

VISUAL IMPACT  
PROVISION

nationalgrid

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Second Annual Report  
July 2016

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## Stakeholder Advisory Group members:



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# Foreword by Chris Baines

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**This is the second annual report of National Grid's Visual Impact Provision project. The detailed account in the pages that follow shows how much very thorough work has been completed over the past twelve months, but there is still much to do.**

The main task for the project's Stakeholder Advisory Group has been to consider the twelve locations in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks that had been identified as being the highest priority. All are undoubtedly affected by their pylons and power lines, and all of them are clearly deserving of the landscape improvement that the project can offer. With technical support from landscape consultants and National Grid's specialist engineers, the Stakeholder Advisory Group applied its collective landscape expertise and its professional judgement, and I was delighted when we arrived at a unanimous decision to prioritise four of the shortlisted sites. Although geographical spread was never any part of our brief, the coincidence of selecting sites in AONBs and National Parks, with one in Wales, one in the north of England and two in the south was a bonus.

Each of our shortlisted sites is in an extremely beautiful and very vulnerable landscape and removing the pylons and placing the lines underground is bound to be technically challenging. Each of the sites is very different. There are issues of underlying geology, hidden archaeology, sensitive ecology and public accessibility. There will be unavoidable disruption for farmers and landowners affected, but we are very grateful for the cooperation they have shown.

One of the most impressive aspects of the Visual Impact Provision process continues to be the extensive consultation at local level.

In each of the four landscapes there has been tremendous support from specialists – ecologists, archaeologists, historians and others – and every effort is being made to keep neighbouring communities informed of progress through drop-in exhibitions and a great deal of face-to-face discussion. Stakeholder Advisory Group members have played an active part in this process and I think we have all been impressed by the generally positive response that the Visual Impact Provision proposals are enjoying.

Whilst the technical assessment continues for each of the major undergrounding projects, I am pleased to report that the Landscape Enhancement Initiative was formally launched in May 2016. This offers grants for practical, smaller-scale projects in AONBs and National Parks which are affected by National Grid transmission lines. The enthusiastic response to the initiative has been very encouraging indeed. As a consequence, whilst the removal of entire stretches of transmission lines will take several years to achieve, the first positive outcomes from the project can be expected within the coming year.

Finally I want to thank my colleagues on the Stakeholder Advisory Group for their very active and imaginative support for the Visual Impact Provision project. This is a model of knowledge sharing and creative debate that would be well worth adopting by others, particularly when faced with such major infrastructure projects.



**Chris Baines**

Chairman of the Stakeholder Advisory Group  
Visual Impact Provision project

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# Foreword by Hector Pearson

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**The Visual Impact Provision remains a unique infrastructure project – both in terms of its ambition to reduce the visual impact of existing high voltage electricity overhead transmission lines and because key decisions are being made by stakeholders who know and care about our landscape.**

The project continues to provide a real opportunity to not only mitigate the visual impact of our existing electricity infrastructure in precious landscapes, but to enhance those landscapes, and encourage enjoyment and investment in them.

It's been a year of real progress which has seen National Grid and stakeholders at both a national and local level work collaboratively for the benefit of landscapes in AONBs and National Parks.

The views of stakeholders have continued to shape our plans. The project's Stakeholder Advisory Group under the chairmanship of Chris Baines has made difficult decisions by identifying four priority schemes where existing overhead lines will be replaced by underground cable.

In prioritising these projects, the Group considered that these schemes will deliver the greatest benefit in mitigating the visual impact of our overhead lines in some of England and Wales' most treasured landscapes. It was a task that they didn't take lightly and I would like to thank them all for their hard work and commitment to the project.

Following the Group's recommendations, the project team and its advisors have undertaken technical feasibility work, including environmental studies, archaeological studies and engineering work on the ground for all four schemes.

In each of the areas we have worked extensively with stakeholders to inform the scheme development and assessment work. Local Stakeholder Reference Groups including technical experts with in-depth knowledge of local issues have been established and regular meetings convened to help provide us with input and guidance.

This work has been collaborative, transparent and crucially has helped us to further evaluate the potential landscape, wildlife, cultural, environmental and socio-economic factors that inform the development of preferred scheme options. In parallel, we have engaged with landowners and also held community drop-in events to listen to the views of local people.

The benefits of the Visual Impact Provision will also be felt beyond the four priority schemes. The launch of the Landscape Enhancement Initiative has ensured that all 30 AONBs and National Parks affected by our infrastructure now have the opportunity to develop proposals to deliver small localised landscape enhancement projects.

The future is very exciting. As we progress with development work on the four priority projects and consider the first applications for the Landscape Enhancement Initiative, we all have a major opportunity to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of some of our most precious landscapes.



**Hector Pearson**

Visual Impact Provision Project Manager  
**National Grid**

# 01: What is the Visual Impact Provision?

## **National Grid's Visual Impact Provision project makes use of an allowance of £500m by Ofgem across Great Britain to carry out work which will help to reduce the impact of existing electricity transmission lines in English and Welsh AONBs and National Parks.**

The most important task for us is to use this allowance to achieve the maximum enhancement to the landscape in England and Wales, whilst avoiding unacceptable environmental impacts. To ensure that we get this right and bring the most benefit from the Visual Impact Provision project, National Grid is working closely and collaboratively with stakeholders.

A group, known as the Stakeholder Advisory Group, has been set up by National Grid. It comprises organisations dedicated to conserving the landscape and countryside throughout England

and Wales. The group is helping National Grid to make decisions, and these will be made according to the guiding principles set out in the Visual Impact Provision policy which are explained in Section 2. By adopting this approach we aim to ensure fairness and balance in our decision making to help select the projects which we undertake.

