment augurs very well for VIP both now and into the future.

I am certain that Hector will continue to follow the project closely and thank him on behalf of National Grid and the project's stakeholders for his drive, dedication and sound judgement.

It was encouraging to see the project's founding principles ratified this year following a stakeholder-led review. After consultation with eligible AONB Partnerships, National Park Authorities and wider stakeholders, our VIP policy was endorsed with only minor updates and amendments.

Accordingly, our goal remains to maximise the potential of Ofgem's £500 million provision not only through the schemes proposed in Dorset, the New Forest, the Peak District and Snowdonia, but through the many smaller projects already benefitting from Landscape Enhancement Initiative funding.

With its potential now being transformed into tangible benefits, there is also growing excitement about what could be achieved in RIIO-T2, our next regulatory period. Our Stakeholder Advisory Group has unanimously supported continuing the project, and we are exploring with them what VIP might look like beyond 2021.

VIP has always been a forward-looking endeavour, and we remain united in our commitment to enhancing our treasured landscapes for generations to come.

01: Visual Impact Provision

National Grid’s Visual Impact Provision (VIP) project is proposing to replace existing overhead transmission lines with underground solutions in four nationally important landscapes in England and Wales, with the aim of helping to reduce the visual impact of electricity transmission infrastructure. Our four projects are in the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), New Forest National Park, Peak District National Park and Snowdonia National Park.

There is a £500m Ofgem¹ provision to carry out this work in English and Welsh AONBs, National Parks and Scottish National Scenic Areas. National Grid is making use of this provision as the electricity transmission owner in England and Wales. The provision also provides for our Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI), a grant scheme for smaller local improvement projects open to all 30 AONBs and National Parks which contain or are impacted by National Grid overhead transmission lines.

At National Grid, we are passionate about playing our part in conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the landscape. Our aim is to achieve the maximum enhancement to the landscape from the available funds whilst ensuring that no significant adverse impacts arise as a result. To ensure that this aim is achieved, we are working closely with our Stakeholder Advisory Group, which we set up at the start of the project in 2014 to advise us on the evaluation and selection of the projects proposed for delivery.

This fourth annual report records our progress and key activities in delivering the four projects and LEI scheme between June 2017 and May 2018. It builds on progress detailed in our three previous annual reports. To read them, or to find out more about how the four prioritised projects were selected, please visit our website, www.nationalgrid.com/VIP.

Project statistics

- **571km** of National Grid electricity transmission line in **AONBs** and **National Parks** assessed
- **30 AONBs** and **National Parks** in England and Wales included in the project
- **53.7km** of line in **12 sections** within eight protected areas = highest impact
- **Four sections** of overhead line prioritised for undergrounding
- Landscape Enhancement Initiative = funding of **up to £200,000** per local visual improvement project

£500M PROVISION TO BENEFIT NATIONAL PARKS, AONBs AND NATIONAL SCENIC AREAS



¹ Ofgem is the electricity and markets regulator in the United Kingdom

02: Working with stakeholders

Stakeholders hold the key to the success of the VIP project; their views are vital in helping us to make decisions on how we should use the provision to maximise its potential benefits. As well as seeking the views of a wide variety of local stakeholders including local groups, communities and landowners, a national Stakeholder Advisory Group was established in 2014 to guide decision-making on the project.

2.1 Stakeholder Advisory Group

The VIP project’s Stakeholder Advisory Group is chaired by leading environmentalist Chris Baines and is comprised of senior representatives of organisations dedicated to conserving and enhancing the landscape throughout England

and Wales, as well as Ofgem and National Grid itself. They advise the project on key decisions as well as the most effective ways to engage with local stakeholders.

Stakeholder Advisory Group members:



2.2 Stakeholder Advisory Group activities

During 2017/18 the Stakeholder Advisory Group met twice. The minutes of these meetings are available on our website, www.nationalgrid.com/VIP.

Below is an overview of the key activities and issues considered by the group over the past year.

Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting	Main items of discussion
10th meeting 6 November 2017 Held in Birmingham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress updates on the four prioritised projects including an overview of technical work and local stakeholder and community engagement • Review of the planning application and Ofgem funding submission for the Dorset VIP project • Update on applications to the LEI scheme • Update from the Scottish transmission owners on their initiatives in Scotland • Review of the VIP policy and consider updates
11th meeting 22 February 2018 Held in Birmingham	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress updates on the four prioritised projects including an overview of technical work and local stakeholder and community engagement • Update on applications to the LEI scheme • Review of current SAG membership and wider engagement • Generation and discussion of ideas for the future of the VIP project in the next Ofgem price control period (RIIO-T2)

2.3 Wider stakeholder engagement and empowerment

Throughout the year, we have worked with our Stakeholder Reference Groups in each of the project areas. These groups, established at the beginning of the project, are attended by representatives of the relevant AONB Partnership or National Park Authority and local technical stakeholders. They provide vital information and advice to inform project development.

Each prioritised project also has its own dedicated website so that local stakeholders and interested parties can keep abreast of the latest developments. More details and a summary of the Stakeholder Reference Group members for each area are available in the project summaries.

We have also shared project information, updates and documentation on our project website www.nationalgrid.com/VIP to keep stakeholders and the public up-to-date as the project progresses.

The two companies that own the Scottish transmission network are developing their own projects to use the Ofgem provision. They attended the tenth Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting in November 2017 to discuss their progress. By sharing our knowledge and experiences with them, we are seeking to ensure that the potential benefits are maximised across England, Scotland and Wales.

Benjamin Graham, award-winning Landscape Photographer of the Year, was commissioned to capture the pylons targeted for removal in the four priority areas to demonstrate the potential of the VIP project. His photographs are used throughout this report.

