

4 CONSULTATION

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 This chapter of the Environmental Assessment Report outlines the stakeholder engagement activity undertaken on the VIP Project to date and describes the consultation strategy adopted during the Environmental Assessment process for the Proposed Project. Consultation and stakeholder input has been integral to the design and development of the Proposed Project, identification of existing environmental constraints and sensitivities and identification and assessment of its likely environmental effects.

4.2 National Grid's commitment to engagement

- 4.2.1 The section of National Grid transmission line that has been prioritised as part of the VIP Project in the Peak District (Woodhead Tunnel, 4ZO.2) runs close to a number of isolated properties and communities, particularly Dunford Bridge, Townhead and Carlecotes. The area also attracts a significant number of visitors and tourists who make use of the Trans Pennine Trail.

- 4.2.2 Under Section 38 and Schedule 9 of the Electricity Act 1989, National Grid has a duty to have regard to the desirability of the preservation of amenity: the natural environment, cultural heritage, landscape and visual quality, as well as the effect of National Grid's works on communities. The five Guiding Principles contained in the VIP Policy¹ document make specific reference to these aspects of the protected landscapes in which all of the VIP Projects are located.

- 4.2.3 In addition, National Grid's Stakeholder, Community and Amenity Policy² sets out a commitment to meet this duty. It makes the following commitments to consultation when undertaking electricity works:

"We will promote genuine and meaningful stakeholder and community engagement. We will meet and, where appropriate, exceed the statutory requirements for consultation or engagement. We will adopt the following principles to help us meet this commitment:

- *we will seek to identify and understand the views and opinions of all the stakeholders and communities who may be affected by our works*
- *we will provide opportunities for engagement from the early stages of the process, where options and alternatives are being considered and there is the greatest scope to influence the design of the works*
- *we will endeavour to enable constructive debate to take place, creating open and two-way communication processes*
- *we will ensure that benefits, constraints and adverse impacts of proposed works are communicated openly for meaningful stakeholder and community comment and discussion*
- *we will be clear about any aspects of the works that cannot be altered*

¹<https://www.nationalgrid.com/sites/default/files/documents/37295-Policy%20document.pdf>

²https://www.nationalgrid.com/sites/default/files/documents/National%20Grid_s%20commitments%20when%20undertaking%20works%20in%20the%20UK.pdf

- *we will utilise appropriate methods and effort in engaging stakeholders and communities, proportionate to the scale and impact of the works*
- *we will provide feedback on how views expressed have been considered and the outcomes of any engagement process or activity”.*

4.3 Initial Engagement on the VIP Project

- 4.3.1 National Grid’s VIP Project has been stakeholder-driven from the outset. Both National Grid and Ofgem have always maintained that for the project to succeed, it is vital that stakeholders play an ongoing central role in helping to identify those areas and existing OHLs which would benefit most.
- 4.3.2 The Stakeholder Advisory Group was established in April 2014 and comprises an independent group of stakeholder organisations, chaired by environmentalist, Chris Baines and comprising senior representation from 15 English and Welsh stakeholder bodies namely: Cadw, the Campaign for National Parks, Campaign to Protect Rural England, The Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales, Historic England, the Landscape Institute, the National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs), National Parks England, National Parks Wales, the National Trust, Natural England, Natural Resources Wales, The Ramblers, Visit England and Visit Wales.
- 4.3.3 The members advise the project on key decisions and on the most effective ways to engage with local stakeholders outside the main Advisory Group. In the same way at a local level, an independent Stakeholder Reference Group has been established in each VIP priority area, including the Peak District. The Peak District Stakeholder Reference Group includes representatives from Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Dunford Parish Council, Natural England, Peak District National Park Authority and Trans Pennine Trail. The input of local people from local enthusiasts to residents and technical experts has been sought throughout the project.
- 4.3.4 Following the first meeting of the VIP Project’s Stakeholder Advisory Group, it was agreed that National Grid’s VIP team would visit main contacts at all 30 of the AONB Partnerships and National Park Authorities which were eligible for VIP.
- 4.3.5 Having identified a shortlist of 12 subsections of OHL in October 2014 in eight designated areas, the Stakeholder Advisory Group asked National Grid to carry out early stage engagement with stakeholders and the public at a local level.
- 4.3.6 In the Peak District, the aim of this early engagement was to gather information and intelligence on the area to inform the options assessment and to gauge local attitudes and opinions to the work. It was also felt that involving local groups and individuals at the outset would not only help to identify any potential problems and challenges, but also to give the local community a sense of ownership.
- 4.3.7 In its guidance for consulting on planning applications, the government notes that early involvement of local communities, local authorities and statutory consultees can bring about significant benefits for all parties. It allows members of the public to influence the way projects are developed and how they are integrated into the community. It helps local people understand better what a particular project means for them, so that concerns resulting from misunderstandings are resolved early. It allows an applicant to obtain important information about the economic, social and environmental impacts of a project from consultees so that potential mitigating measures can be considered and, in some cases, built into the project before an application is submitted.
- 4.3.8 The government guidance also notes:
- “To manage the tension between consulting early, but also having project proposals that are firm enough to enable consultees to comment, applicants are encouraged to consider an iterative, phased consultation consisting of two (or more) stages, especially for large projects*