This second annual report provides an overview of the Visual Impact Provision and of key project activities during 2015/16, principally between May 2015 and May 2016. National Grid has a dedicated project team which has been supported in these activities by external specialist advisors, including Professor Carys Swanwick on landscape assessment, technical experts from Gillespies and LUC as well as Camargue as communications advisors. Bruton Knowles have provided support with land access and Aecom as environmental consultants.

High Weald AONB



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# 02: National Grid Visual Impact Provision Project

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## 2.1 How it came about

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

For National Grid, which is the electricity transmission owner in England and Wales, this means considering the visual amenity of our existing infrastructure in AONBs and National Parks. We call this 'Visual Impact Provision'.

## 2.2 Enhancing our treasured landscapes

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**AONBs and National Parks are nationally important landscapes which have statutory protection. At National Grid we are passionate about playing our part in conserving and enhancing the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of these landscapes.**

We seize the opportunity the fund creates to work collaboratively with stakeholders to achieve this. We are of course working in accordance with our statutory duties and licence obligations and national planning policy. In particular, we have duties to maintain our network in an economical and efficient way, to preserve amenity, and to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the AONBs and National Parks.

## 2.3 How the allowance can be used

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**The Visual Impact Provision project applies to existing electricity infrastructure – principally high-voltage overhead electricity lines – in AONBs and National Parks in England and Wales. It can, in special cases, also be applied to lines running adjacent to these protected landscapes where the lines impact on the visual setting.**

**The allowance could be used for:**

- Landscaping enhancements
- Screening substations or overhead lines from public viewpoints
- Re-routeing existing lines
- Replacement of existing overhead lines with underground cables
- Innovative painting techniques to reduce pylons' visual impact
- Initiatives in AONB or National Park management plans which mitigate the impact of our electricity infrastructure
- Other visual impact measures recommended by stakeholders.

The Stakeholder Advisory Group has the difficult task of deciding with National Grid which projects to select and how the funds could be allocated.

**The fund cannot be used for:**

- The construction of new infrastructure
- Other National Grid infrastructure such as gas transmission
- Other landscape, heritage and ecological designations
- Infrastructure owned by other businesses
- Any areas not yet designated AONBs or National Parks.

## Project dimensions

- **571km** of National Grid electricity transmission line in **AONBs & National Parks**
- **30 AONBs** and **National Parks** in England and Wales included in the project
- **53.7km** of line in **12 sections** within eight protected areas = highest impact
- **Four sections** of overhead line prioritised for undergrounding
- Landscape Enhancement Initiative = **up to £24m** for localised **visual improvements**



## 2.4 Guiding Principles

### Our Guiding Principles are to prioritise potential projects which:

- Result in greatest landscape enhancement benefits
- Result in greatest opportunities to conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage, whilst avoiding unacceptable environmental impacts
- Result in greatest opportunities to encourage public understanding and enjoyment of the protected landscapes, including positive socio-economic impacts

- Are technically feasible in the context of the wider transmission system
- Are economical and efficient.

As these principles may sometimes conflict with one another and each scheme is likely to perform differently against them, we will need to carefully balance the choices we make, with the help of stakeholders, against the Guiding Principles.



## 03: Working with stakeholders

**Stakeholders hold the key to the success of this project. We believe that the views of our stakeholders and consumers are vital in making decisions on how we should use the Visual Impact Provision to maximise enhancement to the landscape from the available funds.**

### 3.1 Stakeholder Advisory Group activities

The Stakeholder Advisory Group for the Visual Impact Provision project was launched in April 2014. Chaired by leading environmentalist Chris Baines, the group advises National Grid on the evaluation and ultimate selection of the projects proposed for delivery. The Stakeholder Advisory Group comprises representatives from organisations dedicated to enhancing the landscape and countryside throughout England and Wales as well as Ofgem and National Grid itself (see page 1). They advise the project not only on the key decisions but also on the most effective ways to engage with local stakeholders outside the main group.

The role of the Stakeholder Advisory Group is to:

- Help to identify initial priorities for the use of the Visual Impact Provision, based on our guiding principles
- Consider the technical inputs provided by National Grid

- Consider the input of wider stakeholders who are not directly represented on the Stakeholder Advisory Group (e.g. specific comments on where use of Visual Impact Provision funds might be beneficial, or where there is evidence of public support)
- Identify the specific infrastructure and locations which would most benefit
- Define the projects which should be taken to development phase by National Grid
- Re-consider or re-assess priorities and use of the fund, as development of projects progresses.

During 2015/16 the Stakeholder Advisory Group met twice and the minutes of these meetings are available on our project website [www.nationalgrid.com/VIP](http://www.nationalgrid.com/VIP). The table overleaf provides an overview of the key activities and issues considered by the group during the past year.