2.4 Review of the VIP policy

National Grid published its VIP policy² in 2013 to set out how we propose to make use of the £500m provision made available by Ofgem. It contains the five guiding principles that underpin the decision-making on the project to ensure fairness and balance. As per our commitment in the policy, we reviewed it in 2017 to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

The review was carried out in consultation with the Stakeholder Advisory Group and wider stakeholders including representatives from the eligible AONBs

and National Parks and Stakeholder Reference Group members. It concluded that the policy is still fit for purpose and does not require any substantive revision. However, some minor updates to the policy were made, such as updating weblinks to background and supporting documents. This updated version of the VIP policy, dated December 2017, is available on our website, www.nationalgrid.com/VIP, along with a more detailed summary of the review process.

2.5 VIP in RIIO-T2 – the next price control period

Ofgem’s £500m VIP provision is part of the current regulatory period, known as RIIO-T1³, which runs to the end of March 2021. With three years of RIIO-T1 left, National Grid is beginning to shape its plans for the next regulatory period (RIIO-T2) for Ofgem’s consideration. The plans, developed with stakeholders, will include suggestions for what VIP could look like in the future.

As part of the eleventh SAG meeting in February 2018, we held a workshop for stakeholders to explore lessons learned so far from the current VIP project and share ideas for its future.

The main discussion points included:

- Unanimous support for continuing the VIP project into RIIO-T2
- Maintaining and building on the existing approach, with scope to broaden it through consideration of other important landscapes, such as World Heritage sites
- Support for closer collaboration between National Grid and the Distribution Network Operators
- Exploring opportunities for innovation in the LEI scheme, such as new surface coatings and camouflage for pylons



² Our Visual Impact Provision policy can be found on our website www.nationalgrid.com/VIP

³ To find out more about the RIIO regulatory framework please visit our website: <https://www.nationalgrid.com/uk/about-grid/how-we-are-regulated/riio-regulatory-framework>

03: Our four VIP projects

Our four major Visual Impact Provision projects aim to enhance some of the most beautiful landscapes in England and Wales by replacing National Grid overhead transmission lines with underground solutions, while avoiding unacceptable environmental impacts and balancing technical deliverability and cost.

During 2017/18, we have continued to make good progress on the four prioritised projects, building on work undertaken previously. This has been informed by technical and engineering design work as well as discussions with stakeholders, landowners and communities. The following pages provide a progress update on each of the projects as well as a look ahead to activities planned for 2018/19.

We are doing this through a transparent process which is led by the Stakeholder Advisory Group, drawing on input from technical experts, local stakeholders and communities. The VIP project is supported by National Grid's project team and external specialist advisors.

OUR FOUR VIP PROJECTS

- SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK**
 Around 3km of undergrounding, removing 10 pylons
- PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK**
 Around 2km of undergrounding, removing 7 pylons
- DORSET AONB**
 Around 8.8km of undergrounding, removing 22 pylons
- NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK**
 Around 3km of undergrounding, removing 8 pylons

Dorset AONB

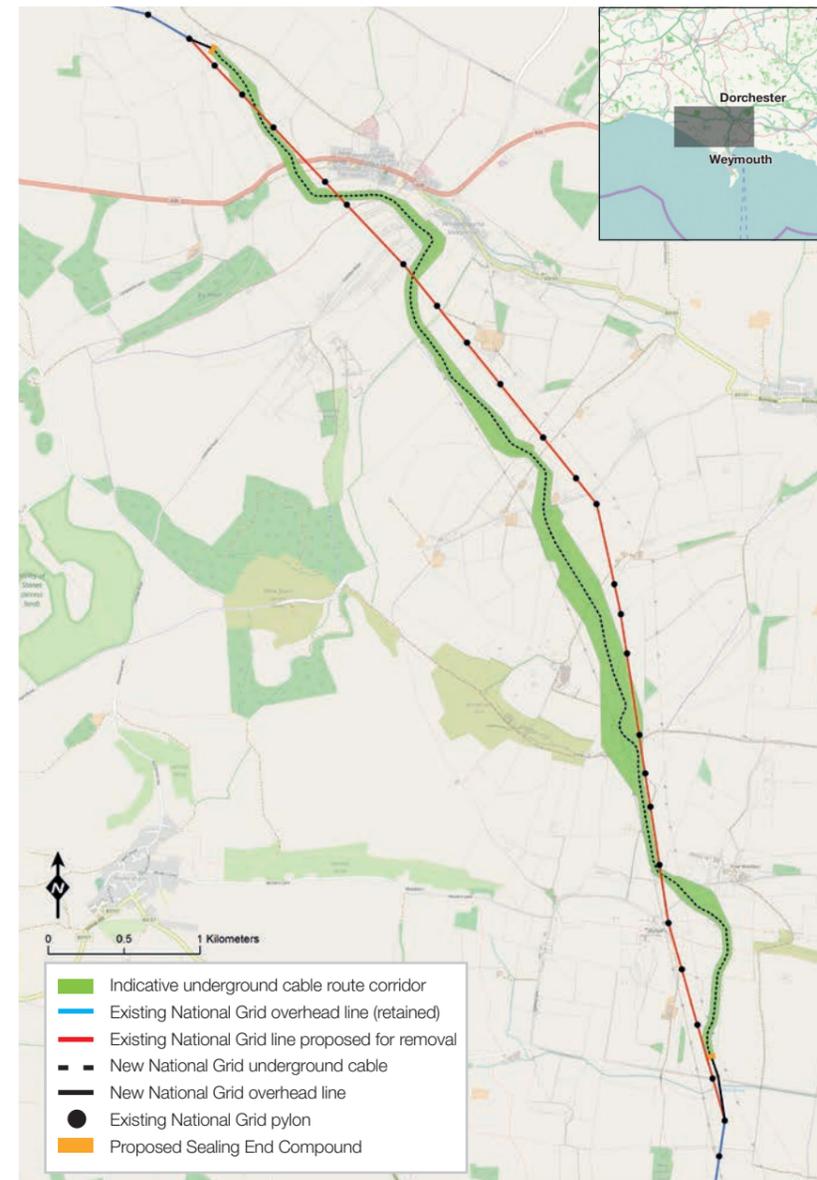


The Dorset AONB project would replace 8.8km of overhead line near Dorchester with an underground cable, permanently removing 22 pylons from the landscape.

