

# Visual Impact Provision Eighth Annual Report

June 2021 – May 2022



nationalgrid

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 2. Looking down from Corton Ridge towards the southern Sealing End Compound location, Dorset AONB  
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## Foreword by Chris Baines



**Chris Baines,**  
 Independent  
 Chair, Stakeholder  
 Advisory Group,  
 Visual Impact  
 Provision project

**Carrying out major civil engineering works in some of the UK's most precious and protected landscapes is very challenging. This was the year when the National Grid's project managers, technical experts and contractors began work in earnest on the ground. They responded with great skill and sensitivity.**

In the Dorset Downs AONB the terrain is particularly difficult, and trenching down very steep slopes has called for specialist machinery, and a determination to stay true to the route determined through several years of valuable consultation with local communities, archaeologists and other specialist advisers.

On the eastern boundary of the Peak district National Park space in the heart of the small village of Dunford Bridge is very tight, and good community relations are vital.

It is essential to maintain ease of access to the popular trans-Pennine trail for walkers, cyclist, horse-riders and an exceptional range of users with mixed physical abilities. The provision of temporary bridges, ramps and an alternative riverside route is impressive and promises to be extremely popular. This VIP project straddles the headwaters of the river Don - a complex landscape of moorland and meadow, woodland and wetland. The commitment of the project manager and his team of Grid staff and contractors to protecting water quality, wildlife habitats and vulnerable species such as willow tit, brown trout and grassland wildflowers has set new conservation standards which will serve as an invaluable model for future projects.

## Foreword by Michelle Clark



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

**As the country has returned to something more like normality post the Covid-19 pandemic, we have continued to make excellent progress on the VIP projects, all the while ensuring that the safety of our teams and visitors to our projects remains a priority.**

In both Dorset and the Peak District, we are making plans for the removal of the pylons later in 2022 with the cables now almost completely installed and testing underway. In Dorset, we have finally been able to open up our Information Centre and welcome large numbers of stakeholders and community representatives. In the Peak District too, the Trans Pennine Trail diversion has received plaudits from trail users and numerous visits. There our approach to environmental management is leading the way and learning from lessons on the Dorset scheme.

There has been steady progress in Eryri (Snowdonia) with the tender now awarded and the team gearing up for a start on site later in 2022. In the North Wessex Downs too, we've been working up our plans and engaging across the local community with a target for submission of a planning application in early 2023. We've also begun early work on our fifth VIP project in the Cotswolds National Landscape. This is an exciting addition to the VIP portfolio in a challenging and stunning landscape. Once again, I would like to thank the Stakeholder Advisory Group for its commitment and invaluable input. There is no doubt that their expertise and experience ensures that we are delivering the best we can for local communities and visitors to these special places.

# 1. Visual Impact Provision project

**National Grid's Visual Impact Provision (VIP) project is driven by stakeholders both nationally and locally and aims to help to reduce the visual impact of electricity transmission infrastructure in some of our most beautiful landscapes.**

From April 2013 to March 2021, Ofgem made a £500m provision available<sup>1</sup> to carry out this work in National Parks, English and Welsh Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and Scottish National Scenic Areas. National Grid is making use of this provision as the electricity transmission owner in England and Wales to deliver projects chosen by stakeholders in the Dorset AONB, Peak District National Park and Eryri National Park.

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.

April 2021 marked the start of a second period of funding from the energy industry regulator. This provision of £465m is available<sup>2</sup> for the period April 2021 until March 2026. National Grid is making use of this to develop projects in the North Wessex Downs AONB and Cotswolds National Landscape and to continue with LEI projects. The most important task for us is to use this provision to achieve the maximum enhancement

to landscapes affected by our network while ensuring that no significant adverse impacts arise as a result. We are working closely with stakeholders to achieve this aim.

This eighth annual report records our progress and key activities between June 2021 and May 2022. It builds on the progress described in our seven previous annual reports. To read them, or to find out more about how the projects were selected, please visit our website: [www.nationalgrid.com/uk/electricity-transmission/planning-together-riio/](http://www.nationalgrid.com/uk/electricity-transmission/planning-together-riio/)

## Visual Impact Provision statistics


- **571km** of electricity transmission line in **AONBs** and **National Parks** assessed for visual impact
- **30 AONBs** and **National Parks** in England and Wales eligible to benefit
- **53.7km** of line within **eight protected landscapes** judged to have the highest impact
- **Five sections** of overhead line prioritised for undergrounding
- Landscape Enhancement Initiative provides funding of **up to £200,000** for smaller projects

# £465M

## provision to benefit

### National Parks, AONBs and National Scenic Areas

\* For the current price control period 2021-2026



- ◆ Dorset AONB
- ◆ Peak District National Park
- ◆ Cotswolds National Landscape
- ◆ North Wessex Downs AONB
- ◆ Snowdonia National Park

<sup>1</sup> Ofgem is the government regulator for gas and electricity markets in Great Britain. As part of the RIIO-T1 price control period (covering 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2021), Ofgem set aside a £500m (2009/10 prices) provision for the three transmission owners in Great Britain to address the visual impact of existing transmission infrastructure. The size of the provision was based on a 2012 Willingness to Pay study.

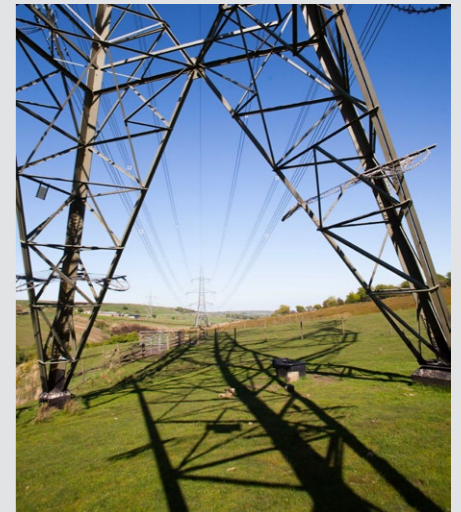
<sup>2</sup> Ofgem set aside a £465m (2018/19 prices) provision for the three transmission owners in Great Britain to continue to address the visual impact of existing transmission infrastructure. The size of the provision was based on activity in the 2013-2021 price control period, feedback from stakeholders and a 2019 Willingness to Pay study.

# 2. Working with stakeholders

**The VIP project is driven by stakeholders; they help us to make decisions on how we should use the provision to maximise its potential benefits. On each individual project, we tap into the expertise and seek the views of a wide variety of local stakeholders including experts from organisations like Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, Historic England and Cadw, local interest groups, communities and landowners. Crucially, our national Stakeholder Advisory Group (SAG) established in**

**2014 at the start of the project continues to guide our work, with many of its original members still involved.**

The Stakeholder Advisory Group advises National Grid on key decisions and the most effective ways to engage with local stakeholders. The group is chaired by leading environmentalist Chris Baines and its members are senior representatives from organisations committed to enhancing the landscape. National Grid and Ofgem are also members of the group.



### Stakeholder Advisory Group members:

  
Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

  
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
Areas of Outstanding  
Natural Beauty

  
Lle i enaid gael llonydd

  
Britain's breathing spaces







  
Campaign to Protect  
Rural England  
Standing up for your countryside

  
at the heart of walking



  
Inspiring great places









  
Natural Resources  
Wales



  
Keeping beautiful places safe

The group has met twice over the past year and below is an overview of the key activities and issues considered. If you would like more details, the minutes of these meetings are on our website [www.nationalgrid.com/planning-together/visual-impact-provision](http://www.nationalgrid.com/planning-together/visual-impact-provision).

**19th Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting**  
21 & 22 September 2021 held in Dorset and Wiltshire

**Main items of discussion**

- Members of the Group visited the live project site in Dorset including a ride along the haul road and a project update meeting in the Project Information Centre
- Members of the Group visited the proposed location for the VIP project in the North Wessex Downs AONB and received an update on project progress
- A presentation was given by Henry Oliver, Director of the North Wessex Downs AONB Partnership, on the work of the Partnership across the region
- National Grid gave an update on progress on the Peak District East and Eryri (Snowdonia) projects
- National Grid provided an overview of the emerging project in the Cotswolds National Landscape now in its early development stages
- National Grid gave an update on the Landscape Enhancement Initiative and the revised application process introduced in April 2021

**20th Stakeholder Advisory Group**  
23 & 24 March 2022 held in Sheffield and Dunford Bridge

**Main items of discussion**

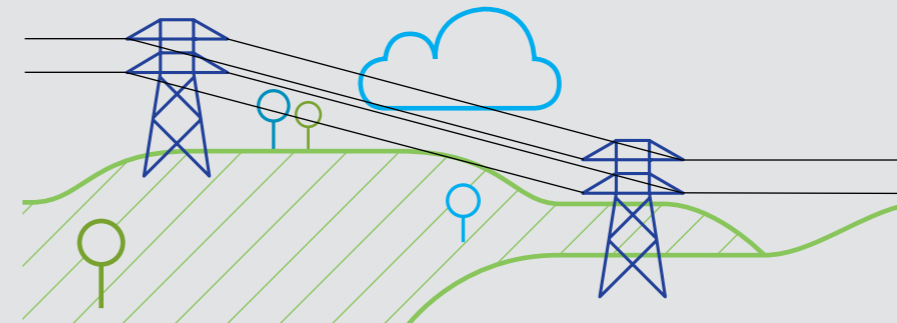
- Members of the Group visited the Peak District East VIP project site, met members of the project team in the Information Centre and walked the specially constructed diversion to the Trans Pennine Trail
- Members of the Group visited Torside in the Longdendale Valley to see one of the projects funded in the Peak District National Park by the Landscape Enhancement Initiative
- National Grid gave a detailed presentation on the forthcoming work on the Eryri (Snowdonia) VIP project including the tunnelling under the Dwyryd Estuary
- National Grid gave a detailed presentation on the content of the planning application for the VIP project in the North Wessex Downs
- National Grid provided updates on the VIP projects in Dorset AONB and Cotswolds National Landscape and the Landscape Enhancement Initiative
- National Grid gave a presentation on the journey to net zero and the number of new connections that will be required to meet government targets
- National Grid and the Group discussed the Grid for Nature initiative and the role that the Group could play in delivering positive environmental change on a large scale

We have carried on working with our Stakeholder Reference Groups, which were set up to inform project development in each of the areas and to keep local people up to date on progress.