with long development periods. For example, applicants might wish to consider undertaking informal early consultation at a stage where options are still being considered. This will be helpful in informing proposals and assisting the applicant in establishing a preferred option on which to undertake formal statutory public consultation.”

4.3.9 In line with this guidance, National Grid has already undertaken numerous stages of consultation. This has provided the opportunity for people to share their comments and opinions so that these could inform decisions made by the national Stakeholder Advisory Group, the Peak District Stakeholder Reference Group and National Grid prior to the presentation of a proposal for more formal consultation prior to planning submission.

4.3.10 National Grid’s intention was to work closely with Peak District National Park Authority, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, and key stakeholders to present a collaborative, inclusive partnership approach to the local community. Activity to date is summarised below.

4.4 Early Engagement on the Proposed Project

4.4.1 An initial scoping meeting for the early engagement work was held between National Grid and a broad range of stakeholders (March 2015) and an overall approach to engagement discussed. The early engagement programme involved:

- A technical workshop was held in April 2015 for key representatives from the Peak District National Park Authority, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and other relevant statutory bodies. These included representatives from Dunford Parish Council, Natural England and Trans Pennine Trail. This group formed a Stakeholder Reference Group for the project.
- A press release outlining the early proposals was produced and issued to local print and broadcast media.
- BBC Radio Leeds interviewed National Grid’s press officer, Jeanette Unsworth, who explained the VIP process to listeners and promoted the drop-in event in Crow Edge (see below).
- A public drop-in event was held in April 2015 at the Parish Community Centre in Crow Edge, Holmfirth, a venue close to the community of Dunford Bridge (attended by 19 people).
- Technical feedback from the Peak District Stakeholder Reference Group, along with the opinions of local people and other non-technical groups who attended the drop-in session was incorporated into the Options Appraisal Report³ for the Proposed Project.
- A second meeting of the Stakeholder Reference Group (technical stakeholders) took place in August 2015.
- The National Grid VIP team also took a stand and gave presentations at the 2014 and 2015 Landscape for Life Conferences organised by the National Association of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In 2014, Chris Baines gave a keynote speech and in 2015, Hector Pearson addressed a plenary session on the VIP project which was followed by a workshop on the Landscape Enhancement Initiative element of VIP.

³<http://peakdistricteast.nationalgrid.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/150821-Peak-District-East-DOR-for-SAG.pdf>

- 4.4.2 Following the incorporation of further stakeholder feedback, the Options Appraisal Report for Peak District (East) was presented to the Stakeholder Advisory Group in August 2015 and formed one of the main documents that informed the Group's decisions on which projects should be prioritised and undergo development.
- 4.4.3 Following the September 2015 Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting, the section of OHL near Dunford Bridge (Woodhead Tunnel, 4ZO.2) was selected as one of the four priority projects for further investigation.
- 4.4.4 National Grid directly informed the Peak District National Park Authority and the communications team at Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and spread the word widely through media releases, social media and other communications. Direct communication was also made with members of the Stakeholder Reference Group and those who had registered for updates via the VIP Project website www.nationalgrid.com/VIP.
- 4.4.5 MPs and elected members from Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council and parish councils were also written to and meetings offered on an individual basis. Following the announcement in September 2015, the VIP team, its appointed environmental consultants and consents team have been liaising with the Peak District National Park Authority, Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, members of the SRG and other relevant technical organisations to explore potential options further.