The preferred route for the underground cable runs from Winterbourne Abbas to the edge of the South Dorset Escarpment at Friar Waddon. To connect the cable to the remaining existing overhead line, sealing end compounds and associated terminal pylons would need to be constructed at Winterbourne Abbas and Friar Waddon Hill.



Current route option as of May 2018



Dorset AONB



Progress to date

Over the past year, we worked to prepare our planning application for the Dorset project, which has now been submitted to West Dorset District Council. This involved detailed technical studies, discussions with stakeholders and landowners as well as the completion of an environmental assessment for the project to ensure that we avoid or minimise any adverse environmental impacts.

The locations of the two sealing end compounds needed to connect the cable to the remaining overhead line have been confirmed. One will be located north of the A35 at Winterbourne Abbas and the other to the south of Friar Waddon Hill, close to the disused railway line. In identifying these locations, we have investigated options, undertaken environmental and engineering studies and held discussions with landowners and stakeholders to develop landscaping and planting schemes to reduce the visual impact of these structures.

We held two public consultation events in July 2017 before submitting the planning application. These events gave people the opportunity to comment on the details of the project including environmental mitigation, traffic management and project phasing. The events were held in Martinstown and Winterbourne Abbas and were attended by nearly 100 members of the public, including local residents and business owners, community groups, affected landowners and representatives from Dorset County Council, West Dorset District Council, Winterbourne Abbas and Winterbourne Steepleton Parish Council and Chesil Bank Parish Council. The vast majority of comments received through feedback forms were supportive of the project.

The SAG reviewed and endorsed the planning application for the Dorset project at its meeting in November 2017. We submitted the planning application to West Dorset District Council in January 2018 and a decision is expected in summer 2018. We also submitted a request to the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy under Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 for consent to replace a short section of line to connect to the new sealing end compound north of the A35.

In April 2018, we applied to Ofgem for funding to be released for the Dorset project. The application included details of the project, its development and benefits, stakeholder engagement and the delivery programme.

The tendering process for the main contractor to deliver the project was launched in June 2017. A preferred bidder has been identified to carry out the construction works should the planning application be approved and the project funding confirmed by Ofgem.

Two Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) meetings were held in Dorset in 2017/18. Members of the Dorset SRG include representatives from the Dorset AONB Partnership, West Dorset District Council, Dorset County Council, Natural England, Historic England and the Environment Agency.

We have liaised with Historic England and Dorset County Council to understand the potential for archaeological discoveries in the project area. As a result, we have agreed to excavate 150 archaeological trial trenches to better inform our plans. This work is expected to start in summer 2018 should the planning application be approved.



Dorset AONB



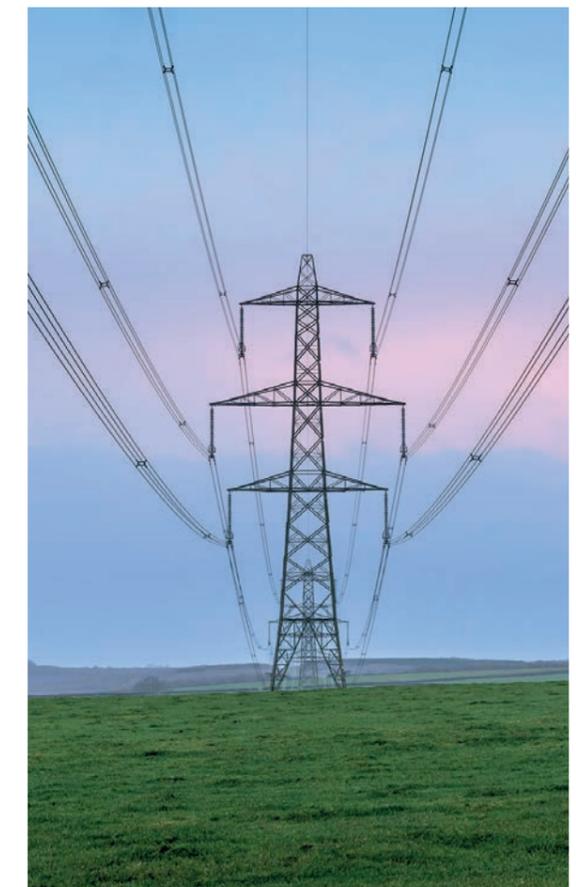
Looking forward

Subject to all necessary negotiations, approvals and consents, the current indicative programme is that on-site works will begin in 2019 and take approximately three years to complete. It is anticipated that by 2022 the new underground cable will be in service and that the existing pylons and section of overhead line will have been removed.

We will continue to work with the local community and our stakeholders throughout the construction phase to ensure that the project achieves the greatest possible enhancement of the landscape. We have developed a plan to keep the public informed of progress including the installation of information boards in key areas such as Hardy's Monument.

Project information, updates and documentation will continue to be shared through our Dorset project website: <http://dorset.nationalgrid.co.uk>.