Tamar Valley AONB





Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting	Main items of discussion
6th Meeting (8-9 September 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Consideration and review of information regarding potential mitigation options for each of the twelve areas that had been shortlisted in October 2014, including technical work and local stakeholder feedback</li> <li>■ Discussion of the relative merits of the mitigation options in terms of the guiding principles set out in the Visual Impact Provision policy</li> <li>■ Agreed to prioritise four of the twelve shortlisted areas to be taken forward to the development stage (see Section 4 below)</li> <li>■ Update on progress with establishing the Landscape Enhancement Initiative (see Section 5 below).</li> </ul>
7th Meeting (19 April 2016)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Updates on progress with the four schemes that have been prioritised to be taken forward, including overview of technical work and engagement with local stakeholder reference groups, landowners and other local stakeholders in the areas</li> <li>■ Update on the Landscape Enhancement Initiative, including feedback following review by Ofgem and resulting changes, as well as preparation of the launch of the initiative</li> <li>■ Update on discussions with the Scottish Transmission Owners about their plans for making use of the Ofgem allowance and about cooperation and information exchange between all three transmission companies.</li> </ul>



Peak District National Park

#### Attendance at the Stakeholder Advisory Group meetings

Organisation	Meeting attendance 2015/16
<b>Chairman</b>	2 out of 2
<b>Cadw</b>	2 out of 2
<b>Campaign for National Parks</b>	2 out of 2
<b>CPRE</b>	2 out of 2
<b>CPRW</b>	1 out of 2
<b>Historic England</b>	2 out of 2
<b>Landscape Institute</b>	2 out of 2
<b>National Association for AONBs</b>	2 out of 2
<b>National Grid</b>	2 out of 2
<b>National Parks England</b>	2 out of 2
<b>National Parks Wales</b>	2 out of 2
<b>National Trust</b>	2 out of 2
<b>Natural England</b>	2 out of 2
<b>Natural Resources Wales</b>	1 out of 2
<b>Ofgem</b>	2 out of 2
<b>The Ramblers</b>	0 out of 2
<b>Visit England</b>	1 out of 2
<b>Visit Wales</b>	1 out of 2

### 3.2 Wider Stakeholder Engagement and Empowerment

In addition to working with the Stakeholder Advisory Group, we have continued to engage with other stakeholders with an interest in AONBs and National Parks to keep them informed and to establish their priorities for using Visual Impact Provision funding. The Stakeholder Advisory Group has been instrumental in helping to shape our approach to this wider stakeholder engagement.

We continued to work with stakeholder reference groups in each of the shortlisted AONBs and National Parks which were attended by representatives of the relevant AONB Partnership/ National Park Authority and other local stakeholders. These groups have provided vital information and advice which has informed the development of options for reducing the impact of our transmission lines in these areas. Further engagement with the stakeholder reference groups as well as public ‘drop in’ events for members of the public are planned in the four prioritised areas for summer 2016.

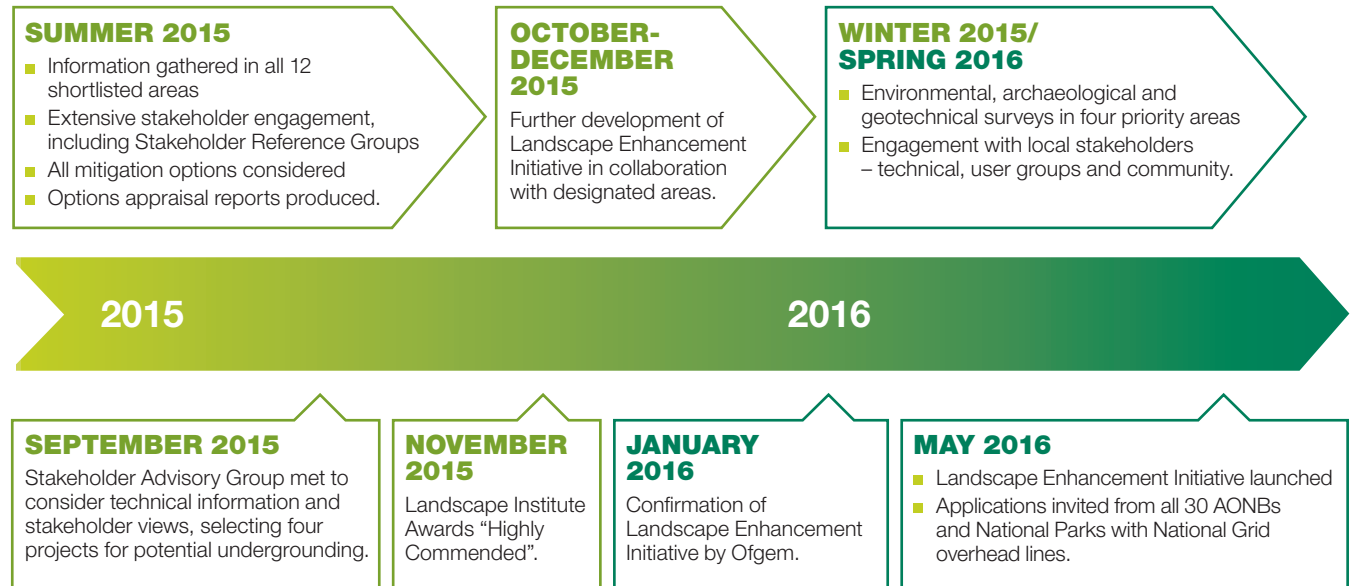
In addition, we continued to engage with representatives of all of the 30 areas covered by the Visual Impact Provision project. This included updates regarding our new Landscape Enhancement Initiative (see Section 5 below). We also attended and gave presentations at relevant events, including attendance at the annual conferences of the National Association for AONBs and of the National Parks Societies for the second year running.

Our team has also liaised with the two companies that own the Scottish transmission network, who are developing their own schemes to use the Ofgem allowance, in order to ensure that the benefits of the allowance are maximised across England, Scotland and Wales.

We are using various communication channels to share project information, updates and documentation, including a dedicated website [www.nationalgrid.com/VIP](http://www.nationalgrid.com/VIP). We kept stakeholders up-to-date through media releases, letters to local stakeholders and MPs as well as publications such as summary documents and infographics.



