

**VIP Stakeholder Advisory Group**  
**Minutes of the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

**Stakeholder Advisory Group members present:**

- **Chairman** Chris Baines
- **Campaign for National Parks** Fiona Howie, Chief Executive
- **CPRE** Tom Fyans, Director of Campaigns and Policy
- **Historic England** Amanda Chadburn, Senior National Infrastructure Adviser
  
- **Landscape Institute** Mary O'Connor, WYG Associate Director
- **National Association of AONBs** Howard Sutcliffe, AONB Manager, Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB
  
- **National Grid** George Mayhew, Director of Corporate Affairs
- **National Parks England** Sarah Kelly, Landscape Officer, New Forest National Park Authority
  
- **National Parks Wales** Jonathan Cawley, Director of Planning and Land Management, Snowdonia National Park
  
- **National Trust** Dr Ingrid Samuel, Historic Environment Director
- **Natural England** Gary Charlton, Senior Adviser – Valuing the Environment
  
- **Ofgem** Anna Kulhavy, Senior Economist
- **The Ramblers** Alison Hallas, Policy and Advocacy Officer (Countryside and Access)

**Apologies:**

- **Cadw**
- **CPRW**
- **Natural Resources Wales**
- **Visit Wales**

**Secretariat in attendance:**

- **National Grid** – Michelle Clark, VIP Project Manager; Ben Smith, VIP Project Manager (South); Eloise Frank, VIP Project Manager (North); Andrea Key, Consents Officer; Steve Lam, Regulatory Submissions Manager; Christopher Hawkins, Development Engineer
- Professor Carys Swanwick, Independent Advisor to National Grid
- **Camargue** – Stuart Fox; Jane Dalton

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The purpose of the meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> December was for the Stakeholder Advisory Group to:

- Hear updates on the four schemes prioritised for replacing existing overhead electricity transmission lines with underground solutions in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks in England and Wales
  - Receive an update on the Landscape Enhancement Initiative and consider a potential option for funding from an external organisation to stimulate project development
  - Hear updates on the work carried out by National Grid on potential future projects for the next price control period (RIIO-T2)
  - Provide further input to National Grid to help them shape their submission to Ofgem for the next price control period
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## **1 – Update on the four schemes shortlisted for underground projects**

Michelle Clark, Ben Smith, Eloise Frank and Andrea Key from National Grid gave an update on the progress of the four schemes that have been prioritised to be taken forward. A summary of progress and specific issues for each of the four schemes is outlined below.

### **4.1 – Dorset AONB – 4YA.7**

The planning application for this scheme was approved in June 2018 subject to a unilateral undertaking being agreed, which is now in place, and Ofgem funding was approved in November 2018. The contract award to the main contractor Morgan Sindall is imminent, and National Grid is continuing to work with them on finalising the construction methodology and the discharge of planning conditions.

Large-scale archaeological investigations have been carried out with 162 trial trenches being dug. In the latter stages of this work, there has been a series of finds. These finds are currently being dated, but they are believed to be from around 200 AD. Although none of the finds have been in the cable trenching area, National Grid is continuing to work closely with local stakeholders and Morgan Sindall to identify any necessary construction mitigation requirements. They are also liaising with Historic England, the Dorset county architect, the AONB and the landowner regarding external communication about the finds.

With regards to ecology, National Grid has been working with Morgan Sindall on the mitigation licencing for badgers and dormice. A new artificial badger sett has now been built and has already been inhabited, and dormice boxes have been installed and will be monitored on an ongoing basis.

The next steps are to complete the analysis and write-up of the archaeological works, and to continue working with Highways England on the A35 road crossing and the associated transport assessment. Preparatory enabling works including hedgerow removal, site compound construction and road bell-mouths will commence in early 2019, and the main construction work is scheduled to start in May 2019. The line should be energised in Autumn 2021 and the overhead pylons removed in 2022.

### **4.2 – Peak District National Park (Eastern section) – 4ZO.2**

Following the Stakeholder Advisory Group's visit to the project site in September 2018, work on this scheme has primarily focused on environmental considerations. There is still some work to do on the ecology and landscape mitigation, and a meeting has been held with local ecology and landscape stakeholders to discuss and agree mitigation proposals. The Environmental Assessment Report (EAR) chapters for the Gas Insulated Line (GIL) scheme have been updated and revised, and the draft Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) has been completed and reviewed by Natural England.