STAKEHOLDER REFERENCE GROUP MEMBERS



New Forest National Park

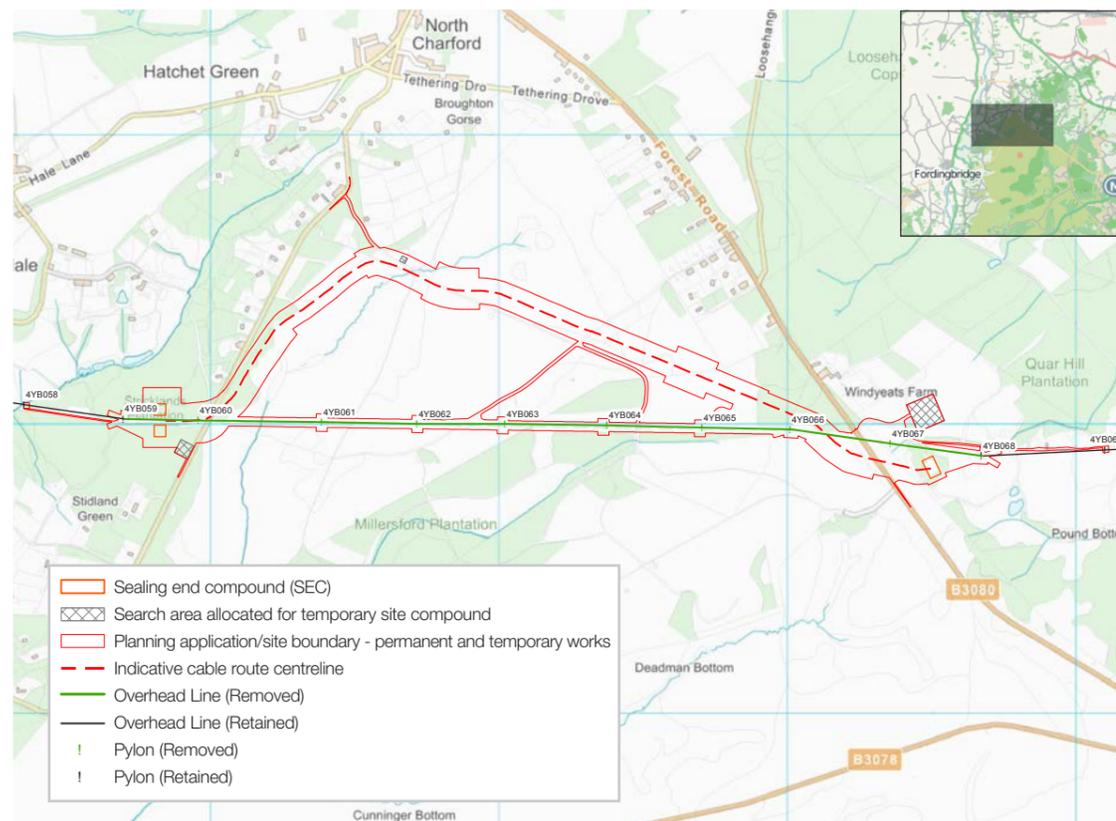


The New Forest National Park project would replace a 3km section of overhead line near Hale with an underground cable, permanently removing eight pylons from the landscape.

The preferred route for the underground cable runs north of Hale Purlieu between Stricklands Plantation and Pound Bottom. To connect the cable to the remaining existing overhead line, a sealing end compound and associated terminal pylon would be needed at Stricklands Plantation and Pound Bottom Quarry.



Current route option as of May 2018 (nb a revised route was adopted in July 2018)



New Forest National Park



Progress to date

Discussions with stakeholders on the preferred route for the underground cable have continued during 2017/18. Due to the highly sensitive ecology of the area and engineering constraints, the cable route identified initially has been revised. The route now deviates to the north to avoid crossing the most sensitive section of the mire in the valley to the west of Hale Purlieu. This was provisionally endorsed by the Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) in February 2018 and we are in the process of informing wider stakeholders and the local community about the latest proposals.

Work is continuing with stakeholders and environmental restoration specialists to mitigate the impact of the project's construction on the landscape, wildlife and livestock and so that comprehensive restoration is achieved. A phased programme of work is being developed to ensure that work on the Purlieu is staggered throughout the construction phase. This will allow for the free and safe movement of livestock across the Purlieu throughout the project's construction, keeping restrictions on livestock grazing and recreation to a minimum.

The locations of the two sealing end compounds needed to connect the cable to the remaining overhead line have been identified following discussions with stakeholders and landowners. One will be located at Stricklands Plantation in the west and the other at Pound Bottom Quarry in the east.

Two Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) meetings were held in the New Forest in 2017/18. Members of the New Forest SRG include representatives from the New Forest National Park Authority, National Trust, Natural England, Forestry Commission, the Verderers of the New Forest and the Environment Agency.

Ongoing detailed environmental and ecological surveys have confirmed the presence of three specially protected species of bird: the Dartford warbler, the nightjar and the woodlark. Based on the outcome of these surveys and advice from Natural England, it was concluded that the project has the potential to have an adverse effect on these birds. We will therefore be pursuing an 'Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest' (IROPI) case under the European Habitats Directive to seek approval for the project.



New Forest National Park



Looking forward

A second meeting of the project's Community Liaison Group will take place in summer 2018. We established the group to involve the large number of stakeholders interested in the project. Its membership includes representatives from parish councils, the RSPB, CPRE Hampshire, the Friends of the New Forest, the Verderers of the New Forest and the New Forest Commoners Defence Association. We will continue to work with the project's many stakeholders to optimise our preferred route for the underground cables.

Public consultation events will take place ahead of the submission of a planning application, giving the public the chance to have their say on the details of the project, including environmental mitigation, traffic management

and project phasing. We are aiming to submit a planning application to the New Forest National Park Authority in winter 2018.

Subject to all necessary negotiations, approvals and consents, the current indicative programme is that on-site works will begin in summer 2019 and take approximately two and half to three years to complete. It is anticipated that by 2022 the new underground cable will be in service and the existing pylons and section of overhead line will have been removed.