**Timeline of key activities during 2015/16**



North Wessex Downs AONB



## 04: Stakeholder-led prioritisation of mitigation schemes

**Our objective for the Visual Impact Provision project is to maximise landscape enhancements in English and Welsh AONBs and National Parks, whilst avoiding unacceptable environmental impacts. We do this through a transparent process which is led by the Stakeholder Advisory Group, drawing on the input from technical experts and local stakeholders.**

### 4.1 A transparent process for prioritising schemes

In October 2014 the Stakeholder Advisory Group decided that a shortlist of twelve sections of overhead lines in eight designated areas should be taken forward for more detailed technical assessment during 2015/16<sup>1</sup>. This followed an assessment of all 30 AONBs and National Parks which contain or are impacted by our overhead lines.

Following the agreement of the shortlist by the Stakeholder Advisory Group in October 2014, our team worked with stakeholders and technical experts to develop and assess options for the twelve shortlisted sections of transmission lines. The aim of this work was to enable the Stakeholder Advisory Group to propose which of the shortlisted areas should be prioritised to be taken forward to detailed development.

For each of the shortlisted sections, with assistance from specialist environmental and landscape consultants, we carried out work to:

- Develop alternative options for each of the areas to reduce the impact of our existing transmission lines
- Investigate the feasibility of the alternative options
- Determine preferred option(s) and test these with local stakeholders
- Work in liaison with local officers/experts to further evaluate the potential landscape, wildlife, cultural, environmental and socio-economic impacts of the preferred options both during and after construction.

In carrying out this development and assessment work we engaged with stakeholders in the designated areas and the public. This involved technical workshops with stakeholders including the bodies responsible for managing the designated areas, local authorities, statutory bodies such as Natural England and Natural Resources Wales, parish councils and other local bodies or groups. We also held ‘drop-in’ events which gave local people opportunities to find out about, discuss, and comment on, the proposals. Most members of the Stakeholder Advisory Group also visited one or more of the shortlisted schemes in person.

This work on developing and assessing mitigation options was presented in detailed Options Appraisal Study reports which are available on our project website.

#### “Highly Commended”

In 2014 we undertook a comprehensive assessment to help identify those sections of our existing overhead lines in AONBs and National Parks that have the greatest impact and offer the greatest opportunities for mitigation and enhancement. The work was carried out by landscape planning consultants Gillespies and LUC under the guidance of Landscape Adviser Professor Carys Swanwick. The methodology developed and used for the assessment was “Highly Commended” at The Landscape Institute Awards 2015.



<sup>1</sup> The shortlisted areas were Brecon Beacons National Park, Dorset AONB, High Weald AONB, New Forest National Park, North Wessex Downs AONB, Peak District National Park, Snowdonia National Park and Tamar Valley AONB.

## 4.2 Schemes prioritised by the Stakeholder Advisory Group

### The Options Appraisal Studies identified potentially feasible methods of mitigating the landscape and visual impacts of the existing transmission lines in the shortlisted designated areas.

The environmental and landscape consultants who prepared the Options Appraisal Studies undertook an appraisal of the mitigation options and their potential impacts and made a recommendation on the most favourable options for presentation to the Stakeholder Advisory Group. Our team also discussed the options appraisal and the proposed preferred options with stakeholders in each of the designated areas as part of this process. The preferred options were endorsed by the technical stakeholder workshops in all but one of the designated areas<sup>2</sup>.

The Stakeholder Advisory Group considered the output from the options development and assessment work at its meeting in September 2015. The Group assessed the proposed mitigation options against the Guiding Principles in the Visual Impact Provision Policy (see Section 2 above). Following detailed consideration and discussion of the mitigation options,

the Stakeholder Advisory Group agreed unanimously that four schemes should be prioritised to be taken forward for potential undergrounding (see below).

The Stakeholder Advisory Group considered that these schemes will deliver the greatest benefit in mitigating the visual impact of our overhead lines in some of the country's most beautiful landscapes, whilst balancing technical deliverability and cost. In addition, the Stakeholder Advisory Group said that the other schemes from the shortlist of twelve sections should all remain on the shortlist in case any of the prioritised schemes cannot be implemented following further detailed development work.

The following pages introduce the four prioritised schemes. During 2015/16 we have undertaken technical feasibility work, including environmental studies, archaeological studies and engineering work 'on the ground' for each of the four schemes. We have also engaged with stakeholders in each of the areas to inform the scheme development and assessment work. These activities will continue during 2016/17.

**PRIORITISED SCHEMES**

Designated Area	Length of Undergrounding	Number of Pylons to be Removed
<b>DORSET AONB</b> Dorset Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	ca. 7km	approx. 18 pylons
<b>NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK</b>	ca. 3km	approx. 8 pylons
<b>PEAK DISTRICT NATIONAL PARK (EAST)</b>	ca. 1.8km	approx. 7 pylons
<b>SNOWDONIA NATIONAL PARK</b>	ca. 2.5 to 3 km	approx. 6 to 10 pylons

<sup>2</sup> In the Peak District National Park (West) (4ZO.3&4) section, the stakeholders attending the technical workshop generally supported the suggested preferred option, but they would have preferred a different location for one of the cable sealing end compounds.

# Dorset AONB



**The Dorset AONB was designated in 1959. It covers nearly all of the Dorset coast and significant areas inland. The geology is strongly expressed along the Jurassic Coast, a World Heritage Site, and it gives rise to a varied landscape of downland, ridges and vales.**

Two of National Grid's electricity transmission lines run through this AONB. At the Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting in September 2015,

the section of line near Winterbourne Abbas was prioritised as one of the four sections of line to be taken forward as a potential undergrounding project. The section is approximately 7km in length and runs from a point north-west of Winterbourne Abbas, cutting across the A35 and south of Winterbourne Abbas in a south-easterly direction. It then turns slightly south, across the upper slopes of Corton Down on the South Dorset Escarpment, to lower ground south of Friar Waddon Hill.





