

**VIP Stakeholder Advisory Group**  
**Minutes of the twenty-first meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2022**

**Stakeholder Advisory Group members present:**

- **Chairman** Chris Baines
- **Campaign for National Parks** Ruth Bradshaw, Policy and Research Manager
- **CPRE** Tom Fyans, Interim Chief Executive Officer
- **Landscape Institute** Sue Sljivic, Landscape Architect
- **National Association of AONBs** Howard Sutcliffe, AONB Manager, Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB
  
- **National Grid** Zac Richardson, Director of New Infrastructure
- **National Parks England** Sarah Kelly, Landscape Officer, New Forest National Park Authority
  
- **National Parks Wales** Jonathan Cawley, Director of Planning and Land Management, Snowdonia National Park
  
- **National Trust** Dr Ingrid Samuel, Historic Environment Director
- **Natural England** Gary Charlton, Landscape Senior Advisor
- **Natural Resources Wales** Keith Davies, Head of Sustainable Places Land & Sea
- **Ramblers** Alison Hallas, Policy & Advocacy Officer

**Secretariat in attendance:**

- **National Grid** – Michelle Clark, VIP Project Manager; Ben Smith, VIP Project Manager (South); Leanne Evans, Senior Project Manager – Peak District East; Jordan Brindle, Lead Project Manager – Eryri; Nick Sanderson, RIIO Delivery Electricity Analyst
- Professor Carys Swanwick, Independent Advisor to National Grid
- **Camargue** – Stuart Fox; Katherine Wingate; Jane Dalton

**Apologies:**

- Caroline Cotterell, Natural England
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Due to railway strikes, the 21<sup>st</sup> Stakeholder Advisory Group was held remotely via Microsoft Teams.

The purpose of the meeting was for the Stakeholder Advisory Group to:

- Hear updates on the schemes prioritised for replacing existing overhead lines with underground cables in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks in England and Wales.
  - Receive an update on the Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI).
  - Consider the timings, scope and locations for meetings in 2023.
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## **Session 1 – Updates on the schemes shortlisted for underground projects**

Leanne Evans, Jordan Brindle and Ben Smith from National Grid gave updates on the progress of the schemes that have been prioritised to be taken forward for undergrounding. A summary of the progress and specific issues for each of the schemes is outlined below.

### **1.1 – Peak District National Park (eastern section – ZO.2)**

This scheme has involved the undergrounding of 1.5km of overhead line under the Trans Pennine Trail (TPT), the removal of seven pylons, the removal of the existing sealing end compound in Dunford Bridge, the construction of a new sealing end compound in Wogden Foot local wildlife site (a former railyard), and the construction of a temporary accessible diversion to the TPT across local farmland.

The scheme has been a hive of activity since April 2022 and is now nearing completion. Since the last Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting in March 2022, 9km of cables have been installed and energised, and felling of the pylons took place in September and October. All seven pylons have now been permanently removed and a celebratory event marking the key milestone of the felling of the last pylon took place on 20<sup>th</sup> October. A series of photographs and videos showing the stages of removal and the final tower coming down were shown during the meeting.

Over the last few weeks, there has been a huge amount of further work, including reinstatement of the TPT, and completing the reinstatement process resulting from removal of the temporary TPT diversion. The project team is now working through the car park enhancements with the local authority.

Whilst this is the smallest of the VIP projects in terms of pylons removed, the project has had significant impact. There has been a huge commitment to stakeholder engagement, as well as both minimising and mitigating environmental impacts during construction. Both the National Grid team and the contractor, Morgan Sindall Infrastructure, have been very proud to work on the project, and from a media point of view there has been some very positive coverage.

The scheme is also the first project within National Grid to include the 10 percent biodiversity net gain target. This minimum target of 10 percent was not just reached but exceeded, with 18 percent biodiversity net gain ultimately being achieved through a combination of off-site works at Crow Edge, and on-site works at Wogden Foot. This is regarded as having been an enormous success, and the learnings from the project are being shared both externally and internally within National Grid. It is hoped that this will set a new benchmark/ambition within the business for future projects.