**Once in construction, these expanded Community Liaison Groups meet at least twice a year to update the community on project progress and, crucially, act as a forum for any concerns or opportunities that the community wants to share with National Grid. We describe in more detail how we have done this in each of the project updates that follow.**

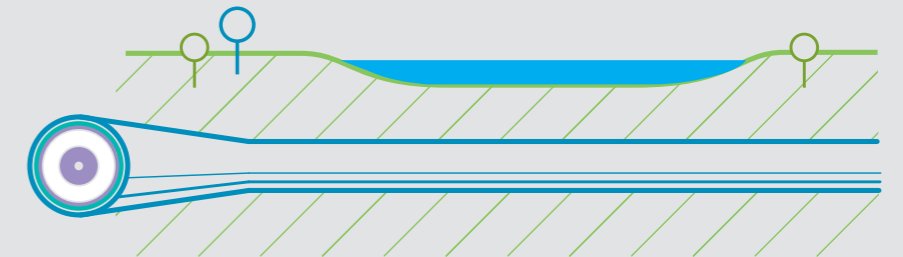


**Over 50 stakeholder meetings**



**Over £7m of LEI funding granted to date**

**51 pylons to be replaced by underground cable**



Dorset AONB



The national Stakeholder Advisory Group on Roundway Hill, Devizes

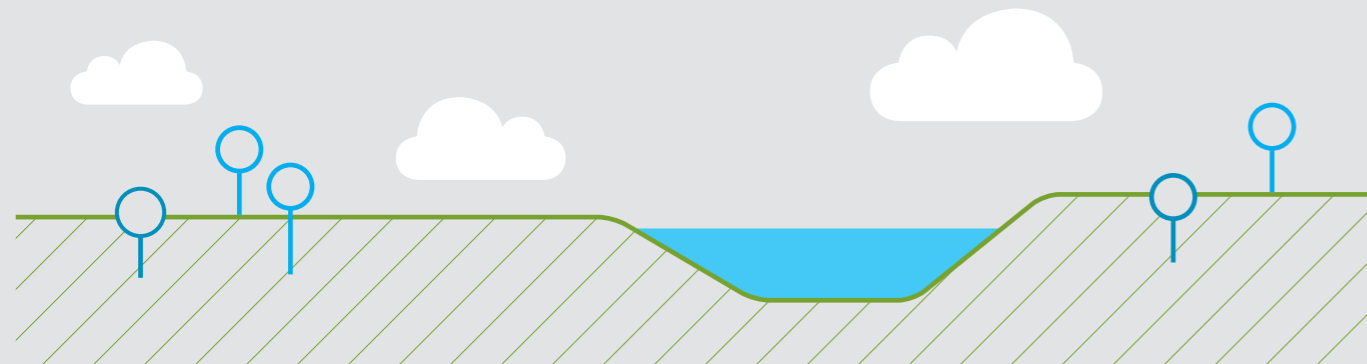
### 3. VIP project updates

**By replacing our overhead transmission lines with underground cables, National Grid’s Visual Impact Provision projects aim to enhance some of the most beautiful landscapes in England and Wales, while avoiding unacceptable environmental impacts and balancing technical deliverability and cost.**

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.

Over the past year, we have continued to make excellent progress on the 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 an update on each of the projects as well as a look ahead to activities planned for 2022/23.



**We aim to enhance some of the most beautiful landscapes in England and Wales, while avoiding unacceptable environmental impacts and balancing technical deliverability and cost.**



# Dorset AONB

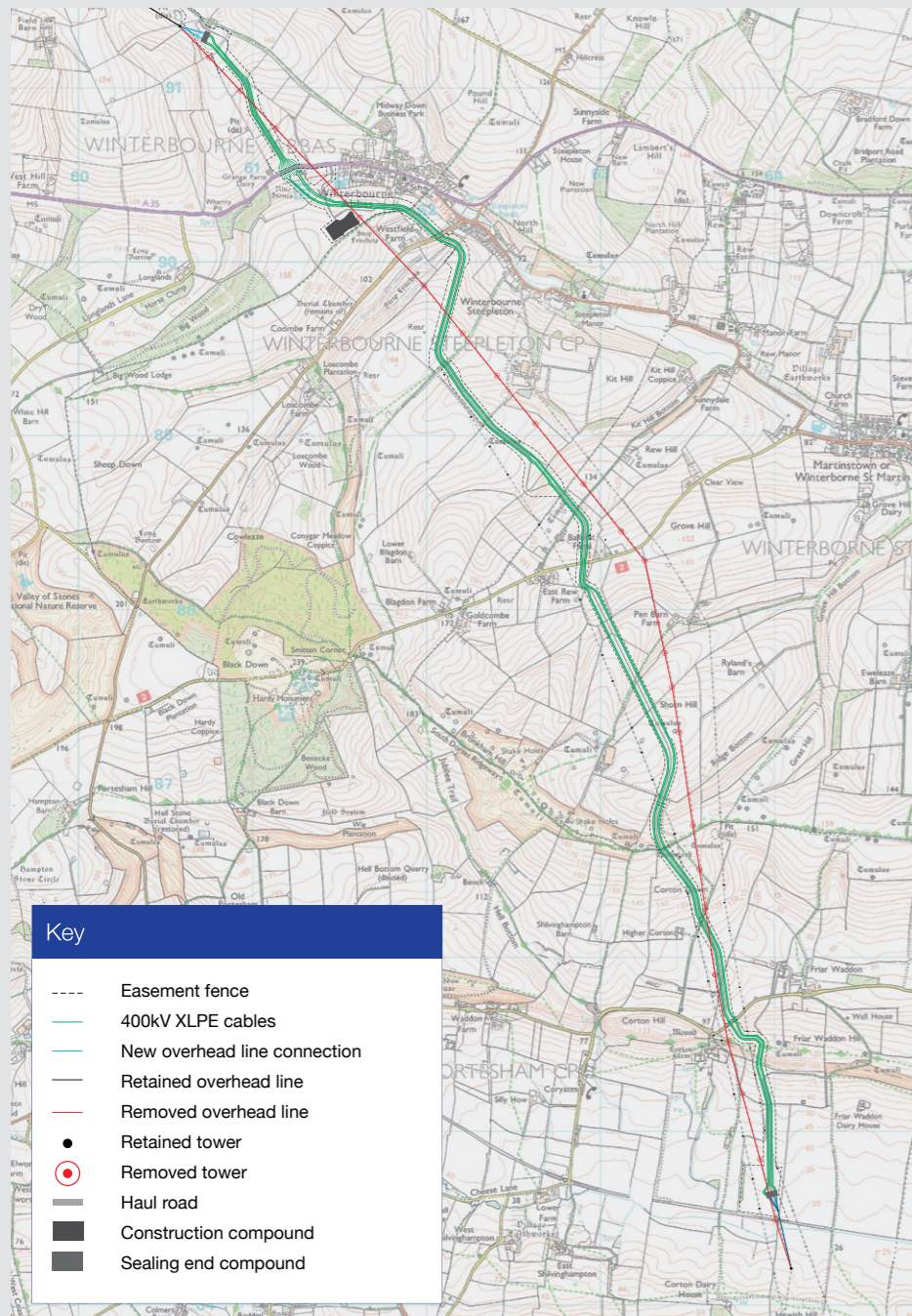


**Our project in Dorset will replace 8.8km of overhead line to the west of Dorchester with an underground cable, permanently removing 22 pylons from the landscape.**

The route for the underground cable runs from north of the A35 near Winterbourne Abbas to the edge of the South Dorset Escarpment below Corton Ridge at Friar Waddon. To connect

the cable to the remaining existing overhead line, sealing end compounds and associated terminal pylons will need to be constructed at both ends.

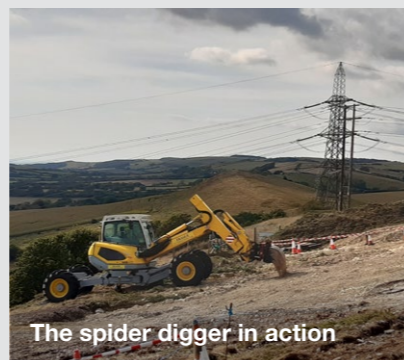
## Project route



Backfilling with cement bound sand



Setting up the jointing tent



The spider digger in action

# Dorset AONB



## Progress to date

Construction work which began in 2019 is advancing well. The extensive civil engineering work was completed in 2021 making way for the installation of the ducts which hold the cables and the cables themselves. Working with specialist contractors from around the world as well as utilising local suppliers and expertise, the team installed the last of the cables in May 2022. Over an incredibly busy 12 months, the team has:

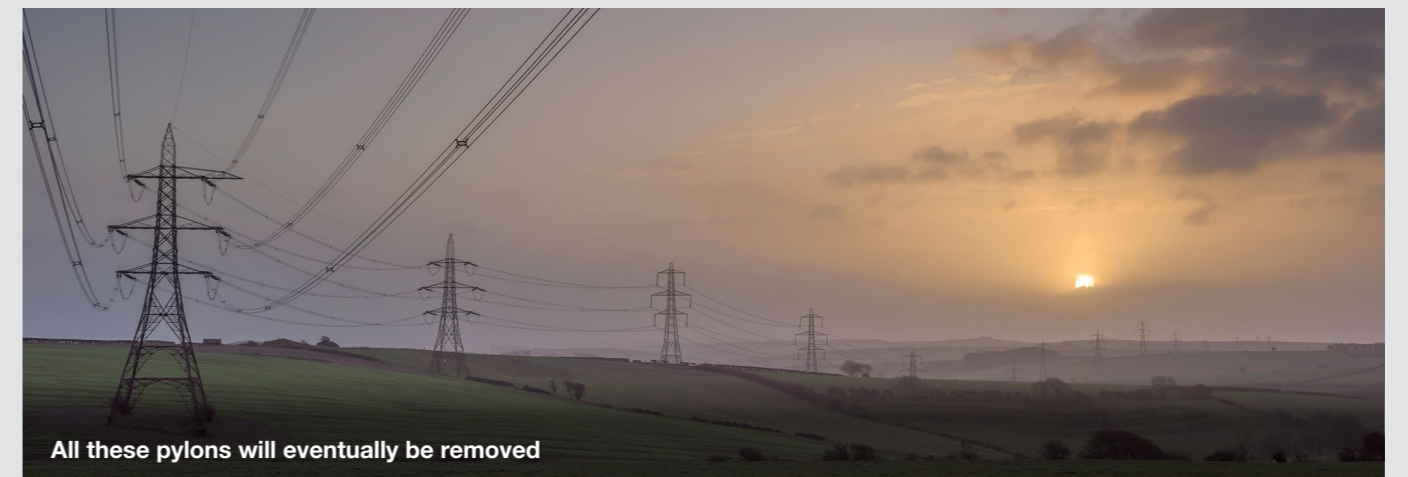
- Installed around 108km of new cables (six cables per circuit) within 108km of ducting along the length of the project site. The cables are around 800m – 1000m in length and arrive on drums weighing some 45 tonnes. These cables are then expertly joined in carefully monitored, sterile conditions within a jointing tent.
- Backfilled the cable trenches along the bulk of the 8.8km route and started construction of the two new cable sealing end compounds. Construction of the southern sealing end compound required the introduction of a temporary tower to keep the team safe during the work. It has also made the process more

efficient and a similar approach is likely to be adopted on future VIP and other National Grid projects. Once the work on the compound is complete, the temporary tower will be removed and returned to our stores in Didcot.