### Progress to date

National Grid established a stakeholder reference group which includes representatives from Dorset County Council, West Dorset District Council, Natural England, the South Dorset Ridgeway Partnership and Bournemouth University. We have also engaged with local landowners, ward councillors, local authority cabinet members and local MPs and held a public drop-in event.

The preferred mitigation option which is being developed involves the replacement of the existing section of overhead line with underground cabling. Subject to further development work and stakeholder consultation, the project is likely to include:

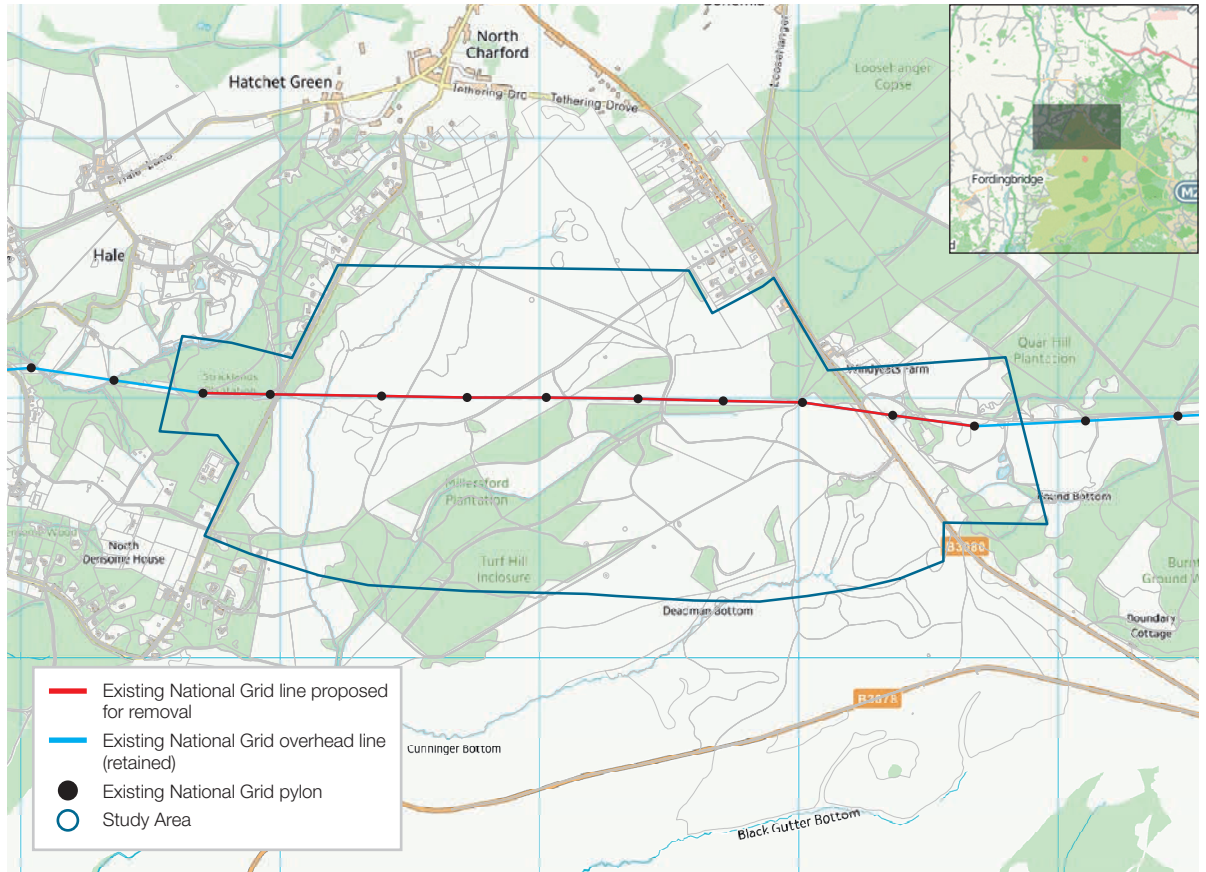
- Removal of the existing overhead line over a length of approximately 7km, including

the removal of approximately 18 pylons (depending on the location of cable sealing end compounds)

- Construction of two new sealing end compounds and associated replacement terminal pylons which are required to connect the new underground cables to the remaining existing overhead line
- Laying of new underground cabling of approximately 7km (depending on the location of sealing end compounds and route of cable alignment).

The current indicative programme is that, subject to all necessary approvals and consents, on site works will commence in spring/summer 2018 and take approximately two and a half to three years to complete.

# New Forest National Park



**Located within the county of Hampshire, on the south-central coast of England, this former royal hunting ground and immediate surrounding area was given National Park status in March 2005.**

The New Forest is crossed by two of National Grid's transmission lines. At the Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting in September 2015, the section of line near the village of Hale was prioritised as one of the four sections of line to

be taken forward as a potential undergrounding project. The section is approximately 3km in length and runs from Stricklands Plantation on the upper slopes of Avon Valley near Woodgreen, in the north-west corner of the National Park, across Hale Purlieu Common, the B3080 at Golden Cross, and finishes within Pound Bottom quarry east of the B3080.



## Progress to date

National Grid established a stakeholder reference group which includes representatives from the National Park Authority, Hampshire County Council, the appointed New Forest Verderers, the Forestry Commission, National Trust and Natural England. We have also engaged with local landowners, ward councillors, local authority cabinet members and local MPs and held a public drop-in event.

