

North York Moors National Park Authority

21 September 25015

Undergrounding of Overhead Electricity Wires

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update Members on the new round of funding and agree the bids to be put forward to Northern Powergrid for consideration and development.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Undergrounding for Visual Amenity scheme was originally established in 2005 as part of the Distribution Price Control Review. Under the programme electricity operators are entitled to recover expenditure incurred on replacing overhead lines in National Parks and AONBs with underground cables.
- 2.2 The funds are split between the Yorkshire and North East licence areas and cover a total of nine protected areas. Four National Parks (North York Moors, Yorkshire Dales, Peak District and Northumberland) and five Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (North Pennines, Nidderdale, Howardian Hills, Northumberland Coast and Lincolnshire Wolds). The overall budget is broken down and sub allocated to each area based on the percentage of the electricity company's assets within their area.
- 2.3 Under previous funding rounds a total of 34 schemes have been put forward to Northern Powergrid for undergrounding, of which 25 schemes have been completed. Unfortunately there were timescale issues with the delivery of some of these schemes which resulted in 9 schemes not starting before the end of the funding programme. This has been addressed by Northern Powergrid who is committed to completing these remaining schemes using their own funds. The completion of these will therefore run alongside those considered under the new funding scheme. A further 10 were rejected for various reasons; however some are proposed to be put forward again. A list of the schemes is listed in Appendix 1.

3. RIIO-ED1

- 3.1 The new funding scheme, called RIIO-ED1 is an 8 year scheme running from April 2015 to March 2023. The North York Moors falls within the North East licence area which has a total budget of £8,358,000. A total allowance of approximately £2.9m has been set aside for the North York Moors which amounts to about 34% of the budget (highest of all stakeholders).
- 3.2 Unlike previous schemes which concentrated on low (11k) voltage lines which were predominantly in village locations, RIIO funding may also be used for the undergrounding of high voltage and extra high voltage lines.
- 3.2 Due to past spending issues, this budget is to remain protected for use within its allocated area for the first four years of the RIIO period; after which funding may be reallocated to other areas if insufficient submissions have been made by the stakeholder.

3.3 The criteria for assessing each scheme remain similar from previous rounds, which include the following main points:

- Lines which impact the setting of a Listed Building or Conservation Area;
- Where the line is the only discordant feature in the landscape, or is dominant on the landscape;
- Lines which cross a ridge, skyline or wide open space and stand out prominently;
- Lines which cross a wide open landscape;
- Multiple lines with many road crossings and exceptional pole/wire density.

4. **Consultation**

4.1 In January 2015 Officers wrote to all Parish Councils outlining the new scheme and requested proposals for consideration. Officers also helped to identify potential lines for undergrounding as part of their usual site visits and through their knowledge of the Park. Officers are in the process of contacting those parish councils where proposals have been suggested by Officers to ensure that they have local support.

5. **Considerations**

5.1 Priority is always given to Conservation Areas to enhance their environmental and historical interest and importance. Many of the Park's Conservation Areas have already been considered under the previous funding rounds of which the majority have seen undergrounding works. There are however several villages where undergrounding has not been feasible for a number of reasons including excessive costs, requirement for extensive road excavation or where they have village green or common land status. All other outstanding Conservation Areas have been considered as part of this process.

5.2 Under RIIO, high voltage and extra high voltage lines can now be considered as well as the low voltage lines. With HV and EHV come increased costs and as such it is felt that a balanced approach needs to be adopted - weighing up lower cost LV schemes which are popular with communities vs the more expensive but wider landscape enhancement schemes. As such, a mixture of HV and LV has been proposed (see table below).

5.3 Northern Powergrid has been very keen for stakeholders to consider the practicalities of undergrounding at an early stage in order to try and avoid delays in progressing schemes. It is preferred for all lines to be laid within public land to enable future access for repair and maintenance, therefore the proximity to a footpath or highway has been considered with each scheme, especially with regard to the HV lines.

5.4 The existence of third party apparatus (e.g. telephone networks and street lighting) remains an issue as the third party may decide to retain their overhead apparatus. Whilst the removal of the wires provides a benefit, the retention of the poles will limit the overall enhancement. Northern Powergrid has been in discussions with BT to try and encourage them to underground their overhead lines at the same time. Discussions have been positive and it is hoped that they can be persuaded to work together.