The planning submission process is proving to be complex, as different aspects of the project (including the new sealing end compound at Wogden Foot, two new bridges, the Trans Pennine Trail (TPT) diversion, the Crow Edge assembly and laydown area, and the northern access road and bell mouths) require planning applications (one for the works associated with the main scheme and one for the Crow Edge laydown area). There are also works to the existing OHL which fall under the Electricity Act but are exempt and we need to submit a notification of this to Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) for their agreement. BMBC are considering how to secure mitigation which is not associated with a planning application ie works associated with the undergrounding of the GIL tubes which are permitted development. All applications will be submitted at the same time, and a meeting with the planning officer from BMBC is being held next week to finalise/determine the approach for this.

The strategic plan for Transport for the North is yet to be announced, and the National Grid project team is waiting to see what impact it might have on the project.

Negotiations with landowners including Yorkshire Water and Barnsley MBC are ongoing, and the public consultation is now underway with five events due to be held before the end of 2018. Depending on the feedback from these events, the planning application will be submitted as soon as is possible with the Ofgem funding submission following shortly afterwards.

Subject to gaining approval, pre-construction mitigation will commence in the summer of 2019. As advised at the previous meeting, the main construction works are now scheduled to commence in the summer of 2020 due to the need to avoid a clash with another National Grid project that requires an outage earlier than the VIP project. Under these timescales, it is envisaged that the new circuits will be energised in 2021, and the pylons removed in 2021/2022.

#### **4.3 – Snowdonia National Park – 4CZ.1**

The preferred option for this scheme that has been agreed with local stakeholders is to construct a tunnel to carry the connection from Cilfor to Garth under the Dwyrdd Estuary to the sealing end compound at Garth to join up with the existing cables that run under the Glaslyn Estuary to the northwest.

The key area of focus since the last meeting has been continued work on the options for removing the pylons and their concrete bases from the estuary. Discussions have been taking place with a specialist helicopter contractor. Following a subsequent meeting with Network Rail, it has been confirmed that temporary closure of the railway would be allowed to enable the steel to be flown over the railway so it could be offloaded and removed via the road network. National Grid is still assessing the options and continuing dialogue with stakeholders to determine whether the reduced impact on the saltmarsh would warrant the additional cost involved in this approach.

The public consultation events have just been completed and National Grid is now processing the responses. The events and feedback have been very positive with the majority of people expressing support for the scheme. There have been some detailed conversations and this process has also provided useful feedback on the siting and design of the tunnel head houses and associated infrastructure. There was also valuable feedback on flood risk and traffic, and local people have provided potential leads for spoil receiver sites. It was also noted by Jonathan Cawley from Snowdonia National Park that the feedback from stakeholder groups has been very positive about the way in which National Grid has engaged and worked with them.

The Group discussed the potential total cost of this project, which is high compared to the others because of the need for a tunnel. It was agreed that the team need to undertake further work and discuss with Ofgem what proportion would be covered by the VIP provision and how much might be funded as network reinforcement associated with new generation in the area.

The next steps for the project are to review the stakeholder and public feedback, liaise with Natural Resources Wales regarding the Screening and Scoping report and the impact on the saltmarsh, and continue with preparing the planning application and tender documents.

It is currently anticipated that the planning application will be submitted in March 2019 and the funding application to Ofgem will be submitted in the summer. Under these timescales, it is envisaged that construction will commence in 2020, the tunnel will be completed in 2024/2025 and the overhead line/pylons will be removed in 2025.

#### **1.4 – New Forest National Park – 4YB.2**

The Stakeholder Advisory Group was reminded of the challenges facing this project which is in a highly-designated and ecologically-sensitive area as well as common land with open access grazing for commoners. Following extensive consultation with stakeholders over the last three years, National Grid agreed with stakeholders earlier in 2018 that it should investigate a cable alignment to the north of Hale Purlieu (Option E) as the most likely option to take forward. The potential feasibility of this route would be subject to detailed survey work covering ecology, geology, hydrology and hydrogeology and discussions with commoners and residents about access and safety issues. This route avoids an area of mire but brings it closer to an area of residential homes.

As reported at the September 2018 Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting, a range of stakeholder engagement activity as well as some public information events took place over the summer of 2018, and two campaign groups opposing the scheme have been set up [see the minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> September 2018 meeting for more detail]. Since then, ongoing engagement has included: contacting all property owners in the immediate area resulting in around 40 individual resident meetings; regular interaction with the Protect Hale Purlieu Movement; briefings with the Commoners Defence Association, Cllr Edward Heron, the Rt Honourable Sir Desmond Swayne (the MP for the area), Natural England, the National Trust and the Verderers/agisters. A key priority for the National Grid team during these engagement activities has been to provide factual information about the scheme to counteract some of the inaccurate information that has been given out locally.