Project information, updates and documentation will continue to be shared through our New Forest project website: <http://newforest.nationalgrid.co.uk>.

STAKEHOLDER REFERENCE GROUP MEMBERS



Peak District National Park

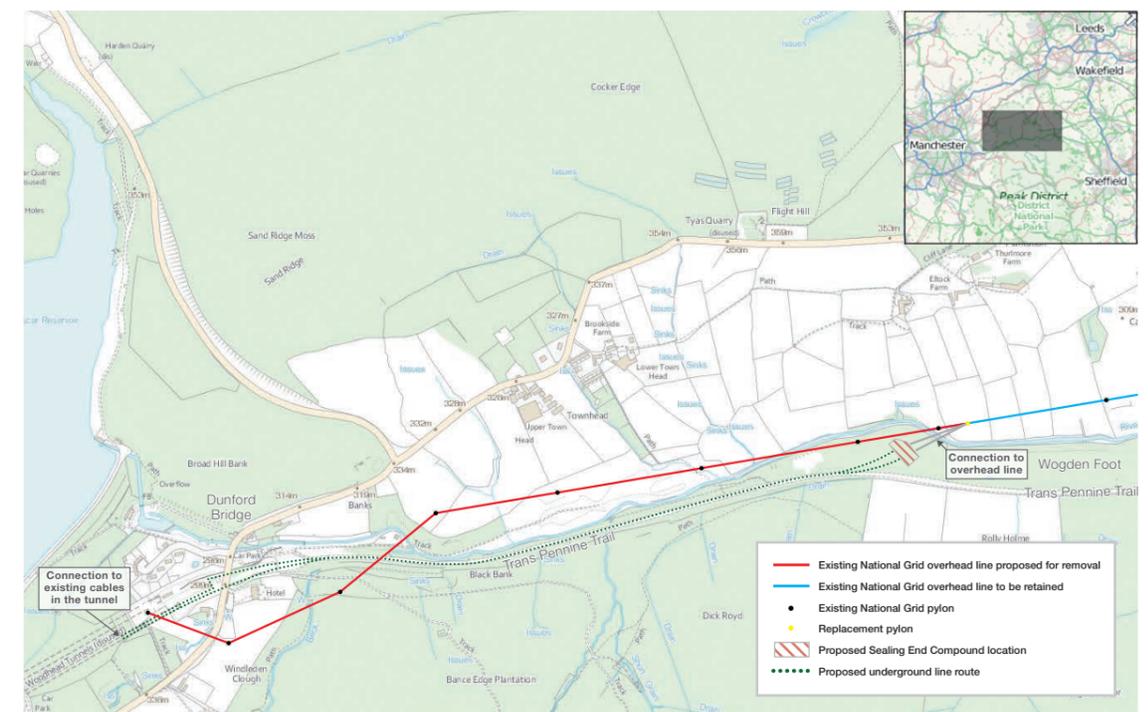


The Peak District National Park (East) project would replace a 2km section of overhead line east of the Woodhead Tunnel near Dunford Bridge with an underground connection, permanently removing seven pylons and a sealing end compound from the landscape.

The preferred route for the connection runs alongside the Trans Pennine Trail to the south of the River Don to join the existing cable in the Woodhead Tunnel. To connect to the remaining existing overhead line, a sealing end compound and associated terminal pylon would be needed at Wogden Foot.



Current route option as of May 2018



Peak District National Park



Progress to date

Archaeological, environmental and hydrological studies have continued throughout 2017/18 and will carry on into summer 2018 to support the preparation of detailed engineering designs for the project. This has included exploring which type of underground technology to use. Gas Insulated Line (GIL) has been identified as the preferred technology, and we are working closely with a GIL equipment supplier to develop this option further.

For the project to be delivered, the Trans Pennine Trail will need to be temporarily diverted for approximately one and a half years to allow for construction work. We are fully committed to ensuring the trail remains open and accessible throughout this period for the many local residents, long distance walkers, cyclists and horse riders who enjoy its special qualities.

Our proposed temporary diversion runs across agricultural land to the north of the River Don and we are working closely with the Trans Pennine Trail Office, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) and landowners to ensure that it is suitable. We have agreed a communication plan with Barnsley MBC to let users know about the project and the diversion in advance of, and throughout, the construction work.

We've held a number of stakeholder briefings with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Barnsley MBC, the Peak District National Park Authority and stakeholders with a specialist interest in ecology to explore mitigation measures and priorities for the project. In particular, we have engaged with the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust to discuss potential mitigation and enhancement opportunities for Wogden Foot Local Wildlife site, where the construction of a sealing end compound is needed to connect the underground section to the remaining existing overhead line.

Two Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) meetings were held in the Peak District in 2017/18. Members of the Peak District SRG include representatives from the Peak District National Park Authority, Trans Pennine Trail Office, Natural England, Dunford Parish Council and Barnsley MBC.

Together with CPRE and the Friends of the Peak District, we have engaged in discussions with the local electricity distribution operator Northern Powergrid, who have agreed to underground a section of their overhead line on wooden poles within the National Park to complement our project and further enhance the landscape.