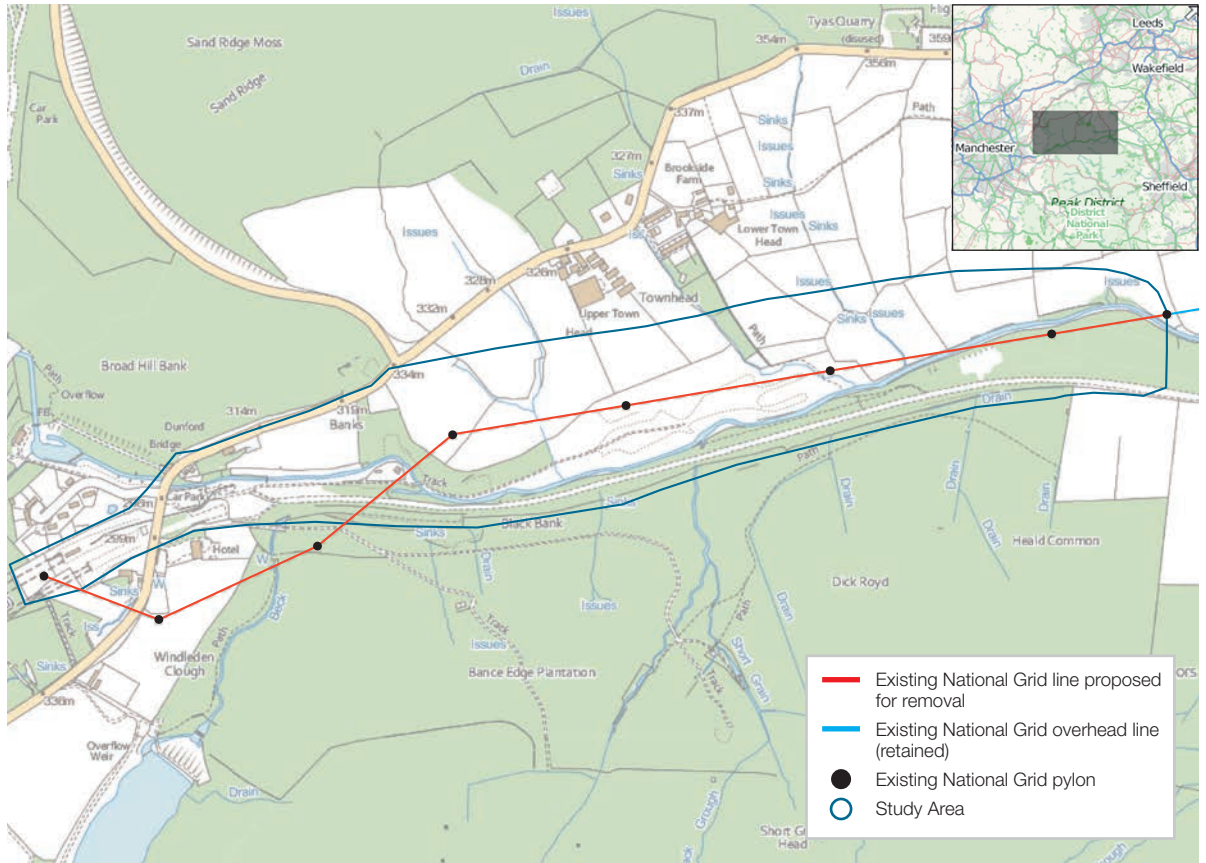
The preferred mitigation option which is being developed involves the replacement of the existing section of overhead line with underground cabling. Subject to further development work and stakeholder consultation, the project is likely to include:

- Removal of the existing overhead line over a length of approximately 3km, including the removal of approximately eight pylons (depending on the location of cable sealing end compounds)
- Construction of two new sealing end compounds and associated replacement terminal pylons which are required to connect the new underground cables to the remaining existing overhead line
- Laying of new underground cabling of approximately 3km (depending on the location of sealing end compounds and route of cable alignment).

The current indicative programme is that, subject to all necessary approvals and consents, on site works will commence in spring/summer 2018 and take approximately two and a half to three years to complete.



# Peak District National Park (East)



**The Peak District was the first National Park in England and Wales, being designated in 1951. One of National Grid’s overhead lines runs through the northern part of the Park. The line includes an existing high voltage cable section which runs through the Woodhead Tunnel between Dunford Bridge and Woodhead connecting the eastern and western sections of the overhead line.**

in length and runs eastwards from an existing cable sealing end compound near to the eastern entrance of the Woodhead Tunnel at Dunford Bridge. It crosses the National Park Boundary, and then continues north over the Upper Don River and the Trans-Pennine Trail, south of the hamlet of Townhead towards Castle Hill.