- Said goodbye from site to the team of 25 intrepid archaeologists from Oxford Archaeology who worked for over 6,500 days, often in very hostile weather, excavating the key areas of archaeology along the length of the site. The tens of thousands of artefacts that have been recovered were taken back to Oxford for further study and will be catalogued in a book recording the finds called a 'monograph'. It will be several years before this will be completed so extensive were the finds.
- Organised a series of fascinating and well-attended archaeological webinars to give a taster of the fantastic findings. Hosted by National Grid and featuring speakers from Historic England, Dorset Council's archaeology team, the Dorset AONB Partnership and Oxford Archaeology, the three webinars focused on different eras – Neolithic

& Bronze Age, Roman and Early to post-Medieval. The webinars can still be accessed via the project website.

- Successfully tested and commissioned the first of the two new underground circuits in March 2022. This involves a specialist mobile testing rig contained within an HGV visiting the site and carrying out a series of tests to ensure the circuit is operating effectively. The second circuit will be ready for testing in June 2022.
- Continued with ongoing environmental mitigation measures, led by Morgan Sindall's environmental clerk of works – a constant presence on site. As well as keeping an eye on the peregrines which have been nesting on one of the pylons scheduled for removal and relocating some boxes meant for dormice which were being used by wood mice and a pair of blue tits, the team have kept an eye on the badgers, deer, hare and numerous bird species that are all regular visitors to the construction site.



All these pylons will eventually be removed

# Dorset AONB



## Stakeholder and public engagement

We have continued to work closely with the local community and relationships remain positive. Our Community Liaison Group met in September 2021 and March 2022 at events which were very well attended. The members of the group are:



CHESIL BANK PARISH COUNCIL

Winterbourne Abbas & Winterbourne Steepleton Parish Council

Chesil Bank Parish Council

Winterbourne St Martin Parish Council

South Dorset Ridgeway Landscape Partnership



## Sparking passion in the next generation of engineers

Local primary school students near the project site were given the chance to learn more about electricity generation as part of an educational programme designed to bring engineering to life.

Children from schools had their eyes opened to a career in engineering through a series of interactive workshops organised by the National Grid team that were aimed at sparking a passion in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) subjects.

Taking part were a mix of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 from local schools including:

- St Nicholas and St Laurence Church of England Primary School
- Winterbourne Valley Church of England Aided First School
- Portesham Church of England Primary School

All the sessions were run by STEMworks, an educational not-for-profit organisation, which saw the children enthusiastically getting stuck into tasks such as building their own electric bedroom door buzzers.



# Dorset AONB



## See for yourself

With restrictions eased following the Covid pandemic, we were finally able to become more active in the local community and, crucially, to make use of our purpose-built Project Information Centre.

We welcomed a number of groups to the site and some were lucky enough to take a trip down the haul road in a special tractor and trailer supplied by MJ Church, our civil engineering partners on the Dorset project.

The team and our partners at Morgan Sindall have also been out in the community helping to restore a children's playground damaged in the storms and refurbishing the playground at Martinstown Village Hall.

Our Community Grant Programme (which provides small grants to community projects in areas where our construction work has an impact) has helped Martinstown Village Hall with a £20,000 refurbishment of its kitchen, bringing in new appliances and improving safety. It has also supported a community project in Portesham where £9,750 was awarded to restore places in the community including restoring a dry-stone wall, tree and shrub planting and the creation of a wildflower meadow working together with children from the village school.

## Looking ahead

By the end of the calendar year 2022, the second circuit will be commissioned and fully operational and we will have permanently removed the 22 pylons and associated overhead line, transforming the Dorset landscape. We will also be well underway with the restoration work so that we leave the landscape totally enhanced.

National Grid will continue to work with the community and our local and national stakeholder partners throughout the construction phase to ensure that the scheme delivered achieves the maximum possible enhancement for the landscape. Project information, updates and documentation will continue to be shared on our Dorset project website: <http://dorset.nationalgrid.co.uk>.



Members of the national Stakeholder Advisory Group viewing progress from Corton Ridge



The national Stakeholder Advisory Group in the Project Information Centre

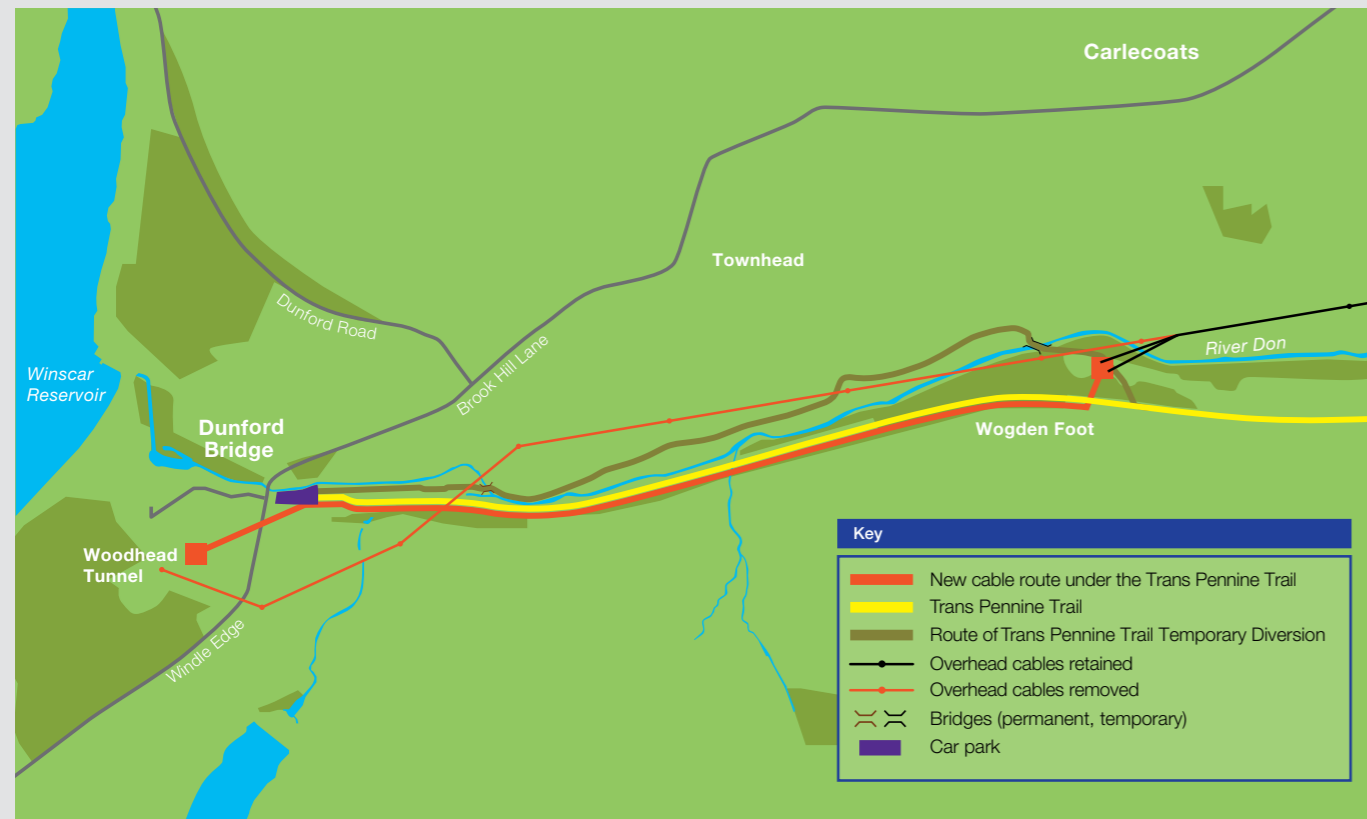
# Peak District National Park



The Peak District National Park (East) project will replace a 1.5km section of overhead line east of the Woodhead Tunnel, in and around the village of Dunford Bridge, with underground cables, permanently removing seven pylons and a sealing end compound from the classic Dark Peak landscape.

The route for the connection runs along the popular Trans Pennine Trail (TPT) to the south of the upper River Don to join the existing cables in the Woodhead Tunnel. To connect the remaining existing overhead line, a sealing end compound and associated terminal pylon will need to be constructed at Wogden Foot, a local wildlife site.

## Project route



Young trees which needed to be removed from the project site were relocated within the parish



The diversion to the Trans Pennine Trail opened in December 2021

We are permanently removing seven pylons and a sealing end compound from the classic Dark Peak landscape.





# Peak District National Park



## Progress to date

Main construction on the Peak East VIP project started in May 2021 and the progress since then has been considerable. Because the electricity cables that will replace the overhead line are due to be buried beneath the Trans Pennine Trail, one of the first tasks on the project was to construct a 1.5km accessible diversion to this well-used route.