Peak District National Park



Looking forward

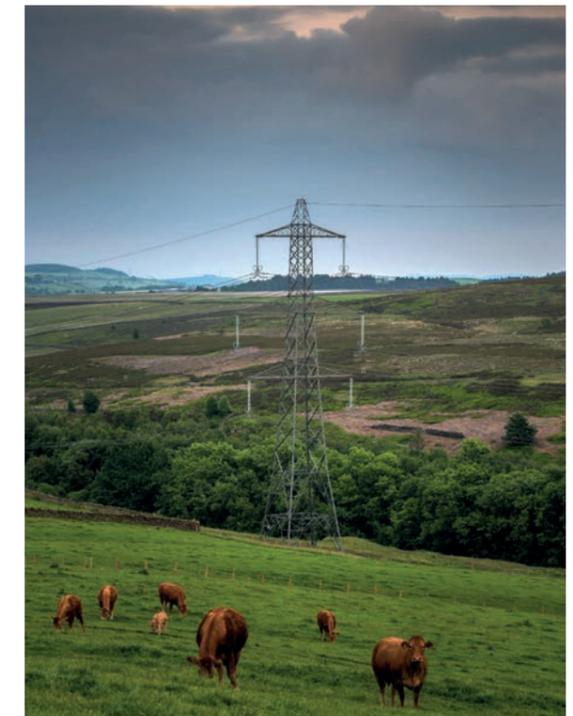
Public consultation will take place so that we can share details of the project, including environmental mitigation, traffic management and project phasing, before we submit a planning application to Barnsley MBC in winter 2018. We will take into account the feedback of the public and our stakeholders to improve our proposals wherever possible.

Subject to all necessary negotiations, approvals and consents, the current indicative programme is that on-site works will begin in 2019 and take approximately two years to

complete. It is anticipated that in 2021 the new underground section will be in service and the existing pylons and section of overhead line will have been removed.

Project information, updates and documentation will continue to be shared through our Peak District East project website: <http://peakdistricteast.nationalgrid.co.uk>.

STAKEHOLDER REFERENCE GROUP MEMBERS



Snowdonia National Park

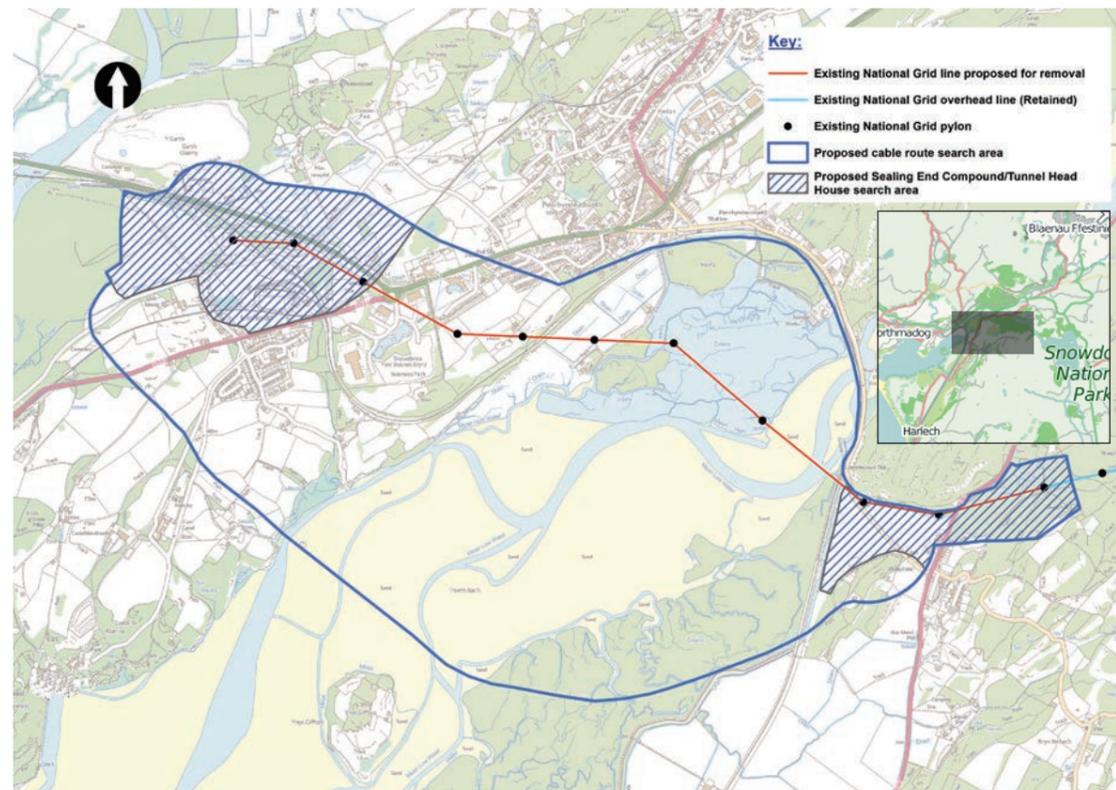


The Snowdonia National Park project would replace a 3km section of overhead line crossing the Dwyryd Estuary near Porthmadog with an underground solution, permanently removing 10 pylons from the landscape.

The new connection will run through an underground tunnel from Cilfor to Garth under the Dwyryd Estuary. A head house will be required at each end of the tunnel. To connect to the remaining existing overhead line in the east, a sealing end compound and associated terminal pylon would be needed.



Search area for potential underground route corridors, the sealing end compound and tunnel head houses as of May 2018



Snowdonia National Park



Progress to date

Ground investigation work has been carried out throughout 2017/18 to inform the depth and route of the underground tunnel the connection will run through. Surveys of the Dwyryd Estuary took place in autumn 2017 to identify any environmental issues and develop a preferred route for the tunnel. A further round of survey work will begin in June 2018 to inform a detailed tunnel design. To carry out this work we have obtained a Marine Licence from Natural Resources Wales and agreements from landowners, Gwynedd Council and the Harbour Master.

