



## Plans submitted to remove 8.25km section of overhead power lines in Dorset AONB

10 Jan 2018

- **Proposal to remove 8.25km of existing overhead high voltage electricity line and replace with underground cables**
- **Plans developed in partnership with Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership and local stakeholders**
- **First major project to take advantage of a £500m provision made available by Ofgem to reduce impact of existing high-voltage lines in AONBs and National Parks**

A project to remove an 8km section of high voltage overhead transmission line in the Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and bury the electric power lines underground has moved a step closer, following the submission of a planning application.

The scheme aims to enhance the landscape near the villages of Martinstown and Winterbourne Abbas, as part of National Grid's Visual Impact Provision (VIP) project\* to reduce the visual impact of existing high voltage power lines in protected areas across England and Wales.

The company has submitted the application to West Dorset District Council and is seeking permission to remove 8.25km of overhead line and 22 pylons and replace it with underground cables. The proposal also includes the construction of two new Sealing End Compounds which are required to connect the new underground cables to the remaining existing overhead electricity line.

Over the past three years National Grid has explored a range of potential underground routes for the cables, and plans have been refined with the input of local experts including Historic England, Natural England and the Dorset County Archaeologist, together with feedback from the local community in June 2016 and July 2017.

The section of line runs north to south close to the villages of Winterbourne Abbas, Martinstown, Winterbourne Steepleton and Friar Waddon. It can also be seen from the National Trust's Hardy Monument. It was chosen following an extensive landscape assessment overseen by landscape expert Professor Carys Swanwick from the University of Sheffield. Over 570km of line was assessed and the sections with the most significant landscape and visual impact identified. An independent Stakeholder Advisory Group comprised of organisations dedicated to protecting landscapes in England and Wales then decided to prioritise four projects in 2015 in the Dorset AONB, the New Forest, Peak District and Snowdonia National Parks.

National Grid has worked closely with local organisations including the Dorset AONB Partnership, Dorset County Council, West Dorset District Council, Historic England and Natural England to identify any potential environmental, archaeological and land issues associated with the proposed underground route corridor.

Chris Baines, chair of the VIP project's independent Stakeholder Advisory Group said: "By working with a range of stakeholders at a national and local level, we have a major opportunity to preserve and enhance this beautiful south Dorset landscape. At the heart of the project is collaboration between National Grid, those organisations tasked with protecting Britain's treasured areas and the people who live in and visit Dorset.

"The Dorset project is the first of four proposed major projects under the VIP scheme and represents a world first. This is the first time that high voltage overhead transmission lines have been removed purely to reduce their visual impact and enhance a beautiful landscape."

Michelle Clark, National Grid VIP Project Manager said: "This is a unique stakeholder-driven project, and it represents a major opportunity to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the Dorset AONB landscape."

"The planning application is a significant milestone and in developing the detailed plans for the proposed underground route corridor, we have taken on board advice from a variety of local experts and organisations, as well as the local community in the nearby villages. Our application has been carefully considered and sets out how we intend to manage the construction process throughout this major engineering project to keep any impact to a minimum."

West Dorset District Council is in the process of registering the application and will determine the planning application by Summer 2018. If approved construction on the project would commence on site in 2019 with construction complete and the pylons removed by 2022.

**ENDS**

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Notes for editors

**\*About Visual Impact Provision**

All electricity transmission owners are funded by a price control mechanism which is agreed with and set by Ofgem, the electricity and gas markets regulator. Ofgem has agreed a set of price controls and incentives for the period from April 2013 to March 2021. The new price controls and incentives include a provision of £500 million to mitigate the visual impact of existing electricity infrastructure in nationally protected landscapes in Great Britain.

For National Grid, which is the electricity transmission owner in England and Wales, this means considering the visual amenity of our existing infrastructure in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks.

**Notes to Editors:**

National Grid is pivotal to the energy systems in the UK and the north eastern United States. We aim to serve customers well and efficiently, supporting the communities in which we operate and making possible the energy systems of the future.

**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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