Specific examples include:

- 6,000 new indigenous trees (all currently being planted off site as part of the net gain target)
- 40 percent of the trees that were originally permitted for removal have been retained
- An area of special grassland was fenced off to protect it during construction, resulting in 18+ months of sustained natural growth without any human intervention / contact
- Biodiversity enhancements in Wogden Foot have included additional habitat features including hibernacula and pruning work to add slits for bats and other wildlife.
- Protection and enhancement of the habitat for the Willow Tit at Wogden Foot – this is still ongoing but has already resulted in sightings / evidence of Willow Tit, this has been much celebrated by the team and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.

Other key achievements during construction have included diverting 99.96% of waste from landfill, and working collaboratively with the contractor to achieve carbon free net delivery through e.g. the

use of eco welfare cabins, supplying power through solar pods, and using the first ever electric woodchipper.

With regards to community engagement, in addition to the successful programme of stakeholder involvement and consultation that has been carried out at every stage of the project, there have been site visits from more than 150 primary school children plus local college students. The Community Grant Programme has awarded £6,000 towards a new clubhouse and pavilion for Penistone cricket club, and £6,000 was awarded to Tandem Trekkers (an organisation that provides accompanied bike rides for the visually impaired) towards a range of new equipment.

Subject to favourable weather, the project should be fully completed by end of March 2023.

A number of questions were asked about how the environmental and biodiversity net gain achievements had come about i.e. were they specifically written into the project at the contract stage, or did they come about through actions that happened during the project?

The National Grid project team confirmed that it had been a mix of both, i.e. some aspects were identified/specified at tender stage, but much of it came about as the project evolved. It was further noted that it had been important not to specify everything at the contractual stage, as this leaves the door open for other ideas and commitments to be added in. So, for example, the contract should specify underpinning approaches such as biodiversity net gain and stakeholder/community engagement, but there needs to be some flexibility in the budget for the things that evolve as the project develops. 'The contract gets you to 10 percent, the enthusiasm, commitment and care within the team gets you to 18 percent. It's not just cost, it's discretion.'

It was also emphasised that the achievements over and above target were very much about the enthusiasm within the team. Site visits from third parties also gave endorsement and encouragement, which in turn helped to raise ambitions within the project team.

A member of the Advisory Group suggested that National Grid should approach the Major Projects Association with a view to delivering a presentation on the project and wider VIP projects. Chris Baines also suggested approaching Sir John Armitt at the National Infrastructure Commission in a similar vein.

**ACTION: National Grid / Camargue to consider opportunities and progress with the Chairman**

### **1.2 – Eryri National Park – 4ZC.1**

This project involves constructing a tunnel under the Dwyrdd Estuary to carry the connection from Llandecwyn to the sealing end compound at Garth to join up with the existing cables that run under the Glaslyn Estuary to the northwest. In addition to the tunnel, construction requirements include two new tunnel shafts and tunnel headhouses, one new sealing end compound, and reconfiguration and expansion of an existing sealing end compound.

Work during 2022 has primarily focused on getting everything ready for main construction to commence in 2023. This has included: establishing the working relationship with the main contractor Hochtief UK and working through their detailed design proposals, establishing a temporary site set up at Trawsfyndd, gaining third party approvals, discharging planning conditions, carrying out additional ground investigations and surveys, pre-commencement of ecological and archaeological mitigation, ordering equipment, and continuing to work on plans for traffic and spoil management.

There have been some changes to the shaft design at Garth, and discussions are still ongoing about the plans for the tower bases. National Grid is also working closely with Welsh Government and Network Rail to gain approvals for crossing under their assets.

The reptile management strategy at Llandecwyn has included trapping and translocation of a number of species (this work was completed by Ecological Land Management (based in Mold) under the supervision of an Ecological Clerk of Work). Species discovered have included adders, slow worms, grass snakes, common lizards and smooth/palmate newts. There will now be ongoing maintenance of the reptile fencing, and continued checks/trapping to ensure that no reptile species are harmed during construction.