At the Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting in September 2015, the section of line to the east of Woodhead Tunnel near Dunford Bridge was prioritised as one of the four sections of line to be taken forward as a potential undergrounding project. The section is approximately 1.8km



## Progress to date

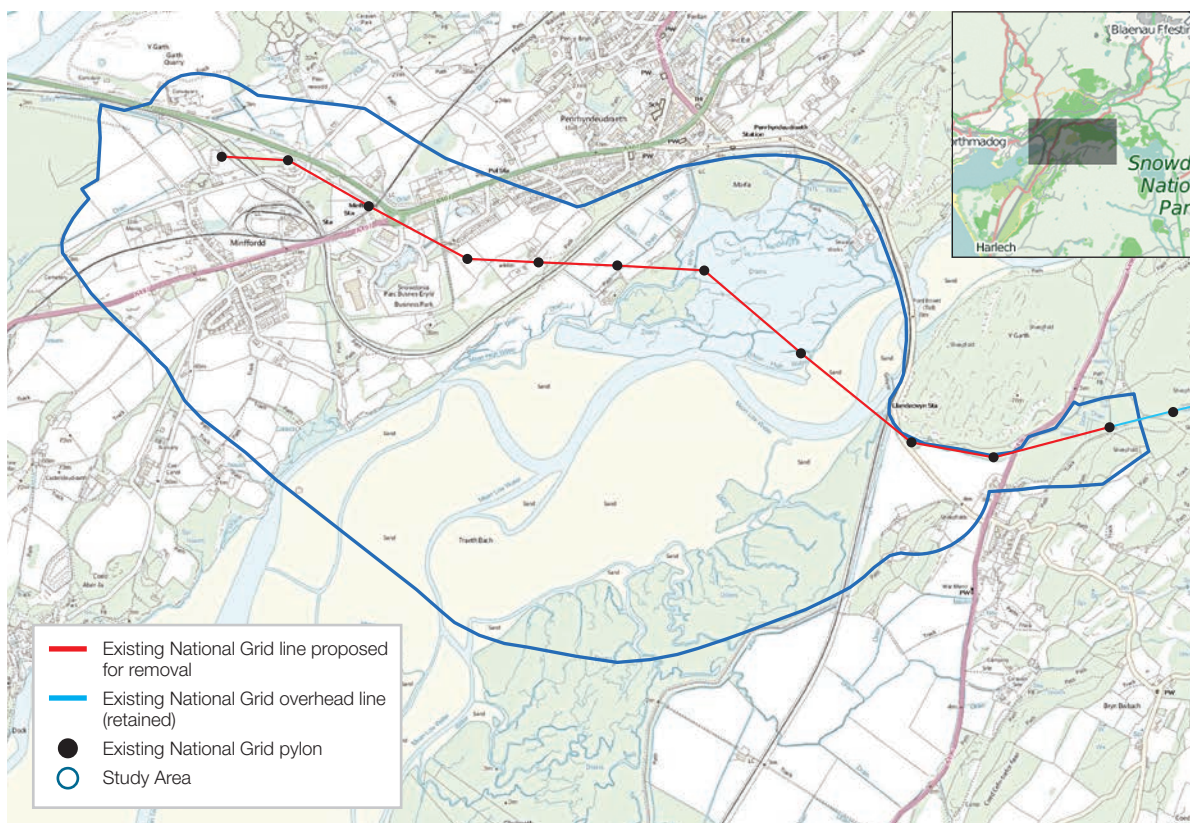
National Grid established a stakeholder reference group which includes representatives from the National Park Authority, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Dunford Parish Council, Natural England and the Trans Pennine Trail. We have also engaged with local landowners, ward councillors, local authority cabinet members and local MPs and held a public drop-in event.

The preferred mitigation option which is being developed involves the replacement of the existing section of overhead line with underground cabling and moving the sealing end compound to the east of Woodhead Tunnel further down the River Don Valley. Subject to further development work and stakeholder consultation, the project is likely to include:

- Removal of the existing overhead line over a length of approximately 1.8km, including the removal of approximately seven pylons (depending on the exact location of the new cable sealing end compound)
- Removal of the existing cable sealing end compound at Dunford Bridge, east of the Woodhead Tunnel
- Construction of a new sealing end compound and associated replacement terminal pylon which is required to connect the new underground cables to the remaining existing overhead line
- Laying of new underground cabling of approximately 1.6km (depending on the location of the new sealing end compound and route of cable alignment)
- A cable jointing building outside the entrance to the Woodhead tunnel within National Grid's existing operational compound
- Jointing of the new underground cable to the existing cable within the Woodhead Tunnel.

The current indicative programme is that, subject to all necessary approvals and consents, on site works will commence in late 2017/early 2018 and take approximately two years to complete.

# Snowdonia National Park



**Snowdonia National Park was designated in 1951 and is the largest National Park in Wales. Snowdonia comprises of a varied landscape which includes mountain scenery, glacial valleys, extensive moorlands, and two coastal estuaries.**

3km in length and runs from the existing Garth cable sealing end compound near Minffordd (to the east of Porthmadog) and across the Dwyryd Estuary where it enters the western edge of the Snowdonia National Park. It then continues past the small settlement of Cilfor.

The National Park is crossed by four of National Grid's overhead lines. At the Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting in September 2015, the section of line near Porthmadog was prioritised as one of the four sections of line to be taken forward as a potential undergrounding project. There is an existing section of underground cables across the Glaslyn estuary to the west of the prioritised section. The prioritised section is approximately





## Progress to date

National Grid established a stakeholder reference group which includes representatives from the National Park Authority, Cadw and Natural Resources Wales. We have also engaged with local landowners, local councillors as well as local MPs and Assembly Members and held a public drop-in event.

The preferred mitigation option which is being developed involves the replacement of the existing section of overhead line with underground cabling. Our team is carrying out engineering and environmental studies to investigate various options for crossing the Dwyryd Estuary which may involve a cable tunnel and/or direct cable burial. Subject to further development work and stakeholder consultation, the project is likely to include the removal of between 2.5 to 3km of overhead line, including the removal of between six to ten pylons.

We are also considering the potential impact on this section of line arising from proposed new generation in the area including a new nuclear power station that is proposed to be built on Anglesey by 2024. The new power station will require the construction of a new transmission line across Anglesey, and uprating of the circuits between Pentir and Trawsfynydd. These circuits include the section of line being considered for undergrounding as part of the Visual Impact Provision project. Studies are ongoing to identify what work will be required to accommodate the proposed new generation.