6. **Projects to be put forward to Northern Powergrid**

6.1 This table sets out the schemes which Officers conclude to be worthy of submission to Northern Powergrid for further consideration

Location	Notes	Line	NPg Score
Aislaby, Dunsley, Newholm	HV line either side of the A171 at Aislaby road end. Line stands out along ridge top. Proposal by NPg includes LV lines at Newholm and Dunsley.	HV & LV	420
RHB - Hawsker	Line runs adjacent the coast and poles and wires are seen within the skyline impacting on views out over the sea. Heritage Coast.	HV	391
Danby Castle	Lines surround Grade I Listed Building and Scheduled Ancient Monument	LV & HV	306
Lowna, Gillamoor	Line and transformer box prominent in highway. Multiple lines which are seen against the skyline and the moorland, and location within context of the listed buildings at Lowna.	HV	280
Staithe	Proposed due to investment in this area with Coastal Community Fund where undergrounding will further help improve the appearance of this area.	LV	272
Lealholmside	Prominent line which stands out along ridge line. Common Land issues and BT poles but could be used as a pilot project with BT to underground at the same time.	LV	234
Low Dalby	Line follows the Ellerbeck Trail and is visible within valley clearing especially along the Dalby Forest Drive.	LV	224
West Ayton A170	Located in open farmland. Impact on setting of the Park to the north as well as the parkland setting to which Hutton Buscel is appreciated.	HV	209
West Ayton, Yedmandale and Castle Rise	Multiple line poles within Conservation Area. Impact on views of the Grade I Ayton Castle. Multiple lines, tension lines and metal poles.	LV	209
Glaisdale	HV line considered intrusive but removal of LV line will help reduce plethora of poles in this particular location. Visible in skyline. Will see if HV line could be considered as well.	LV	209
Thornton le Dale	Majority of village done under previous rounds, but line along Westgate and Maltongate visually intrusive within street scene.	LV	160
Over Silton	Scheme put forward in previous funding rounds but rejected as high voltage. Opportunity to deliver under RII0. Strong community support.	HV	144
Silpho	Multiple wire line, transformer box, crosses main village street	LV	126
High Hawsker	Line runs through village and crosses the A171 towards Low Hawsker. Transformer unit. Links in with coastal line proposed.	LV	120
West Ayton, Hall Garth	Now within the Conservation Area following review of the boundary. Multiple lines, tension lines and other paraphernalia.	LV	110
Ainthorpe	Multi wire and aerial bunched cable. Transformer box located on pole outside LB.	LV	110
Danby village	Aerial bunched cable which increases prominence in village and some intrusive metal poles.	LV	110
Pockley	Multiple wire line and aerial bunched cable	LV	108

	passing several listed buildings.		
Ellerby	Proposal put forward by PC. Multiple wire line that crosses the highway. Listed Buildings.	LV	108
Hawsker Lane	Multiple line poles (4 wires) which stand out in skyline. Seen within context of several listed buildings.	LV	100
Commondale	Liner village along hillside. Punctuation of poles is a dominant feature within streetscene and on the surrounding moorland setting. TPO trees close to line - undergrounding may improve future access and maintenance.	LV	100
Low Hawsker	Lines prominent within village and links in with the High Hawsker line above.	LV	99
Mickleby	Local support for undergrounding. Aerial bunched cables which are prominent in streetscene.	LV	77

Suggestions by Parish Councils have also been made for general undergrounding in Egton, Grosmont, Ugthorpe, Iburndale and UGGLEBARNBY areas which will be looked at in due course.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 Due to the timescale issues experienced at the end of the last round of funding, Northern Powergrid are very keen to front load the work to avoid a rush nearer the end of the programme in 2023. Previous programmes adopted a single stage submission approach which provided little flexibility when more schemes were required later down the line. Given the potential reallocation of funds this time, Officers are keen to adopt more of a rolling programme for submissions in order to put the North York Moors in the best possible position should further funds become available.
- 7.2 These schemes above, based on estimated costs, would amount to approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of the allocated budget from Northern Powergrid. Whilst some schemes may not progress for various reasons (such as wayleaves for example) other schemes may cost more once a more detailed scheme of works is drawn up. It is however proposed to continue looking at sites in order to utilise the remaining budget and also consult wider staff and volunteers as part of this process.
- 7.3 The proposals mentioned above form a mixture of high voltage and low voltage lines. The majority of the LV proposals are as a result of consultation with Parish Councils.