Other ongoing and upcoming survey work includes:

- Further ground investigations.
- Continuing noise, dust and vibration monitoring to establish a baseline.
- Further surveys along the Network Rail line, including badger surveys.
- A topographical route survey (now complete).
- Further peat depth investigations to work out how the peat can be protected.
- Highway condition surveys and trial holes alongside the Network Rail line.

There is a commitment to achieving 10 percent Biodiversity Net Gain at Llandecwyn, and it is currently planned that this will be achieved through a combination of:

- Minimising the loss of on-site valley mire habitat and delivering sensitive restoration and enhancement
- A financial contribution to the Eryri National Park Authority for biodiversity and peatland enhancement projects
- Additional shelters, bird boxes and bat boxes to provide more habitat and nesting places for local wildlife.

There is also a planned planting scheme which will act as both habitat enhancement and screening for the two headhouse sites.

With regards to archaeology, it is understood locally that there is a potential Roman Road at Garth. National Grid undertook three trial trenches at the Garth tunnel head house site. The scope of the work was agreed with Gwynedd Archaeological Planning Services and carried out by Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. Nothing was found, but the investigations have cleared the path for construction works to commence.

The Local Workforce Strategy is in an advanced stage of production and will be sent out shortly. There is a commitment to training and mentoring people and supply chain partners in the local community to enable them to start working on the project. Hochtief UK is looking at an apprentice scheme, and is also working with local schools, colleges and universities. Jobs will be actively promoted on local social media, websites and through Jobcentre Plus.

There will be a peak workforce of approximately 150-180 people from 2024 and the site will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week during the tunnel drive. A number of sites have therefore been considered for the provision of temporary workforce accommodation. Some have been ruled out due to flood risk, and the search has therefore been widened. One aim is to avoid too much use of the hospitality sector as this can have a detrimental effect in the long term, but equally there is a desire to avoid long journeys to the site.

The indicative programme of activity is comprehensive, with site establishment at Garth and Llandecwyn commencing in early 2023, and project completion in 2029. 2023 will primarily be about

mobilisation at Garth and Llandecwyn, including traffic management, establishing site access and site offices at both locations, acoustic barrier installation at Garth (for noise mitigation), and shaft sinking commencing at Garth once the utilities diversions have been completed.

The tunnel boring machine (TBM) is due to be delivered in early 2024, and tunnelling will continue into 2025. Cable insertion will take place from 2025 into 2026, and there will then be a down period whilst waiting for system access onto the National Grid network. The current indicative timetable is for project completion – including pylon removal – in 2029.

Stakeholder Advisory Group members were shown images of the planned site set up for both Garth and Llandecwyn, and photographs from Feeder 9 (a tunnelling project under the River Humber) to provide a comparison as to what the set up for dealing with spoil will look like.

The Llandecwyn site is still being reviewed to look at how the footprint can be reduced, and to identify ways in which the impact on the mire can be minimised.

With regards to the shaft sinking, the project team are now looking at changing the design at Garth to incorporate a pit. This alternative design will be safer and quicker, will require less mining and will therefore generate less spoil. The pit design also allows for a safer launch of the TBM, and more sections of it can be launched in one go. The options at Llandecwyn are more limited as the site is governed by the fluvials – this means that the shaft must go deeper in order to prevent water accumulating in the trough and drying out the mire above.

In respect of community and stakeholder engagement, there have been a number of activities. Senior Project Manager, Steve Ellison, gave a presentation at the National Parks Societies Annual Conference at Capel Curig, and the following day a delegation from the Snowdonia Society and other Welsh National Park Societies visited the estuary site. The visit generated very positive feedback. Two community drop-in events have also taken place. There is a lot of interest in the geology, the technology and the Community Grant Programme, with the key concerns / issues raised by local people being traffic, construction noise and, in particular how the spoil from tunnel arisings will be re-used, as well as local employment opportunities.