Hale Parish Council is the representative local body for the area where the project is located. National Grid has consulted with the council throughout the duration of the project. In 2018, the Parish Council was invited to join the Stakeholder Reference Group for the project. The Parish Council had recently written to National Grid asking it to reconsider the tunnel option. This was discussed by the Group and it was acknowledged that a tunnel would be a significantly more expensive option and would therefore not meet the VIP's fifth principle of being economic and efficient while a lower-cost option still exists. The Group therefore agreed to continue to pursue a direct buried solution as the preferred option.

The next steps for this project are to continue with the ground investigation and survey works to feed into the detailed engineering design and inform the EIA, the HRA and the Imperative Reasons for Overriding Public Interest (IROPI) tests [see 1.4.i below], as well as ongoing wider stakeholder engagement. The next meeting with the Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) on 13<sup>th</sup> December will also include a site visit for SRG members to a site restored by the project's restoration specialists, Alaska, to demonstrate how different types of restoration can be carried out successfully.

The current indicative programme is for the formal public consultation to be carried out in the spring/summer of 2019, and the planning application to be submitted shortly afterwards. Construction would start in 2020, with the new circuits energised in winter 2021 and the pylons removed by 2023.

##### **1.4.i – SPA breeding birds and pursuing an IROPI case**

As reported at the February 2018 meeting, a key issue facing the VIP project in the New Forest is the existence of three bird species accorded Special Protected Area (SPA) status i.e. the nightjar, woodlark and Dartford warbler. Work has been carried out in conjunction with Natural England, the National Trust and the New Forest National Park Authority to determine the potential impacts on these species and to establish the 'carrying capacity' in other areas of the forest.

Two years of detailed surveys have been carried out with the result that Natural England has concerns about all three species. It is therefore the opinion of Natural England that, for the project to proceed, it would be better to accept that there will be a temporary 'adverse effect' and pursue an IROPI case. [A definition of 'imperative reasons of overriding public interest' is contained in the DEFRA guidance.]

IROPI provides a mechanism (a derogation under Article 6(4) of the Habitats Directive) for a project to potentially be approved even though it would have an 'adverse effect' on the integrity of a European site. The IROPI case will form part of the HRA which will accompany the planning application.

Where an Appropriate Assessment concludes that there will be an adverse effect on the integrity of a European site, the Competent Authority may only lawfully grant planning permission when they are satisfied that the following three sequential tests have been passed:

- i) There must be no feasible alternative solutions to the project which are less damaging to the European site;
- ii) There must be "imperative reasons of overriding public interest" (IROPI) for the project to proceed;
- iii) All necessary compensatory measures must be secured to ensure that the overall coherence of the network of European sites is protected.

The New Forest National Park Authority will have 16 weeks to determine the planning application for this scheme, however IROPI could extend the determination period.

National Grid has been developing information for each of the tests and seeking legal advice on the best approach. There are a number of unknowns that are proving challenging. As this is the first time that IROPI has been used for a *temporary* effect there are no precedents that can be drawn upon. It is also unusual for IROPI to be used for a planning application.

Advisory Group members discussed the potential risks now facing the scheme and whether or not the Group should re-consider its position on taking it forward. Others however expressed concerns about there having been a worrying shift towards Habitats Regulations being used without also having a broader view of landscape and positive opportunities for change and enhancement. It was felt that if planning permission is refused due to a temporary negative impact, it would mean that arguments for restoration and improvement of the UK's landscapes for longer-term benefit would suffer a setback.

It was also noted that National Grid is in ongoing discussions with stakeholders at the local level and is working closely with Natural England, the National Trust, the Verderers and the Park Authority to ensure that all areas are considered. There are also ongoing discussions with the RSPB and the Hampshire & Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust to discuss the concerns that they have on the project. These discussions are being facilitated by Natural England. It has been recognised that the project provides opportunities to enhance the habitat for the affected species, and it is hoped that the further planned discussions can produce a positive outcome.

It was agreed that National Grid should continue with their work. A Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting should be scheduled early in the new year to hear an update on progress.

#### **Actions:**

- **National Grid project team** – Continue with the work on preparing the IROPI case and suggest dates for a Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting early in 2019.
- **Chair (and others)** – Discuss potential options for national and local stakeholder engagement with the RSPB and Wildlife Trusts.