At present, we are proposing to continue with the pre-construction, environmental survey and planning works for the undergrounding project, but to align construction activities with the nuclear connection project to ensure an efficient and economic solution and to minimise impacts on the local community and the environment.

# 05: Landscape Enhancement Initiative

**The Landscape Enhancement Initiative is a grant scheme that forms an important part of National Grid’s Visual Impact Provision project. The initiative has been championed by our Stakeholder Advisory Group and aims to use part of the Ofgem allowance for smaller localised improvement projects. The initiative is available to all of the 30 AONBs and National Parks which contain or are impacted by National Grid overhead electricity lines and were included in the landscape and visual impact assessment in 2014.**

## 5.1 About the Landscape Enhancement Initiative

We have developed the Landscape Enhancement Initiative in conjunction with stakeholders from the designated areas. It was launched in May 2016 and aims to provide up to £24 million over six years (2015-2021) for localised visual improvement projects.

The overall objective of the scheme is to reduce the landscape and visual impact of National Grid’s existing electricity infrastructure and enhance the quality of the affected designated landscapes. 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.

## 5.2 How the Initiative works

The Landscape Enhancement Initiative is driven by our stakeholders. Each of the 30 AONB Partnerships or National Park Authorities covered by the project can submit bids for funding of schemes. There are two application windows per year. The first window was in May 2016 and the second window will open in September 2016.

All applications will be assessed by a grants officer and a landscape advisor before being submitted to an approvals panel. The approvals panel will be independently chaired and includes representatives from Cadw, Historic England, Natural Resources Wales and Natural England. The panel will review submissions and agree which projects it believes should receive funding. The final decision as to which schemes are funded will be taken by Ofgem based on the recommendations of the approvals panel.

Further information about the Landscape Enhancement Initiative and the application process can be found on our dedicated website: [lei.nationalgrid.com](http://lei.nationalgrid.com)

Chilterns AONB



## 06: Next steps and timeline

During summer/autumn 2016 we will continue the development work for the four prioritised schemes. We will progress environmental and engineering surveys, engage with landowners regarding land rights and access requirements, liaise with local planning authorities and other relevant bodies regarding consent requirements and consult with local stakeholders and communities.

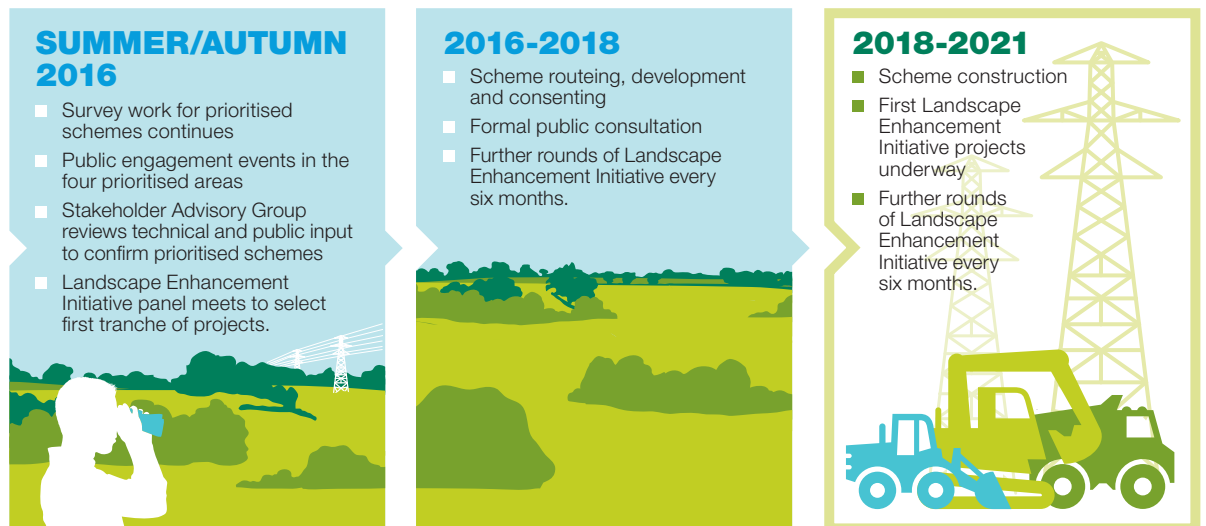
Our Stakeholder Advisory Group will review this work with a view to confirming progression of the undergrounding schemes to implementation in autumn 2016. We will then also seek confirmation of funding for each scheme from Ofgem. Our current aim is to submit planning applications for the confirmed schemes in mid-2017, with construction taking place from 2018 to 2021. While all four schemes are currently running in parallel, different conditions in each locality may require some variation in relation to the programmes for each project.

Regarding the Landscape Enhancement Initiative, the approvals panel will review the first round of project applications and make its recommendations in autumn 2016. Based on its recommendations, National Grid will then seek confirmation of the successful projects from Ofgem.

The next application window for projects under the Landscape Enhancement Initiative will open in September 2016. All of the 30 AONBs and National Parks covered by this project will again be eligible to submit projects.

We will continue to provide updates about the progress of the Visual Impact Provision project, including through our website: [www.nationalgrid.com/VIP](http://www.nationalgrid.com/VIP)

### Visual Impact Provision project timeline







**For further information:**

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

**Visit our website at: [www.nationalgrid.com/VIP](http://www.nationalgrid.com/VIP)**

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

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

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