It was noted that Gareth Burden, the new Project Director for the whole VIP programme, has a huge amount of experience to be brought into the team. It was also suggested that there could be scope for working with the local universities for academic studies into factors such as the geological and ecological impacts of the planned tunnelling. It was confirmed that contact has already been made with the University of Bangor.

### **1.3 – North Wessex Downs AONB – YYM.1**

This scheme focuses on a section of line north of the market town of Devizes at Roundway Hill near the Millennium White Horse, and on the edge of a Civil War battlefield site. The project involves the undergrounding of approximately 4.5km of overhead line, and the removal of up to 13 pylons. The proposed cable route runs mainly across agricultural land, so from a construction and engineering route it is relatively straightforward.

The current main issue is that the required cable ratings for the scheme have increased due to new connections in the system nationwide, greater capacity requirements from potential south coast connections and the drive for net zero. This has necessitated a redesign, including wider spacings between the cables necessitating a wider trench, as well as extra joint bays. The National Grid project team is also working with Balfour Beatty on the optimum programme to align with wider system outages and to give the greatest certainty on costs for consumers.

Plans for temporary tower diversions are also being put in place, which will help to reduce risk on the project. The temporary pylons will allow the circuit to be diverted whilst the sealing end compounds are constructed. This approach has come about as a result of learning from the Dorset scheme, and whilst it does create a short-term, temporary visual impact, it avoids the project being constrained to specific windows and ensures that the outage plan can be met.

Since the last Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting, other work that has been carried out includes completion of the following:

- Further ground investigation works.
- Environmental and ecological surveys.
- Archaeological trial trenching.
- Topographical and ground penetrating radar (GPR) surveys.
- Unexploded ordnance surveys.

Work is ongoing on the plans for achieving biodiversity net gain, and the project team is working with the county ecologist, Natural England and a specialist consultant to the AONB Partnership to explore both offsite opportunities and on-site enhancements.

The project team also took part in the North Wessex Downs 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Walking Festival in June 2022, carrying out two pylon walks which were both well attended despite appalling weather. People came from a wide area to take part in the walk. The National Grid team has already been asked to repeat the walks during next year's festival.

Apart from the above design changes, the scheme is in a good place and the team is almost ready to submit to Wiltshire Council for planning permission and to Ofgem for funding.

Subject to successful consents/determination, the current indicative programme is for construction to commence on site with archaeological works in 2023, and for final pylon removal and reinstatement in 2026.

#### **1.4 – Cotswolds National Landscape – ZF.2(B)**

This scheme was selected to be taken forwards as an emerging project for RIIO-T2. The focus is on the central section of a longer section of overhead line, which runs across the Cotswold Plateau just to the north-east of Cheltenham. The scheme would involve the undergrounding of approximately 7km of line and the removal of up to 20 pylons.

A considerable amount of work has been undertaken since the last Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting, including working with the appointed contractor Baker Hicks on the potential cable route and identifying possible sealing end compound and site access locations, as well as extensive community/stakeholder engagement. Preliminary survey work is also ongoing, including ecology, geology, archaeology and hydrology.

As previously discussed, the biggest challenge is not the cable route on the plateau itself, but the access to the plateau. The team has engaged in conversations with a number of landowners and this consultation process has identified some new opportunities for potential access routes. In particular, local knowledge and input about existing traffic routes and access, has led to the team potentially having identified a very good access point and compound site in the south which makes use of an existing layby on the A40.

The National Grid 'Lands' team has also now made contact with all of the key landowners. There are approximately 130 landowners which is the most that National Grid has had on any of the VIP projects. This brings a different challenge and, whilst voluntary land-use agreements are always aimed for, as previously advised, the CPO process is being pursued in case it is needed. The Lands team is also putting a book of reference together to determine how much land is going to be needed.

With regards to the locations for the sealing end compounds, good conversations have taken place with the relevant landowner(s) in the north. The southern location is on farmland; conversations are ongoing.

The scheme has been very well received within the local community. A stakeholder reference group has been established and is working well, and there have been numerous stakeholder briefings. A series of community drop-in events also took place in August.