As with all the VIP projects, the Peak East project is being delivered in a highly environmentally-sensitive location. Add to that the difficulties and constraints of working in a steep-sided upland valley in often very hostile weather, and the progress made by the team over the last 12 months has been remarkable. The team has:

- Created a fully accessible 1.5km diversion to the TPT on the northern bank of the River Don. This involved the significant re-profiling of the ground to remove any steep gradients on the path.
- Installed two new bridges over the River Don. The first, near Dunford Bridge, replaces an existing bridge which was in very poor condition and will remain once the project is completed to allow access for the local farmer and Yorkshire Water. The second is a temporary bridge which allows the trail diversion to rejoin the existing TPT east of Wogden Foot.
- As an example of the project's total commitment to sustainability and diverting waste from landfill, the temporary bridge is totally reusable once the project is completed. The steel bridge structure itself is

already scheduled to move to another location in 2023 and the supporting columns are made from reusable

Legato™ blocks. These precast interlocking concrete blocks are put together like Lego™ bricks and can be taken apart and reused at the end of the project.

- The diversion opened in December 2021 and for one month provided a circular route from Dunford Bridge along the River Don, linking up with the existing TPT at Wogden Foot, before it closed to enable us to lay the cables.
- Established a working area in Wogden Foot and cleared the location for the new sealing end compound. Significantly, the project team managed to retain 40% of the trees within the site that we had permission to remove. This was achieved by adopting a tree-by-tree approach to removal so that only those which it was essential to remove were taken down.

- Installed all the troughs and ducting along the route that will house the cables and taken delivery of the first cable drums in March 2022.
- Taken the lessons learned on the Dorset VIP project in terms of water and run-off management and created silt barriers and retention pools to ensure the water quality of the River Don and its tributaries remains of the highest quality – a fact verified independently by the Environment Agency.
- Harvested more seeds from Wogden Foot and along the TPT which will be carefully stored for reintroduction at the end of the project.
- Carefully stripped and stored topsoil and subsoil with each area of soil carefully labelled and stored close to the position where it will be returned, reducing the amount of disturbance and movement and retaining the integrity of the soil.



Chris Baines and the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust visit the project

# Peak District National Park



## Taking an enlightened approach to the environment

The Peak East project team has always been aware of the highly sensitive nature of the environment in the area where we are working. Peak East VIP was the first National Grid project to be tasked with achieving 10 percent biodiversity net gain (BNG) and the challenges posed by local stakeholders and Barnsley Council in terms of preserving and enhancing habitat for willow tit were considerable.

Rather than see these environmental constraints as a problem, the Peak East team embraced the opportunity to make this project an exemplar in environmental terms and, working with main contractor, Morgan Sindall, have achieved some fantastic results already.

Central to this was the adoption of a new way of working. At National Grid, a no-compromise approach

to health and safety remains central to all decision-making. The Peak East VIP team adopted the same attitude to sustainability and environmental impacts: every decision was scrutinised around how the natural environment and biodiversity could be at least preserved if not managed better and ultimately improved.

This approach has already resulted in the preservation of 40% of the trees that could have been removed under our planning permission. This has had the added benefit of providing almost total screening for the sealing end compound in Wogden Foot before work on the compound has even started.

Other measures undertaken to date include:

- the creation of more habitat preferred by willow tit

- the creation of protection zones around important flora within the construction area
- building refugia for reptiles away from the main construction zones
- relocating brown trout from the tributaries of the River Don to enable the construction of the trail diversion
- using auguring piles in construction rather than traditional, more impactful techniques to minimise disturbance to roosting bats

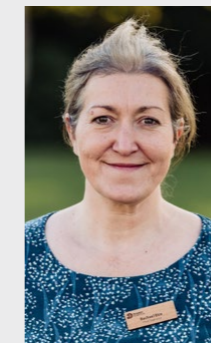
These are just some of the measures that the team has taken to date and they are already hopeful of bettering the 10 percent BNG target. Their work has also not gone un-noticed with many of our site visitors impressed by the work the team has done.

## Some of the praise received by the team is included below:



**“It was heartening to hear and see about the work being done at Wogden Foot to minimise the damage to natural areas and to provide enhancements wherever possible.”**

**“Fantastic and inspiring to see such care being taken over a project, right down to the small things that mean so much to local people.”**



**Rachael Bice**  
CEO, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust



**“A few years ago, David (Parker, the chair of the Trust’s Natural Environment Advisory Board) and I sat down and wrote a ten-point plan on how to carry out development properly in sensitive settings. It is as though, at Dunford Bridge, you have not only read and followed our plan, but have actually improved on it. It’s fantastic to see major infrastructure development being implemented so sensitively. It will show others that it can be done.”**

**Adrian Olivier**  
Chair of the National Trust Advisory Board on Historic Environment

# Peak District National Park



## Stakeholder and community engagement

**Two meetings of the project's Community Liaison Group were held in November 2021 and April 2022. The meetings are well attended by a cross section of community groups including representatives from the National Park Authority and both officers and councillors from Barnsley Council. Organisations represented on the Community Liaison Group are:**

- Dunford Parish Council
- Langsett Parish Council
- Elected members and officers from Barnsley Council
- Trans Pennine Trail national office
- Trans Pennine Trail Conservation Volunteers
- Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
- CPRE / Friends of the Peak District
- Barnsley Biodiversity Trust
- Hade Edge Junior & Infants School
- Millhouse Primary School
- Barnsley Local Access Forum
- British Horse Society
- Ride Barnsley
- The Ramblers
- East Pennine Innovation Partnership

National Stakeholder Advisory Group members visit Torside, Longdendale Valley



# Peak District National Park



The purpose built and well-equipped project information centre has provided an excellent meeting point for stakeholder visits and a base from which to explore the project along the TPT diversion. As well as the Community Liaison Group, among many others, we have welcomed:

- The CEO and Regional Director for Yorkshire Wildlife Trust
- Local Penistone & Stocksbridge MP, Miriam Cates
- Barnsley Council's Cabinet Member for Environment & Transportation along with senior officers
- Members of the National Trust Advisory Boards on Historic Environment and Natural Environment

- The VIP project's national Stakeholder Advisory Group

Our community grant programme too has made its first award on the Peak East project with nearly £20,000 awarded to the Friends of the Trans Pennine Trail for the creation, mapping, interpretation (both in print and online) and promotion of some new circular routes around the TPT in the project area.

Importantly, the location of the project in the heart of a village and on a route popular with runners, cyclists, horse riders and dog walkers has meant we meet members of the public on a daily basis.

Our gatehouse is staffed by a team from Morgan Sindall who have got to know the names of many of the regular users especially their dogs. The team also provide water for animals in warm weather as well as dog and horse treats for anyone who wants them.

Continuing with the reusing theme, the team has already provided chippings from the trees we did remove to Barnsley Council to use as mulch on its park sites, donated three saplings to Dunford Parish Council which have been replanted up at the village hall at Crow Edge and held a log sale which raised funds for Yorkshire Air Ambulance.



Log sale collection



Our staff have got to know regular trail users and have a ready supply of dog and horse treats

### Looking ahead

By the end of the calendar year 2022, we will have built the new sealing end compound in Wogden Foot, the cables will be installed, tested and operational and we will have permanently removed the pylons and associated overhead line from Dunford Bridge. We will also have started the restoration work, removal of the trail diversion and reinstatement of the TPT above the cables. We can then move onto the proposed car park improvements early in 2023.

National Grid will continue to work with the community and our local and national stakeholder partners throughout the construction phase to ensure that the scheme achieves the maximum possible enhancement for the landscape and the environment. Project information, updates and documentation will continue to be shared on our Peak East project website: <https://peakdistricteast.nationalgrid.co.uk/>

# Eryri National Park

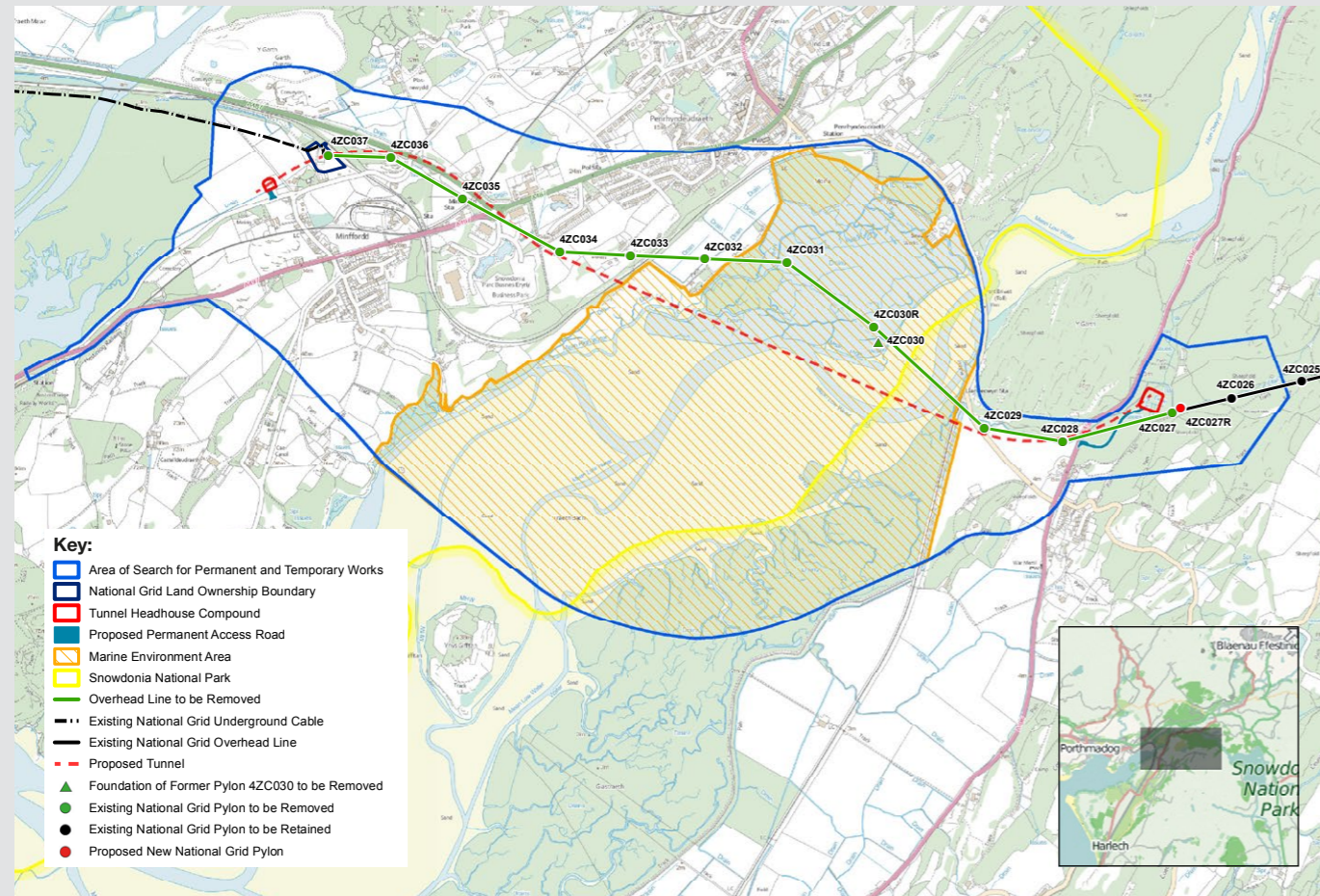


The Eryri National Park project will replace a 3km section of overhead line crossing the beautiful Dwyryd Estuary (which is also home to Clough Williams-Ellis's creation Portmeirion) with an underground cable, permanently removing 10 pylons from the landscape.