8. Other Business

- 8.1 It is important for Members to be aware that this scheme is separate to two other electricity projects within the Park which Members may already be aware of – the undergrounding of the Pickering to Whitby HV line across Fylingdales Moor and also the National Grid's Visual Impact Project.
- 8.2 **Pickering to Whitby line**
Work started in May on the undergrounding with an aim to complete by October 2016, followed by the dismantling of the pylons by early 2017.
- 8.3 **National Grid's Visual Impact Project**
The Visual Impact Provision project will make use of a £500m allocation by Ofgem to help reduced the impact of the National Grid high voltage transmission lines in English and Welsh AONBs and National Parks. A stakeholder advisory group has been

established to identify a list of projects across these areas that could benefit from the fund. This group includes representatives from a number of bodies including National Parks England, CPRE, Historic England and Natural England.

8.4 During 2014 a comprehensive landscape and visual impact assessment was carried out on the impact of the transmission lines in all the AONBs and National Parks. Only a small section measuring 0.8km of high voltage line runs through the western fringe of the North York Moors National Park in close proximity to Over Siltton/Thimbleby. From this assessment the following areas are priorities:-

- Brecon Beacons
- Dorset AONB
- High Weald AONB
- New Forest National Park
- North Wessex AONB
- Peak District National Park
- Snowdonia National Park
- Tamar Valley AONB

8.5 In addition to this scheme the National Grid is in the process developing an initiative which will use part of the £500 million allocation for smaller localised visual improvement projects which can be accessed by all AONBs and National Parks with existing National Grid electricity infrastructure. This landscape enhancement initiative which will be launched later in the year has an ambition to provide up to £24 million over six years (2015 to March 2021). The aim of the initiative will be to reduce the visual impact of the National Grid's existing infrastructure and improve the related visual quality of the landscape; this could include shifting the balance of the impact of the infrastructure by enhancing the local environment. The Park's external fundraising officer is in the process of considering how the Park could best utilise this funding stream and will update Members in due course.

9. **Sustainability Appraisal**

9.1 The removal of overhead lines will have a positive impact on the National Park's environment.

10. **Legal Implications**

10.1 None.

11. **Recommendation**

11.1 That:

The schemes listed in the table at paragraph 6.1 are submitted to Northern Powergrid for further consideration, and

11.2 Members delegate the allocation of the remaining budget (and any future additional funds) to Officers in line with paragraphs 7.1 and 7.2 above.

Completed Schemes:

1. Gillamoor
2. Hutton Buscel
3. Faceby
4. Swainby
5. Egton
6. Robin Hood's Bay
7. Fylingthorpe
8. Ampleforth
9. Kilburn
10. Aislaby
11. Appleton le Moors
12. Thornton le Dale
13. Castleton
14. Fadmoor
15. Easington
16. Lastingham
17. New Row, Kildale
18. Church Houses, Farndale
19. Ruston
20. Kildale village
21. Port Mulgrave
22. Battersby Junction
23. Rosedale East
24. Low Dalby village
25. Swainby

Outstanding Schemes:

26. Coxwold
27. Hinderwell
28. Thorgill
29. Kepwick
30. Boltby
31. Wass
32. Thimbleby
33. Lockton
34. Rosedale Abbey

Rejected Schemes:

35. Charltons (wayleave issues)
36. Egton Bridge (Excessive costs)
37. Levisham (village green conflict)
38. Hutton le Hole (required road excavation)
39. Old Byland (village green conflict)
40. Hawnby (required road excavation)
41. Carlton in Cleveland (HV line, but to be looked at under RIIO)
42. Beck Hole (HV line, but to be looked at under RIIO)
43. Over Silton (HV line, to be put forward under RIIO)
44. Ugthorpe (only BT lines)