The local stakeholder picture is however very complex – there are four local authorities and three MPs, all of whom have been very supportive to date. The Cabinet at Cheltenham Borough Council, for example, are keen on working with underprivileged groups as well as STEM opportunities, so there are a number of opportunities to explore further.

Cotswold National Landscape (the AONB Partnership) is also very supportive and the engagement Andy Parsons, the CEO and his team has been fantastic. Ben Smith gave a presentation to their Board, which was also very well received. A key concern / consideration for Cotswold National Landscape is disruption on local roads and to the local community from our project and the proposed A417 dualling at Birdlip (the so-called Missing Link). To minimise disruption to the community, and consider use of spoil etc., Andy Parsons has already put the project team in touch with the A417 Project Manager and a meeting is being planned to discuss in the first quarter of 2023.

There have been numerous briefings to other local stakeholder groups, including the Winchcombe Museum, English Heritage (which manages the Belas Knap long barrow site near the potential cable route), the Cleeve Common Trust and the Cotswolds Trails & Access Partnership as well as parish and town councils in the area. The Winchcombe Walkers are Welcome Group has asked the team to deliver a 'Pylon Walk' as part of the Winchcombe Walking Festival in May 2023.

A special public rights of way (PROW) workshop was also held for groups that use the local trails and those involved with common land access. This included horse riders, ramblers, etc., and their input has proved very useful. This workshop will be repeated in the first half of 2023 when there is more information about the proposed cable route.

A 360 degree tour has also been produced and published on the dedicated project website [www.nationalgrid.com/cotswoldsvip](http://www.nationalgrid.com/cotswoldsvip).

Upcoming work will focus on further project development, further survey works/investigations, obtaining a screening opinion and further work with Baker Hicks on recommendations for the cable route, access points and sealing end compound locations. The current indicative programme is for the team to be able to go out with the sealing end compound locations and proposed cable route in the first half of 2023, followed by preparations for the Ofgem and planning submissions in early 2024. The current timetable aims for construction to commence in 2025-2026.



### **1.5 – Dorset AONB – 4YA.7**

As outlined at the last Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting, this was the first of the VIP project schemes to begin pylon removal. Over 108km of cable has been laid and energised, and all 22 of the pylons have now been permanently removed from the landscape.

A celebratory event took place on-site on 5<sup>th</sup> October to watch the felling of one of the pylons. Several members of the Stakeholder Advisory Group attended this event alongside local stakeholders, and photographs of the final stages of removal as well as a BBC video of the last tower coming down were shown at the meeting.

Reinstatement has progressed very well. The weather has been favourable during this period, and the majority of the works have now been completed. Whilst good progress has been made, it was however also acknowledged that it is always difficult to reinstate to the satisfaction of the landowner, and in this instance the biggest challenge has been the amount of stone in the soil which always come to the surface during construction works. The final elements of reinstatement and restoration will continue through until May, and will include hedgerow planting and removal of the last bits of concrete that form the bellmouth entrances to the site. It was noted that there have been lots of issues sourcing hedgerow plants in the UK [see also Section 1.6 for further discussion regarding this issue].

The Community Grant Programme received very few applications throughout the lifetime of the project, but four were received right at the end, including from a local running club and one of the local village halls. There was also an application from the National Trust for works at the Hardy Monument. There is still a window of opportunity for further applications and several more are already in the pipeline.

More than 40,000 archaeological artefacts have been uncovered during the scheme, and long-term plans for housing some of those finds at the Dorset County Museum are currently under discussion.

The scheme is on track for final completion in May 2023, and a community event is being planned to mark the achievement.

### **1.6 – Restoration/reinstatement and local provenance of plants/seeds**

It was noted that there are national issues regarding the supply of site-specific plant stock and local provenance seeds. This is impacting a number of projects – within VIP and more widely – both with regards to meeting project timelines and the suitability of the stock that is being provided for site reinstatement. For example, forestry projects are experiencing a massive shortage of local provenance plants, and there have been problems with the supply of hedgerow plants for the Dorset VIP project.