4.5 Further Engagement on the Proposed Project

- 4.5.1 Consultation with statutory consultees and other organisations continued throughout the Environmental Assessment process to obtain environmental data, to discuss and agree the scope of individual environmental assessments and the adopted methods of assessment, and to develop appropriate environmental mitigation measures.
- 4.5.2 The further engagement programme has involved:
- Further Stakeholder Advisory Group meetings undertaken in April 2016, September 2016, December 2016, April 2017, November 2017, February 2018, September 2018, December 2018, March 2019 and July 2019. The meeting in September 2018 was held in the Peak District and included a site visit and presentation by Sarah Fowler, chief executive of the Peak District National Park Authority.
 - Stakeholder Reference Group meetings undertaken in March 2016, June 2016, August 2016, November 2016, December 2017, May 2018, July 2018, August 2018, March 2019 and June 2019. In May 2018, the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust joined the Stakeholder Reference Group.
 - Specialist meetings to engage ecology and environment stakeholders on mitigation and restoration proposals, including technical workshops on the Trans Pennine Trail and Wogden Foot in January 2017, attended by a range of access groups and interested parties.
 - Direct engagement – a comprehensive stakeholder database has been produced for the Proposed Project. As well as the Stakeholder Reference Group, individuals and groups including the Peak District National Park Authority, Yorkshire Wildlife Trust, Friends of the Peak District, CPRE, the Barnsley & Rotherham Chamber of Commerce, the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce, the Barnsley Local Access Forum and Grand Northern Rail have been engaged throughout the project via a mix of one-to-one meetings (where appropriate), presentations to small groups, letters, email updates and phone conversations.

- Chris Baines, the chairman of the national Stakeholder Advisory Group, has visited the project on a number of occasions and held meetings or given presentations to the Stakeholder Reference Group, officers from Barnsley MBC, CPRE and the campaign group, Place.
- Local residents in Dunford Bridge have been regularly updated about the project and its development, including notice of forthcoming events and technical surveys, through direct mailouts.
- Briefings for political stakeholders to inform them of project progress, including meetings with Angela Smith, MP for Penistone and Stocksbridge, in April 2016, October 2018 and April 2019.

A briefing for the three Penistone West ward councillors was held in December 2015, with further briefings including neighbouring Penistone East ward councillors taking place in October 2018 and July 2019.

Meetings were held with other relevant elected officials from Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council including the Leader of the Council, Cabinet Member for Place and the head of the Place Directorate, as well as officers covering a range of disciplines. These took place in October 2015, October 2016, November 2016, December 2016, March 2017, March 2019 and June 2019.

A briefing with stakeholders from Sheffield City Region's executive team took place in January 2019.

- Third party channels – National Grid has worked with the communications teams of those stakeholders where they have an existing relationship to disseminate information through established membership, social media and other channels. This has included Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council, Dunford Parish Council, the National Park Authority and the Trans Pennine Trail Office.
- Media relations – regular updates to the local media on Proposed Project milestones and to publicise forthcoming events and activity.
- Peak District East VIP Website – a dedicated website (<http://peakdistricteast.nationalgrid.co.uk>) has been established with a focus on information specific to the Proposed Project, notification of drop-in events and the chance to relay comments and views.
- Drop-in events – these were held in July 2016 in Penistone Town Hall, Dunford Parish Community Centre and a National Grid Mobile Unit in the Trans Pennine Trail car park at Dunford Bridge. The events were attended by members of the VIP team together with relevant professional advisers. Printed and online feedback forms were available at the events to provide feedback via the website or freepost at a later date. Around 75 members of the public attended, including local councillors and representatives of Dunford Parish Council. Ten feedback forms were received, seven of which gave positive feedback on the Proposed Project, with a further three neutral or balanced.
- Further drop-in events were held in December 2018, at accessible public venues in Dunford Bridge, Penistone, Millhouse Green and Crow Edge, covering weekend and evening hours to maximise opportunities for engagement. The events were staffed by the VIP team and specialist advisors who updated the local community on the progress of the project and gave details on the construction plans.

103 people attended the events, including local residents and businesses. In total, 60 statements of feedback were received at the events and afterwards by post and email, demonstrating a strong level of engagement. Approximately 67 per cent of those who submitted feedback were fully or broadly supportive of the project, with a further 10 per cent providing balanced or neutral feedback. The comments received were analysed and used to help shape the planning application.⁴

- Other local events – where appropriate, the VIP Project had a presence through a trade stand at relevant local events, including the Penistone Show in September 2016 and 2018.

4.5.3 Environmental Assessment topic-specific consultation is summarised in each chapter of this Environmental Assessment Report where relevant.

⁴ A breakdown of key themes and how the planning application responded to the feedback received is found within Technical Appendix 4A.