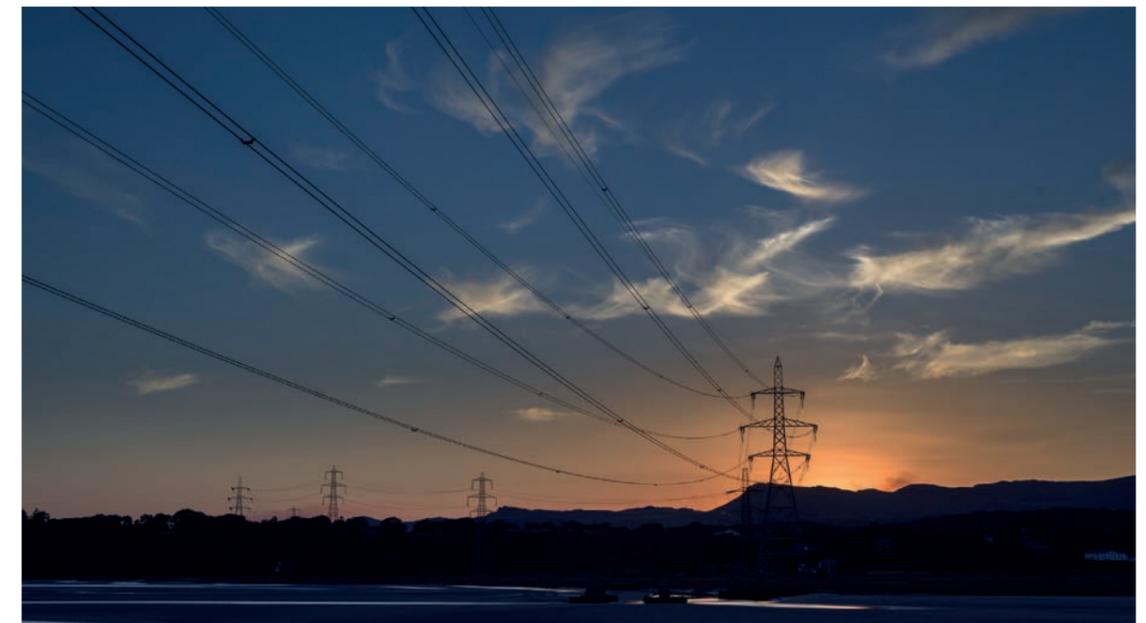
We have started to explore options for removing the concrete bases the pylons in the estuary stand upon. We are working with Natural Resources Wales and other stakeholders including marine and ecology specialists to determine the best approach.

Progress is being made on identifying locations for the tunnel head houses in Cilfor and Garth, as well as the sealing end compound on the eastern side of the estuary. Working with stakeholders, our aim is to carefully select these locations to reduce the visual impact of the head houses and compound.

One Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) meeting was held in Snowdonia in 2017/18. Members of the Snowdonia SRG include representatives from the Snowdonia National Park Authority, Natural Resources Wales, National Trust, Gwynedd Council, Cadw and Gwynedd Archaeological Trust.

We continue to work closely with colleagues working on the North Wales Connection project, which will link the proposed nuclear power station at Wylfa on Anglesey and potential new offshore wind developments with the transmission network.

We are seeking to align our work where possible to mitigate disruption to both the local community and the environment.



Snowdonia National Park



Looking forward

We will share details of the project, including environmental mitigation, traffic management and project phasing, to allow the local community to help shape our plans. Public consultation events will take place ahead of the submission of a planning application to Gwynedd Council in winter 2018.

Subject to all necessary negotiations, approvals and consents, the current indicative programme is that on-site works will begin in winter 2020 and take approximately four years to complete.

It is therefore anticipated that by late 2024/early 2025 the new underground connection will be in service and the existing pylons and section of overhead line will have been removed.

Project information, updates and documentation will continue to be shared in both English and Welsh through our Snowdonia project website: <http://snowdonia.nationalgrid.co.uk>.

STAKEHOLDER REFERENCE GROUP MEMBERS



National Trust



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government



Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru
Natural Resources Wales



04: Landscape Enhancement Initiative

The Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) is an important part of the VIP project. Championed by our stakeholders, the initiative aims to use up to £24m of the Ofgem provision for smaller visual improvement projects.

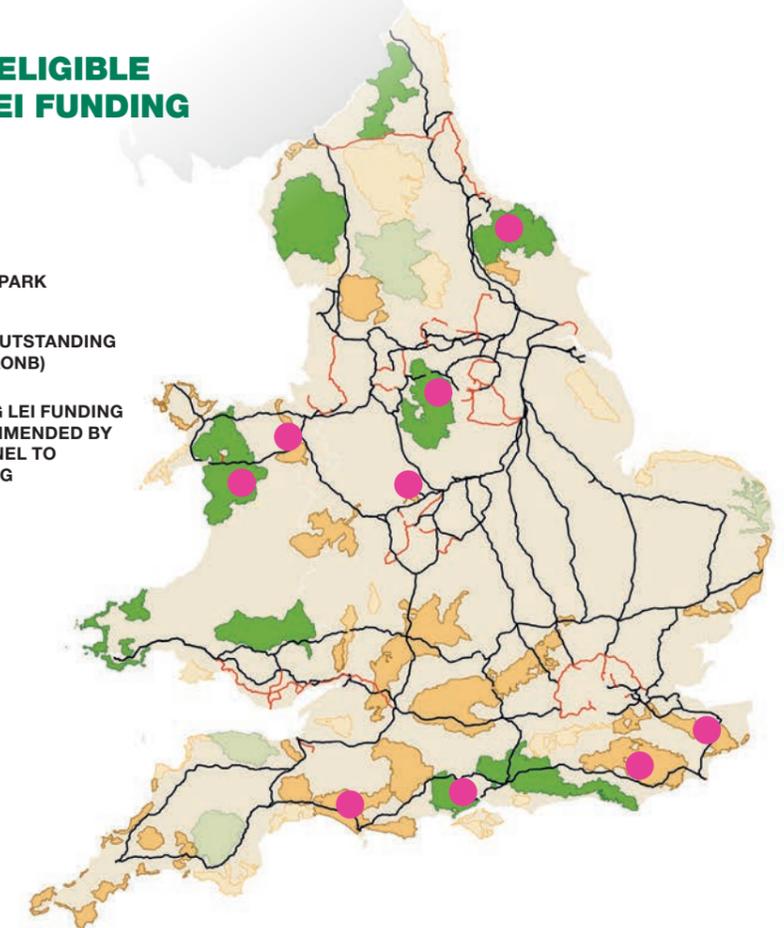
4.1 About the Landscape Enhancement Initiative