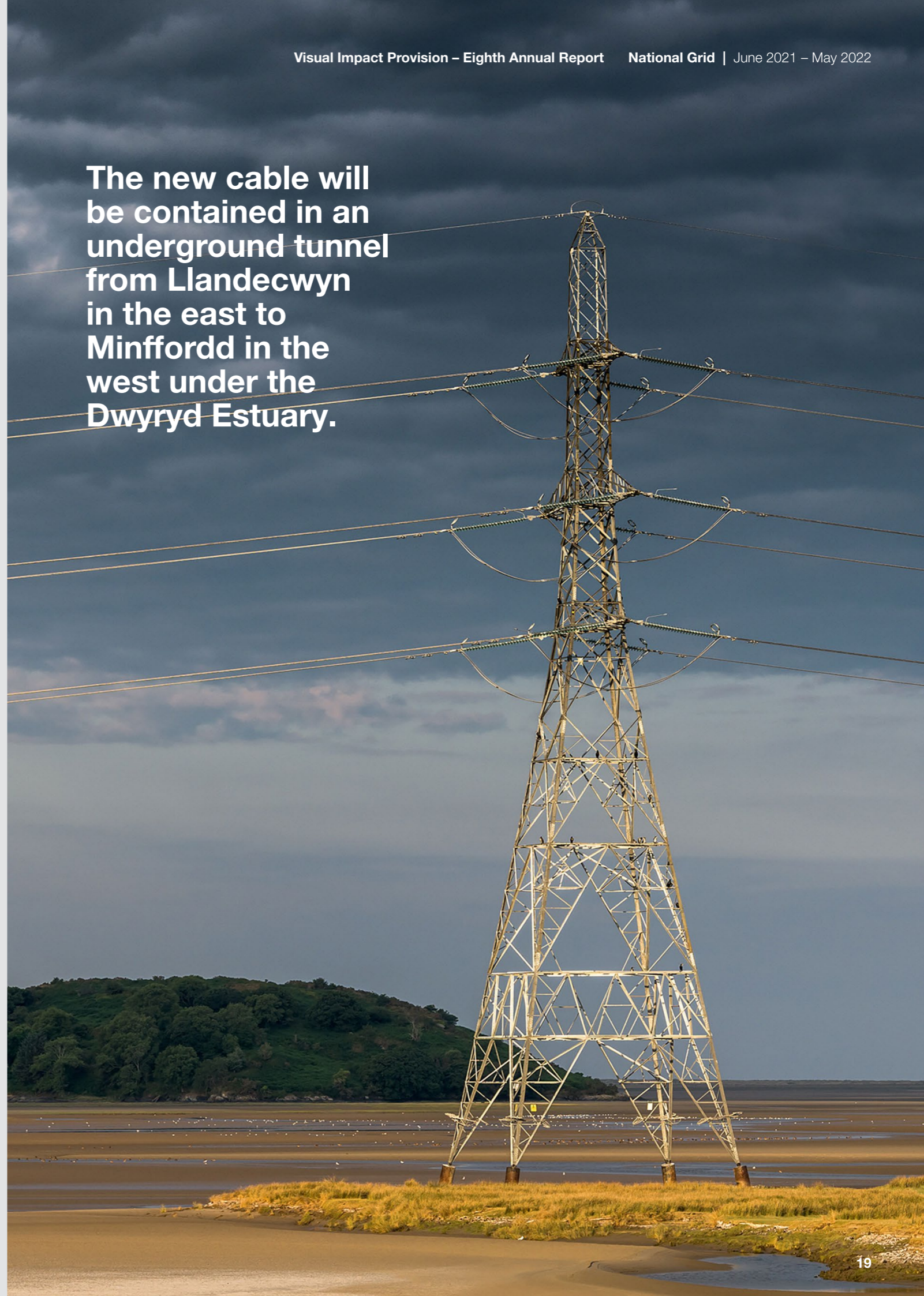
The new cable will be contained in an underground tunnel from Llandecwyn in the east to Minffordd in the west under the Dwyryd Estuary. A head house would be required at each end of the tunnel. To connect the remaining existing overhead line in the east, a sealing end compound and associated terminal pylon would be needed near Llandecwyn.



## Current route option



The new cable will be contained in an underground tunnel from Llandecwyn in the east to Minffordd in the west under the Dwyryd Estuary.



# Eryri National Park



## Progress to date

The last 12 months has seen steady progress on the Eryri VIP project with activity expected to increase significantly in the latter part of 2022 and beyond.

As a reminder, we reported last year that the impact of potential future network requirements on the required tunnel capacity have been kept under review throughout the development of the project. The Government target set in 2020 for 40GW of electricity generation through offshore wind farms by 2030, and offshore wind leasing, and other potential future requirements had impacted the Eryri VIP scheme.

National Grid and Ofgem agreed that it was sensible to change the specifications of the Eryri scheme to construct

a larger tunnel to carry more cables, as this will enable the most economic and efficient solution to be taken forwards. This means that minor changes were required to the above-ground designs which, following discussions with planners at both authorities, are being taken forward as permitted development or non-material amendments to our planning consents.

More significantly, it meant that we have had to re-run the tender event for the updated scope. This international competition completed at of 2021 and Hochtief UK was appointed as principal contractor in January 2022. Hochtief UK has a long and successful track record for tunnelling work both internationally and in the UK and is working as part of a consortium with National Grid on the second stage of the construction of the London Power Tunnels.

While we await Ofgem's final decision on funding for the project, the team is busy establishing a temporary base within National Grid's existing substation at Trawsfynydd. These offices will house the National Grid and Hochtief UK teams until the site compound at Garth, near Minffordd has been built in 2023.

There is a significant amount of work to be done in the coming 12 months in addition to establishing site compounds at either end of the project at Garth and Llandecwyn. Now that they have been appointed, Hochtief UK will work up the detailed design for the tunnel and associated works and we will look to obtain third-party approvals from organisations such as Network Rail, Welsh Government and the Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railway whose land we will be tunnelling underneath.

# Eryri National Park



The first meeting of this group will be held soon and the following organisations have been invited to join:

- Penrhyndeudraeth Town Council
- Talsarnau Community Council
- Maentwrog Community Council
- Elected members and officers from the Eryri National Park Authority
- Elected members and officers from Gwynedd Council
- The National Trust
- Natural Resources Wales
- Cadw
- The Snowdonia Society
- The Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales
- North Wales Wildlife Trust
- Meirionnydd Ramblers
- Chester & North Wales CTC
- British Horse Society
- Sustrans
- Ffestiniog & Welsh Highland Railways
- Portmeirion
- West Cheshire & North Wales Chamber of Commerce
- Local schools in the area

A project information centre will be built as part of the compound at Garth and meetings will be able to take place there from 2023 onwards. In the meantime, it is proposed to alternate between the halls of the community and town council members of the Group. A programme of visits and schools' engagement is also being planned.

Members of National Grid's cabling team recently undertook a clean-up of the beach in Llandudno in an operation co-ordinated by the North Wales Wildlife Trust. Once established, the team hopes to do more volunteering activities and work in the community and is already talking to the Park Authority and the Snowdonia Society about potential opportunities.

The Community Grant Programme is now also active in Eryri and the project made its first award in May 2022 with a grant of £20,000 to Penrhyndeudraeth Football Club which will enable the club to install new safety and security fencing.

The area in which the Eryri VIP project is located has received an elevation of status when, in July last year, the Slate landscape of North West Wales was granted World Heritage Site status. A World Heritage Site is an area or location that has been selected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). It is an area with special significance in terms of its culture, history, science, or other factors. It is legally protected by international agreements.

Congratulations are due to Gwynedd Council which led a partnership to produce the application including Cadw, Welsh Government, Eryri National Park Authority, the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales, Bangor University, the National Trust and the National Slate Museum.

This makes the beautiful and protected landscape in which we will be working even more significant on the world stage.

## Stakeholder and public engagement

The Stakeholder Reference Group has guided the National Grid team throughout the development phase of the project. Its final meeting was held in February 2022 and members were invited to join the Community Liaison Group which will provide a forum for discussion and an exchange of ideas throughout the construction phase until project completion in 2029.