A discussion was held about the need to plan ahead for the pipeline of new projects, so that contract growers/nurseries can be notified in order to be able to supply site-specific and local provenance stock – specifically contract growing of hedgerow or woodland stock.

Other opportunities were also discussed including e.g. working with the Woodland Trust, local landowners and other partners. It was noted that there is already quite a lot of partnership working going on in Eryri, and there are potential business opportunities for smaller local nurseries

Zac Richardson stated that this was something National Grid would investigate, not only for VIP projects but all new infrastructure work.



### **1.7 – Requests for communications/asset packs**

There were a number of requests for sets of National Grid/VIP communication packs, materials and assets to help group members publicise and promote the VIP projects within their organisations and more widely. Specific requests included:

- Copies of some of today's presentation slides (particularly the before/after images, and some of the key facts/figures about what has been achieved to date).
- A set of slides on biodiversity net gain.
- A series of short interviews with people on the ground at project sites to get their feedback e.g. walking groups, tourist groups, parish councillors etc.
- More clarity on what information can be shared at any stage and what cannot.

It was suggested that it might be useful for Stakeholder Advisory Group members to have access to information for two key types of audience:

- Materials (including slide decks, facts/figures, images etc.) to use internally within their own organisations i.e. to showcase what has been achieved.
- Something that is more about what has been learned, that can be shared with other practitioners in order to build their confidence to speak up, and to promote to other organisations (e.g. developers, contractors, councils, utility companies, community groups, etc.)

Camargue confirmed that a lot of this material already exists and/or is in the planning stages, and reminded group members that if there is anything specific that they need for a particular group, meeting or publication, then this can be produced at any stage.

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### **Session 2 – Update on the Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI)**

Ben Smith and Nick Sanderson from National Grid gave an update on progress with the LEI.

#### **2.1 – Project application updates**

- **Window 9** – Seven projects for Window 9 were approved in May 2022.
- **Window 10** – Three applications were submitted in Window 10 and approved in May 2022.

#### **2.2 – LEI in RIIO-T2**

There have and continue to be a number of challenges facing the LEI. This has primarily been around the lack of resource in the AONB Partnerships to be able to develop projects for submission, and the Government's Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) scheme has also diverted potential applicants away from investing their limited time/resources in the development of visual impact projects.

As the LEI scheme moves into RIIO-T2, there are a number of promising developments that will hopefully improve the uptake of the available funds. There have been some funding and timing issues on the National Grid side which it is taking steps to address. This includes a new streamlined approvals process which should mean less of a delay between submitting an application and receiving approval, and the appointment of Nick Sanderson who will be able to focus more resource and priority on the LEI.

£11.65m has been made available to National Grid for the LEI in RIIO-T2, plus a similar amount for Scotland. This is 2.5% of the total VIP allocation. There are currently two application windows per year, but this may go up to three windows.

### **2.3 – Promotion of the LEI**

Further work is ongoing to continue to promote the LEI amongst AONBs and other potential partner organisations.

During RIIO-T1 a couple of conferences were held, and potential partners were invited to these, but lack of resource was again an issue, as well as the location of the conferences. An online conference worked well and was well attended.

National Grid was the platinum sponsor at this year's annual 'Landscapes for Life' conference of the National Association of AONBs. The LEI project team (together with LUC and Gillespies) attended the event at Lancaster University in September and hosted a fringe event as well as an exhibition stand. This led to some very good conversations and several new contacts, including the YHA as a potential LEI delivery partner.

There are plans to arrange another LEI conference, and wider organisations will again be invited. It is also hoped that now some of the earlier LEI projects have either been completed or are well under way, there will be more to showcase to AONBs and potential partner organisations about what can be achieved.

### **2.4 – Awards**

The subject of award submissions was also discussed. Previous VIP submissions that have been submitted for awards have received commended and highly commended for the landscape methodology and planning approach in Eryri respectively. Now that projects are reaching their completion stages, there are further opportunities for outcomes-based award submissions. It was also suggested that the whole of the VIP and LEI could be put forward for the Landscape Institute awards.