The LEI offers grants of up to £200,000 for projects which reduce the visual and landscape impact of our existing overhead lines and enhance the surrounding landscape. The initiative is open to each of the 30 AONBs and National Parks in England and Wales which contain or are impacted by our overhead transmission lines.

Projects are suggested by the relevant AONB Partnership or National Park Authority before being considered by the LEI Approvals Panel. Independently chaired by Mary O'Connor from the Landscape Institute, the panel includes experts from Cadw, Historic England, Natural England and Natural Resources Wales and makes recommendations to Ofgem on which projects to fund. The initiative is supported by National Grid's project team and external specialists, including landscape advisors to offer guidance to eligible applicants on potential LEI projects.

DESIGNATED LANDSCAPES ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE LEI FUNDING

- ELIGIBLE NATIONAL PARK
- ELIGIBLE AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY (AONB)
- PROJECT RECEIVING LEI FUNDING OR PROJECT RECOMMENDED BY THE APPROVALS PANEL TO RECEIVE LEI FUNDING



4.2 Progress to date

Since its launch in May 2016, more than £1.6 million has been allocated to projects across England and Wales.

National Grid held workshops in July 2017 and May 2018 for representatives of AONBs and National Parks to learn more about the initiative and discuss their own ideas for funding.

There have been four windows for project submissions to date. Progress has been made throughout the year on their delivery:

Window 1 projects

Three projects secured funding approval from Ofgem in June 2017 and are now underway with good progress being made to reduce the visual and landscape impact of overhead lines:

- North York Moors National Park – Over Silton to Thimbleby Bridleway
- Peak District National Park – Central Longdendale Trails
- High Weald AONB – Beautiful Boundaries

Spotlight on: High Weald AONB

The High Weald AONB is an internationally-important landscape characterised by a mosaic of interconnected small woods, fields, shaws and hedges – many of which are ancient and species-rich. Beautiful Boundaries aims to restore the historic medieval landscape by regenerating ancient hedgerows to divert attention from the overhead lines.

Particular focus is being placed on locations where the lines can be seen from the area's extensive network of public rights of way including promoted paths such as the 1066 Walk and the Sussex Border Path.

The scheme was granted £200,000 in the first round of LEI funding, and the High Weald Partnership is working with a number of landowners in the Wealden and Rother districts of East Sussex to implement the improvements.

Window 2 projects

A further seven projects secured funding approval from Ofgem in February 2018 to carry out localised landscape improvements:

- Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB – Lost Landscapes
- Dorset AONB – Magical Marshwood Vale
- Peak District National Park – Longdendale Landscape Restoration
- Snowdonia National Park – Dyffryn Ffestiniog (East) Woodland Restoration and Landscape Improvement
- Snowdonia National Park – Snowdonia Traditional Boundaries
- Snowdonia National Park – Dyffryn Maentwrog (West) Woodland Restoration and Landscape Improvement
- New Forest National Park – Woodlands Improvements and Wild Play at Holbury Manor/Warren Copse

Spotlight on: New Forest National Park

The 'wild play' site at Warren Copse, Holbury is the first to be built in the New Forest National Park and benefited from £31,000 of LEI funding. By helping younger children and families to reconnect with nature it draws attention away from the nearby overhead transmission lines.

The National Park Authority worked with Fawley Parish Council and local volunteers from Warren Copse Conservation Group to apply for the funding.

A series of woodland management techniques are also being used to enhance Warren Copse's biodiversity, including the clearance of excess foliage to boost the growth of precious bluebells, wood anemones and primroses.

Window 3 projects

The LEI Approvals Panel met in December 2017 and subsequently recommended that five projects be taken forward to receive funding. These projects were submitted to Ofgem for approval in April 2018 and confirmation of funding is expected in summer 2018:

- Cannock Chase AONB – Gentleshaw Common into the Future
- Dorset AONB – Reconnecting the Ridgeway
- Kent Downs AONB – High Downs
- Kent Downs AONB – North Downs Living Grid
- North York Moors National Park – Arncliffe Wood and Scarth Wood Moor Restoration

Window 4 projects

The LEI Approvals Panel will meet in June 2018 to review the applications submitted in Window 4. Successful projects will be notified over the summer that they will be recommended to Ofgem for funding approval.



4.3 Future application windows

There are three submission windows coming up in 2018/19 during which eligible AONB Partnerships and National Park Authorities can submit project ideas:

- Window 5 – June 2018
- Window 6 – January 2019
- Window 7 – June 2019

If you are interested in finding out more about the LEI, please visit our website for more information: www.lei.nationalgrid.com.

With the LEI gaining momentum and at the request of the Stakeholder Advisory Group, we will be broadening the reach of our communications to include organisations which could develop and lead on projects on behalf of the AONBs and National Parks, such as the RSPB, the Woodland Trust, the National Trust and the Wildlife Trusts.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Visual Impact Provision hotline: **0330 134 0051**

Visit our website at: **www.nationalgrid.com/VIP**

Send an email to: **visualimpact@nationalgrid.com**

Write to our freepost address and quote: **"FREEPOST VISUAL IMPACT PROVISION"**

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