### Stakeholder Reference Group members



## Looking ahead

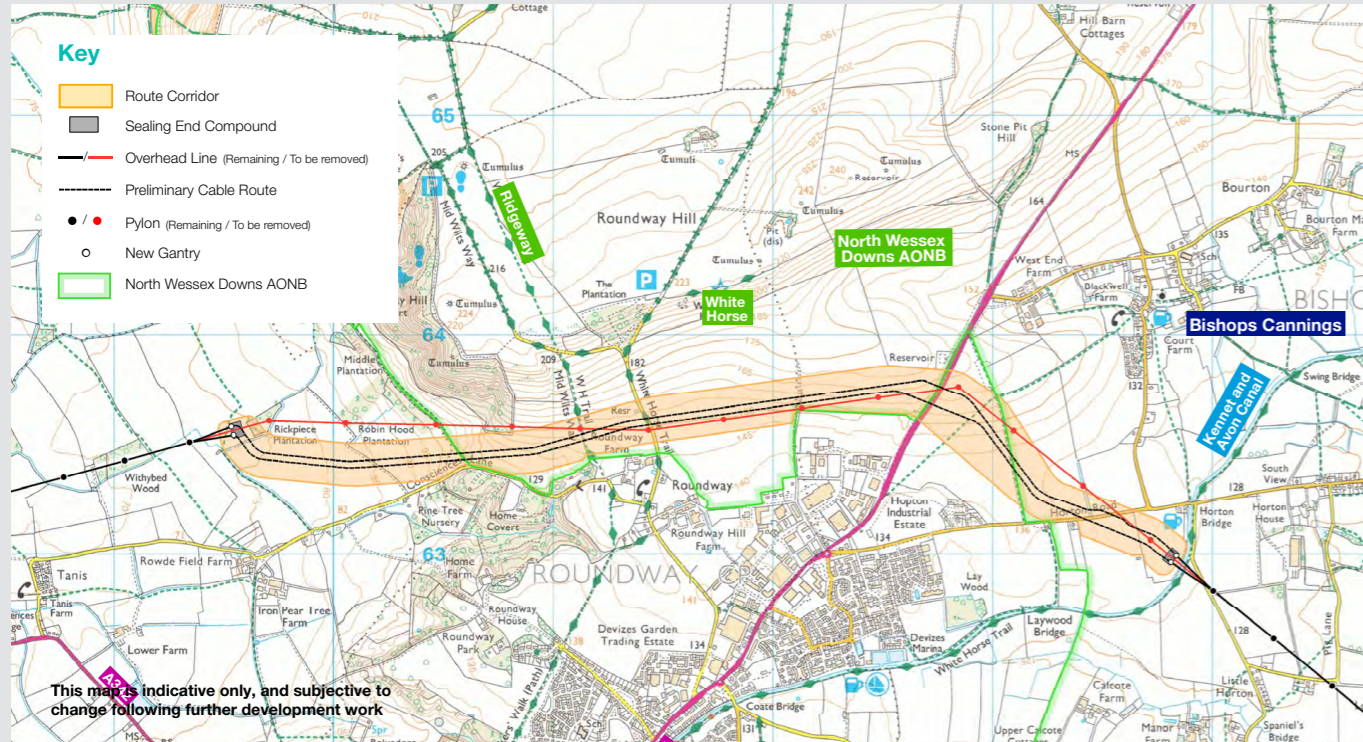
As well as establishing a project presence in the area and building the team, throughout the rest of 2022 and into 2023, we will be carrying out additional surveys including ground investigations, more environmental work and archaeological trial trenching as there is evidence of a Roman road in the area. We will also be translocating reptiles away from our proposed site areas within the National Park.

We will also continue to build on the strong links we have built locally with stakeholders and the community. Project information, updates and documentation will continue to be shared in both English and Welsh on our Eryri VIP project website: [www.nationalgrid.com/eryrivip](http://www.nationalgrid.com/eryrivip).

# North Wessex Downs AONB



## Project route



The North Wessex Downs project will replace around 4.6km of overhead line close to the Millennium White Horse, north of Devizes in Wiltshire, with an underground cable, permanently removing up to 13 pylons from the landscape.

To connect the cable to the remaining existing overhead line, sealing end compounds and associated terminal pylons will need to be constructed close to the Kennet & Avon Canal to the east of Devizes and east of the village of Rowde to the west.

### Progress to date

Significant progress has been made on the project over the last 12 months with elements of the planning application and funding submission for Ofgem now well advanced.

Working with Balfour Beatty, the project team have seen significant advances in a range of design elements including:

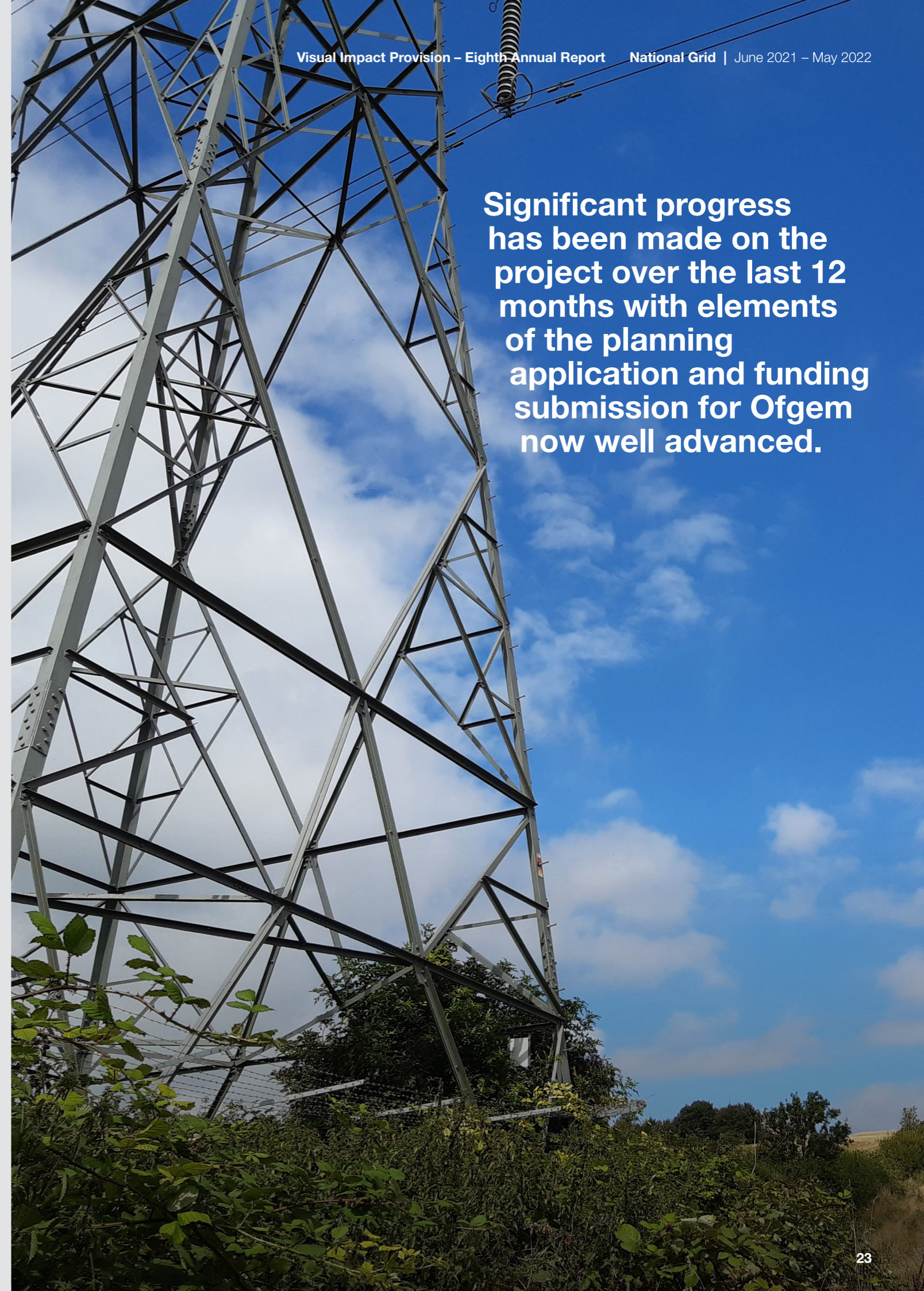
**Development of cable route** – this has included avoiding the source protection zones and Wessex Water pipeline identified earlier in the project. The resulting route is closer to some residential properties but the residents are pleased that the project is going ahead and the team will work with them to minimise disruption during construction.

**Cable sealing end compounds (SEC)** – the presence of the water pipe necessitated the moving of the western SEC an additional two pylons along to the west, but the new location has the potential for good screening. In the east, the SEC remains north of the Kennet & Avon Canal. Stakeholders have provided input

into the design of the compounds including the suggestion that any bunds created adopt a natural and not geometric form.

**Joint bay positions** – the siting of the points where the cables will be joined and accessed for maintenance. Changes to system requirements (see below) have led to additional bays being required and further work on the siting.

**Road crossings** – the underground route will cross the main A361 into Devizes from the north. In consultation with Wiltshire Highways, it has been agreed that both this main arterial route and Horton Road which leaves the town to the east will be crossed using the Horizontal Directional Drill technique that was employed on the Dorset project, removing the need for road closures. Local feedback has also been very vocal on the need for construction traffic to avoid



Significant progress has been made on the project over the last 12 months with elements of the planning application and funding submission for Ofgem now well advanced.

# North Wessex Downs AONB



Conscience Lane to the west of the project due to its narrow winding nature and popularity as a rat run. The use of the haul road running through the centre of the site will mean that VIP construction traffic can completely avoid the lane.

**Haul road and construction access** – detailed work has been done to identify locations for access that will minimise the impact on the narrow and busy roads in central Devizes.

**Public Right of Way crossings** – working with the team at Wiltshire Council, we are, as with all the VIP projects, identifying ways to keep as many of the footpaths open as possible throughout the project. The trails crossed include the popular and well-promoted White Horse Trail which runs right underneath the overhead line and within just a few metres of a pylon. By using a combination of methods as in Dorset, the team is confident that most routes will remain open with only a small number of temporary diversions.

## Uprating the transmission network

Increased generation due to new connections from the growing number of renewable sources has meant that greater capacity is required in some parts of National Grid's existing infrastructure.

The line of which the 13 pylons due for removal as part of the VIP project form part (the YYM Bramley to Melksham route) is one of these routes in need of uprating. As a result, some additional design work was required to accommodate larger cable and additional joint bays. National Grid is working with Balfour Beatty to design a solution and programme that best aligns with system outages and gives greater certainty of cost for the consumer.

This redesign and programme change means that the project will take slightly longer to deliver with the pylons now scheduled to be removed in 2026 and not 2025 as originally planned. The benefits for the consumer of adopting this approach far outweigh the slight project delay and stakeholders locally have fully accepted the change.

## Stakeholder and community engagement

The Group was also invited along with local representatives from Wiltshire Council and the affected parish and town council to visit the VIP project on site in Dorset to see for themselves at first-hand how a major VIP scheme is delivered. A number of representatives including from the North Wessex Downs

AONB Partnership, Natural England, Devizes Town Council and Rowde Parish Council attended and were taken on a tour along the haul road down the full length of the project site.