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## **Session 3 – Any other business and future meetings**

### **3.1 – Changes in membership/representation**

Alison Hallas advised that she is leaving Ramblers in January 2023, but she is intending to give her replacement the opportunity to be inducted. Alison thanked the Stakeholder Advisory Group and Chris Baines for involving Ramblers in the project.

### **3.2 – Scope, timing and locations of future meetings**

At least two Stakeholder Advisory Group meetings are likely to take place in 2023 in the spring and autumn, and a discussion was held about what the group members would like to focus on during these meetings.

It was agreed that site visits would continue to be very useful, and that this could potentially include visits to LEI projects as well as to the undergrounding projects.

Other topics for consideration included:

#### **3.2.i – Revisit the list of potential projects in the light of proposed new AONBs and National Parks**

There are two potential new AONBs (Cheshire Sandstone Ridge and Yorkshire Wolds), and proposed extensions to two existing AONBs (The Chilterns and Surrey Hills), which may mean that there will be new sections of overhead line that could be considered for undergrounding under the VIP scheme. The proposed new National Park in Wales (Clywydian Hills) is actually a

redesignation from an AONB, so this would not change the eligibility of schemes in that area, however if there were to be a change to the boundary or the creation of a link between the existing AONB and Eryri National Park, then this could change. There will be further updates on the situation with all of these proposals over the next few months.

Following at least one request for the results from the initial Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) to be revisited following a change in land use, Professor Carys Swanwick advised that it would be difficult to revisit a particular scheme without doing it for all. The only current exception to this is a change of designation, or a change to the boundary of a designated area. For example, the section of overhead line that was impacted by the changes to the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Park boundary extensions has already been revisited as it scored highly in the rankings.

It was further noted that potential changes to the LVIA process have already been discussed, but these could be more formally captured if/when new projects fall under the umbrella of the VIP scheme. In particular, this could include more detailed consideration at the assessment stage of the technical and geological aspects of potential schemes, and in turn the subsequent cost implications.

### **3.2.ii – Repeat some of the early induction work for Stakeholder Advisory Group members**

The first Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting took place in 2014, and there was a reminder that these early meetings included an introduction to and overview of the work and responsibilities of National Grid. It was felt that it would be useful to revisit some of this content, alongside an update on what is happening now with e.g. relocation of networks, offshore/onshore connections, etc.

It was also suggested that there could be useful insights in terms of crossovers and lessons learned from related infrastructure projects such as the pipeline industry and wind farms. National Grid also offered to update the group on new techniques, insights into specific projects, and some of the tools that are now being used, e.g. 3D maps, and different ways of visualising projects including computer-generated imagery effects.

### **3.2.iii – Capturing lessons learned and best practice**

Building on conversations at both this and previous meetings, it was suggested that a future meeting could be used to formally capture all of the lessons learned from the VIP projects – including some of the themes around best practice discussed earlier during this meeting – and consider how these can be replicated in future projects.

## **3.3 – Continued support from Ofgem**

Anna Kulhavy of Ofgem has now changed jobs. Her support for the VIP scheme and her contribution to the Stakeholder Advisory Group were both acknowledged.

There were further questions and discussions about whether there is still support from Ofgem for the VIP scheme given the current economic situation. National Grid confirmed that Ofgem remain committed to the process.

There was also a reminder of the Willingness to Pay exercises, which have continually shown support from consumers and stakeholders for the VIP scheme. The Willingness to Pay process will be repeated during National Grid's business planning process for RIIO-T3. The stakeholder consultation process is due to commence in early 2023, and National Grid confirmed that VIP will form part of the

stakeholder discussions. The Stakeholder Advisory Group will be asked to contribute to this process later next year.

National Grid also noted two other consultations that are relevant to this group:

- National Policy Statement – Considering the balance of undergrounding vs overhead lines.
- Community Benefits – When National Grid builds infrastructure, how do they create benefit from that? (e.g. not a lot of jobs locally from overhead lines). This could also flow into initiatives such as the LEI.