During the autumn of 2021, a series of presentations was given to Devizes Town Council and the parishes of Rowde, Bromham and Bishops Cannings. Online and face-to-face briefings were also provided to groups including Wiltshire Ramblers and the Devizes Area Board.

On consecutive Thursdays in November, the VIP team took a stall in the very popular Devizes market. Promoted in advance through local networks and the media, the team spoke to over 200 members of the public with the vast majority (all but one) expressing enthusiastic support. Where there were concerns over ecology or archaeology, the team was able to reassure people using first-hand examples from both Dorset and the Peak District projects.

**The Stakeholder Reference Group met in July 2021 to receive updates on the developing plans and provide input. The Group was well attended and included representatives from:**



# North Wessex Downs AONB



The team also continues to liaise with the North Wessex Downs AONB Partnership team and its expert consultants alongside Natural England and the County Ecologist over the wider potential for Biodiversity Net Gain in the area resulting from the project. These discussions will continue into project delivery.

In September 2021, the VIP project's national Stakeholder Advisory Group visited the project in Devizes and walked from the car park above Leipzig Plantation down to Conscience Lane. They were able to see the line crossing Roundway Hill and its cumulative impact heading east as well as the potential opportunities created by removing the pylon from the Roundway Hill & Covert SSSI. They then headed off to the Bridge Inn car park to view the eastern SEC location.

## Looking ahead

We will continue to work with Balfour Beatty and other specialist colleagues on the technical, engineering and environmental work needed to develop detailed plans for the project.

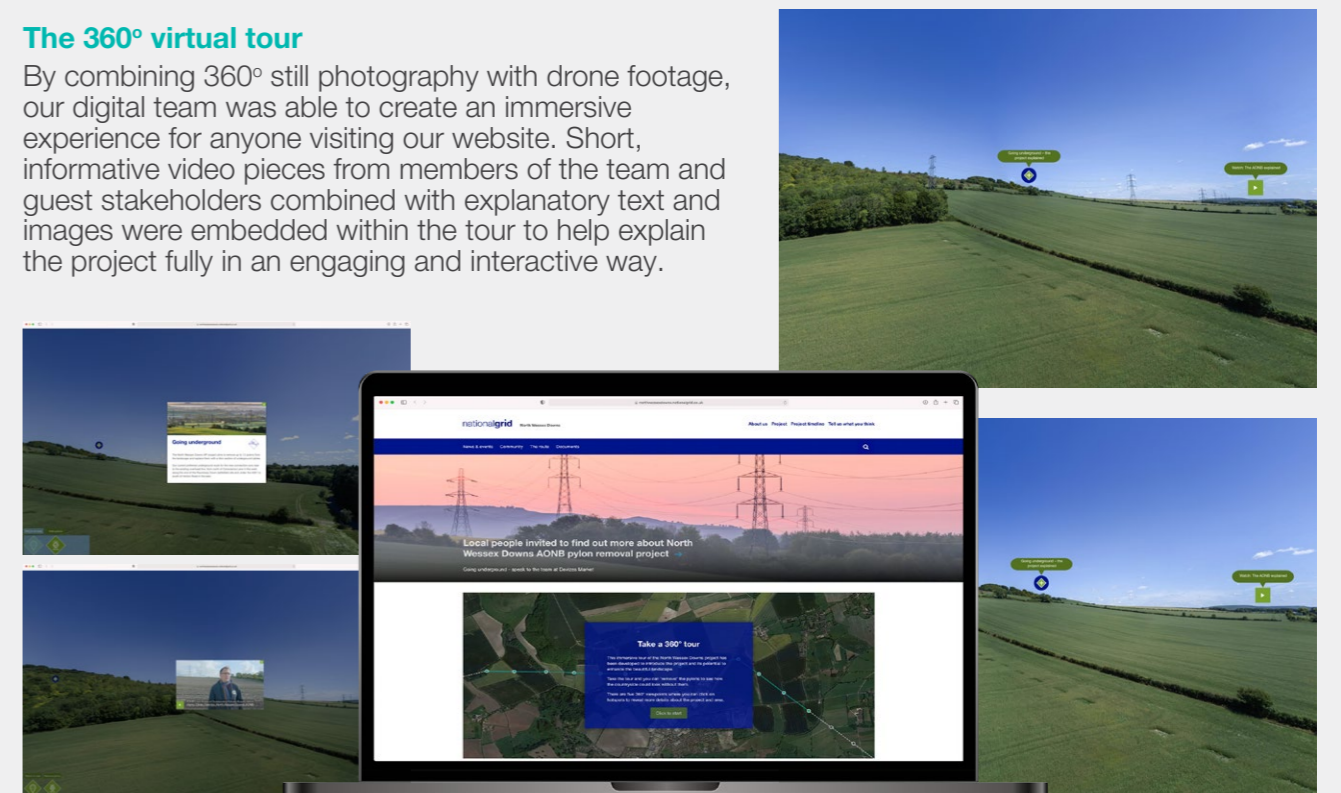
At the same time, we will continue to engage with stakeholders and the community and keep them up to date on aspects of the project as they emerge as well as carrying out negotiations with landowners for the various rights required.

Work on both the planning application and the Ofgem submission is progressing well and both will be submitted during the next 12 months. The planning application will be for the two sealing end compounds and the permanent access to them, as well as for the construction of temporary access onto Horton Road to facilitate the movement of construction traffic within the project site.

Project information, updates and documents will be shared through our North Wessex Downs project website <http://northwessexdowns.nationalgrid.co.uk/>

## The 360° virtual tour

By combining 360° still photography with drone footage, our digital team was able to create an immersive experience for anyone visiting our website. Short, informative video pieces from members of the team and guest stakeholders combined with explanatory text and images were embedded within the tour to help explain the project fully in an engaging and interactive way.



# Cotswolds National Landscape



The VIP project in the Cotswolds National Landscape will replace around 7km of overhead line across the Cotswolds Plateau in Gloucestershire with an underground cable permanently removing up to 20 pylons from the landscape.



To connect the cable to the existing overhead line, sealing end compounds and associated terminal pylons will need to be constructed to the west of Winchcombe in the north and east of Cheltenham near the A40 in the south.

The Cotswolds project is the second VIP project which will use funds made available by Ofgem in the RIIO-T2 price control period. In the 2014 Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, this section (ZF.2) was judged to have combined landscape and visual impacts of high importance. The subsection adjudged to have the most negative impact runs near the market town of Winchcombe in the north and across the high Cotswolds Plateau, the highest point within the AONB designation.

This large-scale landscape has few overt human influences, is of high quality and contains many features that are representative of the special qualities of the AONB. Expansive views across sparsely settled farmland and the distinctive skylines of the escarpments give the area a high scenic quality.

The pylon line is a prominent feature which alters the rural qualities and tranquil nature of the landscape and, although the scale of impact of ZF.2 varies, pylons are clearly visible from many locations.

The Cotswolds Way National Trail runs along the top of the scarp and there are also several regional trails in the area which have led to high importance impacts being recorded for these recreational receptors.

There are also a number of visitor locations within this subsection including the English Heritage site at Belas Knap, Sudeley Castle and other heritage sites, panoramic viewpoints and a number of car parks. The presence of these encourages people to access the area and visitors over a wide area are affected by views of pylons.

Belas Knap long barrow is located close to the line – the pylons are virtually the only man-made feature visible from it – and there is a significant amount of evidence of both Roman and Medieval settlement across the area. This gives rise to the high potential for archaeology in the area.

Ecologically, the overhead line crosses Cleeve Hill Common SSSI and the area has numerous patches of ancient woodland which will make routeing a challenge.

# Cotswolds National Landscape



## Progress to date

Positive initial meetings have been held with the Cotswold National Landscape (CNL) team who visited the VIP project in Dorset to get an idea of the scale and impact of the construction works and have advised on the membership of the local Stakeholder Reference Group of which they will be an important part.

Options for locating the sealing end compounds at both northern and southern ends have been identified and these are being assessed and discussed with stakeholders.

The location also presents several challenges. Aside from the A40 in the south and the B4632 in the north, there are no roads suitable for construction vehicles along the entire 7km length. A haul road will need to be constructed to allow the movement of construction traffic along the site and off local roads but access from the south in particular is likely to prove challenging. Lessons learned from the Dorset project suggest that construction access at both ends of the project is very much preferred.

The inaugural Stakeholder Reference Group meeting was held in February 2022 in Cheltenham.



The topography too is challenging, particularly in relation to getting up onto the plateau and once again lessons learned in Dorset will be invaluable here.

The landowner situation is also more complicated than on any other of the VIP projects with well over 100 individual interests across the site. Add to this the presence of common land at Cleeve Hill Common, plus the likely archaeological and ecological challenges, and the team will need careful consideration of the best cable route options. The area

is also criss-crossed with footpaths including the Cotswold Way (one of the most well-walked trails in England) and Cleeve Hill Common is popular with the community from dog walkers to horse riders, cyclists and running clubs.

The project also has a more complex stakeholder landscape than the other VIP projects to date covering three Parliamentary seats, four local authorities and up to six town and parish councils – as well as the Trustees of Cleeve Common.



# Cotswolds National Landscape



At the suggestion of Cotswolds National Landscape (the AONB Partnership for the Cotswolds) and in the light of the extensive use of the area by a wide range of user groups, the Stakeholder Reference Group has also invited the Cotswolds Trails & Access Partnership – an umbrella group representing all user interests – to join the Group and is

pleased that they were an active participant in the first meeting.

The response from stakeholders on the SRG and some of the wider stakeholders we started briefing from May 2022 has been very positive and we look forward to working closely with them as the project develops.

A project website has been developed [www.nationalgrid.com/cotswoldsvip](http://www.nationalgrid.com/cotswoldsvip). As well as the latest and emerging project information, this features a 360° virtual tour of the project area and features video contributions from members of the project team alongside Andy Parsons, the CEO of Cotswolds National Landscape.



## Looking ahead

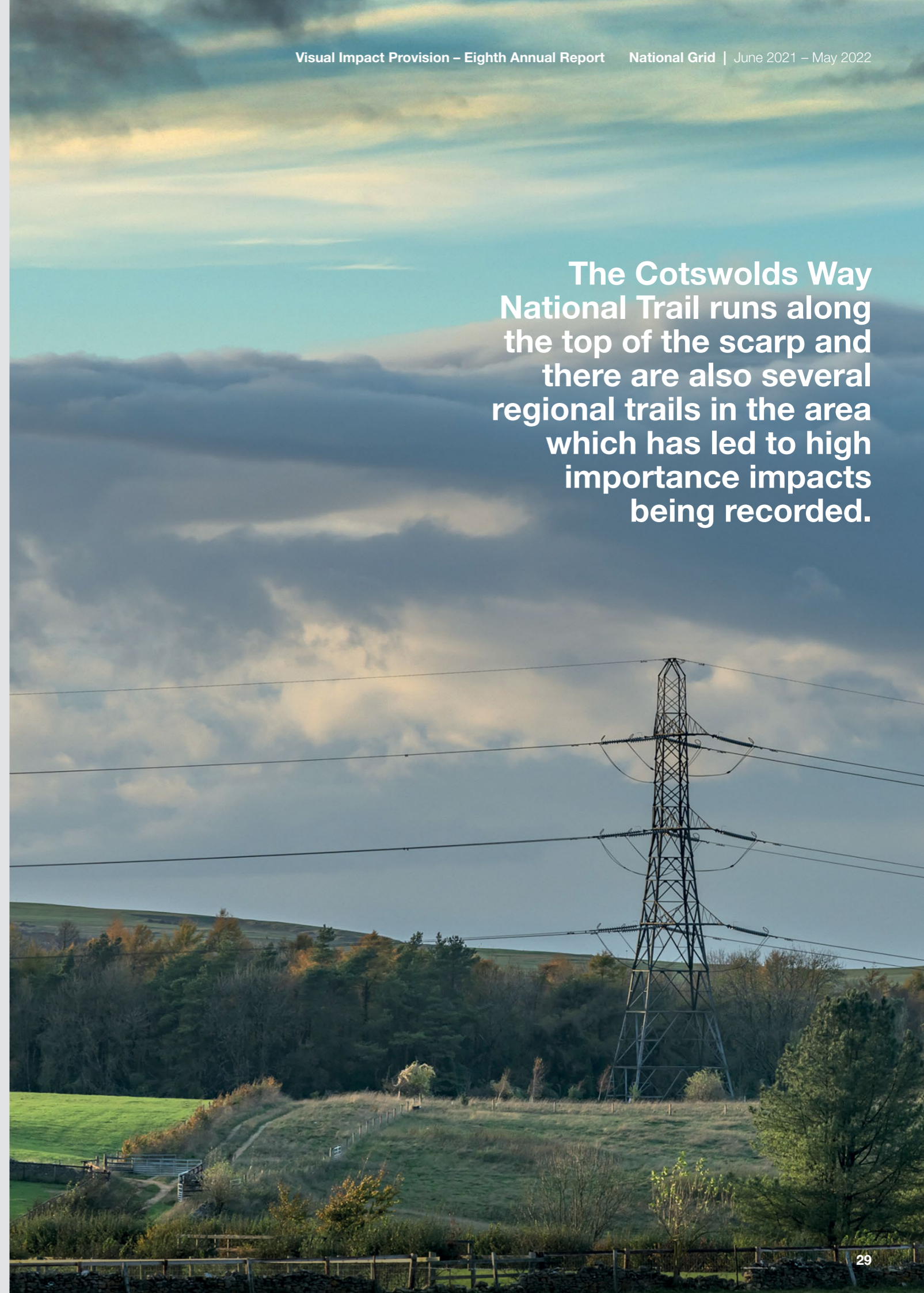
National Grid is continuing with technical and engineering studies to determine the project's feasibility. Detailed engineering surveys and environmental work will take place alongside ongoing stakeholder engagement and negotiations with landowners for the rights required to construct and operate the cables.

Following the Stakeholder Reference Group, the team has planned an extensive early engagement programme which includes briefings with a wide range of groups including parish and town councils and special interest groups as well as the MPs and local politicians in the area. Over the summer, there is a series of information events planned where members of the wider community will also be

able to find more about the project. These events include a proposed pop-up stand on Cleeve Hill Common and a stall at the Winchcombe Country Show over the August Bank Holiday weekend.

If the project can progress, public consultation on the proposals would take place ahead of the submission of a planning application in 2024. Construction would take approximately two years and would be targeted to commence in 2025/6. Project information, updates and documents will be shared through our VIP project website [www.nationalgrid.com/cotswoldsvip](http://www.nationalgrid.com/cotswoldsvip)

**The Cotswolds Way National Trail runs along the top of the scarp and there are also several regional trails in the area which has led to high importance impacts being recorded.**







Tree planting at Whitehill Farm, Blackdown Hills, March 2022

## 4. Landscape Enhancement Initiative

**The Landscape Enhancement Initiative (LEI) has always been an important part of the VIP project and its impact and significance continues to increase. The initiative aims to use some of the Ofgem provision for smaller visual improvement projects.**

Its overall objective is to reduce the landscape and visual impact of National Grid's existing electricity transmission infrastructure and enhance the quality of the affected designated landscapes. Launched in May 2016, the LEI offers grants to each of the 30 National Park Authorities and AONB Partnerships in England and Wales covered by the initiative for local visual improvement projects.

Examples of projects that may be funded include:

- Localised tree planting
- Management of hedgerows
- Changes to trails, footpaths, cycleways and riding routes
- Rebuilding of dry-stone walls

- Enhancing the special qualities of the landscape which may also benefit biodiversity.

Since its launch, over £4m has been allocated to projects across England and Wales. A new streamlined approvals process came into force with R110-T2 on 1 April 2021.

Of the 10 expressions of interest received and invited for full application in Window 9, seven proceeded to full applications and were approved by the panel.

Window 10 saw three applications which were all approved at the panel in May 2022.

A key challenge for AONB Partnerships and National Parks in applying for LEI funding is that the scheme is unable to support initial costs for developing projects.

Limited resources and pressures on prioritisation have meant that some AONB Partnerships in particular have struggled to take advantage of LEI funds.

The Stakeholder Advisory Group has been exploring a number of ways in which this problem could be overcome by obtaining support from third party organisations. This continues to be a focus for the years to come and will hopefully unlock more LEI funding for the future.

### How the Landscape Enhancement Initiative works

The LEI is driven by our stakeholders. Projects are suggested by an AONB Partnership or National Park Authority before being considered by the LEI Approvals Panel. Independently chaired, the panel includes experts from Cadw, Historic England, Natural England and Natural Resources Wales.

The panel makes recommendations on which projects to fund. The initiative is supported by National Grid's project team and external specialists, including landscape advisors, Gillespies and LUC, to offer guidance to eligible applicants on potential LEI projects.



Bridge repairs near Goran & Uphill Farms, Blackdown Hills, March 2022



Bush and scrub clearance, New Forest, February 2022

# Landscape Enhancement Initiative

## Progress to date

### Window 1 projects

#### Ofgem funding received June 2017:

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

### Window 2 projects

#### Ofgem funding received February 2018:

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

### Window 3 projects

#### Ofgem funding received January 2019:

- **Kent Downs AONB:** High Downs
- **Kent Downs AONB:** North Downs Living Grid project
- **Cannock Chase AONB:** Gentleshaw Common into the Future
- **North York Moors National Park:** Arncliffe Wood and Scarth Wood Moor Restoration

### Window 4 projects

#### Ofgem funding received June 2019:

- **Blackdown Hills AONB:** Enhancing the Hills
- **Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB:** Lost Landscapes Continued
- **New Forest National Park Authority:** Landford Bog Nature Reserve
- **High Weald AONB:** Wonderful Woodlands
- **High Weald AONB:** Beautiful Boundaries 2

### Window 5 projects

#### Ofgem funding received January 2020:

- **Tamar Valley AONB:** South Hooe Restoring & Enhancing Watery Landscapes
- **North York Moors National Park:** Kewick Landscape Restoration

### Window 6 projects

#### Ofgem funding received January 2021:

- **New Forest National Park:** Restoration and Enhancement of Franchises Lodge
- **Blackdown Hills AONB:** Hillforts of the Hills
- **Cotswolds AONB:** Restoring Cheltenham's Escarpment Grasslands
- **Cotswolds AONB:** West of Winchcombe Landscape Enhancements - Nottingham Hill
- **Forest of Bowland AONB:** Quernmore & Conder Valley Landscape Enhancement Initiative
- **Lake District National Park:** Healing Valley Mires
- **Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB:** Views of Minsmere
- **Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB:** Scenic sights and watery wilderness

### Window 7 projects

#### Ofgem funding received May 2021:

- **Lake District National Park:** Highlighting History at Lowther
- **Cotswold AONB:** Hampnett to Chedworth Boundary Restorations
- **Northumberland National Park:** Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail Enhancement
- **Snowdonia National Park:** Carneddau Connectivity

### Window 8 projects

#### Eight applications received and approved by the approvals panel. Ofgem approval is expected later in 2022

- **Lake District National Park:** Breast High Road Bretherdale Restoration
- **Lake District National Park:** Breast High Road Borrowdale Restoration
- **Clywdian Range & Dee Valley AONB:** Hidden From View
- **South Downs National Park:** Revealing Grandfathers Bottom Chalk Grassland Restoration
- **South Downs National Park:** Historic Boundaries of Woolbeding Estate
- **Kent Downs AONB:** Empowering the Natural Network
- **New Forest National Park:** New Forest access and landscape enhancements
- **Dorset AONB:** Linking Chalk, River & Vale

### Window 9 projects - opened in March 2021

#### Seven applications received and approved by the approvals panel. National Grid will approve projects under the new process later in 2022.

- **Clywdian Range & Dee Valley AONB:** Caring for Caer Drewyn
- **Eryri National Park:** Carneddau Access and Landscape Improvements
- **Eryri National Park:** Carneddau Access and Landscape Improvements
- **Eryri National Park:** Mind the Gap
- **Cotswolds National Landscape:** Lodge Park Bridgeman Restoration Project
- **Dedham Vale AONB:** Conserving Constable Country
- **Brecon Beacons National Park Authority:** Clydach Ironworks Conservation and Improvement Works
- **Kent Downs AONB:** Empowering the Natural Network

**For further information:**

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

Visit our website at: **[www.nationalgridet.com/planning-together/visual-impact-provision](http://www.nationalgridet.com/planning-together/visual-impact-provision)**

Send an email to: **[visualimpact@nationalgrid.com](mailto:visualimpact@nationalgrid.com)**

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