### **1.5 – Use of photographic images**

A number of images and photo montages now exist for each scheme, including some where graphic impressions have been created showing what the landscape might look like when the pylons have been removed. A discussion was held about which images can be shared/used both internally and externally. It was noted that there are strict rules on images that can be used in planning applications.

#### **Action:**

- **Camargue** – Produce and circulate a summary slide pack for each project with a note explaining the caveats on the use of any images.

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

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

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

**Window 1** – Monitoring is ongoing on the three projects that received funding in Window 1 and which are already under way (projects in High Weald AONB, Peak District National Park and North York Moors National Park).

**Window 2** – Seven projects were approved by Ofgem and are under way (projects in the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB, Dorset AONB, New Forest National Park, Peak District National Park and Snowdonia National Park).

**Window 3** – Funding decisions are now expected before the end of 2018 on the five projects that were submitted to Ofgem for approval in April 2018 (Kent Downs AONB, Dorset AONB, Cannock Chase AONB and North York Moors National Park).

**Window 4** – The five projects that were approved by the LEI Approvals Panel were submitted to Ofgem in October 2018, and a decision on these is now pending.

**Window 5** – Two applications were received and the Approvals Panel is due to meet on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2018 to consider them. If successful they will be prepared for submission to Ofgem early next year with final approval envisaged in the summer, and funds released in the autumn of 2019.

Expressions of Interest for Window 6 will open on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2019, for Window 7 in June 2019, and for Window 8 in January 2020.

### **2.2 – Encouraging wider participation**

As discussed at previous meetings, although there is a good spread and diversity of projects coming through the LEI, the number of applications is still low. To try to address this, a workshop was held in November 2018 to get the message about the LEI out to a wider range of stakeholders. Seventeen organisations and a number of AONBs attended and the feedback was very positive. It is now hoped that this will generate further applications.

A webinar is also being planned to encourage other organisations to take part in the scheme, and Stakeholder Advisory Group members also offered to encourage the AONBs and National Parks that have not yet submitted applications to apply.

It was noted that the Snowdonia National Park – which has currently applied for the maximum amount of LEI funding available for live projects – would be able to apply for additional funding after the first of its current live projects had concluded.

**Actions:**

- **Ben Smith** – Circulate a list of the top five AONBs (in terms of length of National Grid transmission line running through the designation) that have not yet applied for LEI.
- **Howard Sutcliffe** – contact those organisations in the top five once known to encourage them to participate.

**2.3 – Potential partner funding**

At the 12<sup>th</sup> Stakeholder Advisory Group meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2018 it was confirmed by Ofgem that the terms of the VIP provision do not allow applicants to be paid for the work involved in pre-development of projects. There was, however, broad support for finding a way to help organisations identify and develop ideas for schemes e.g. by enabling them to think more strategically about what can be achieved, allowing for further landscape assessments to be carried out, and providing specialist landscape architects to help identify and design potential projects.

Following these discussions, the Chair of the Stakeholder Advisory Group met with a representative of the Esmee Fairburn Foundation to discuss whether it would be interested in providing partner funding to enable the provision of expert resource/input to potential applicants. The meeting was very positive and it was confirmed that the Foundation is open to the idea of providing funding for this kind of work. Although it has not yet been fully scoped out, there is a proposal for approximately £200k of funding to be made available to finance a central post that would manage and administer the provision of smaller grants to specific AONBs to help them shape projects.

Following further discussion, it was agreed that the option should be explored further. There was some debate about how it would work in practice, and it was acknowledged that the proposed model would need further development to ensure that it fits alongside the existing work of the LEI Approvals Panel and landscape consultants (Gillespies and LUC). An organisation would also need to be identified to 'host' the person in the central role.

**Actions:**

- **LEI Approvals Panel** – Consider the proposals in more detail during its December meeting.
- **Chair and Natural England** – Discuss the potential role of the host organisation, and hold conversations with AONBs and National Parks about how the additional funding might work in practice.

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**3 – National Grid submission to Ofgem for RIIO T2 and pipeline of potential future projects**

At its previous two meetings in 2018, the Stakeholder Advisory Group discussed the future of the VIP programme, gave input to National Grid to help them shape their first submission to Ofgem for the next price control period (RIIO T2), and considered the options for future projects that could be pursued if the VIP provision continues. At the September meeting it was agreed that the following schemes should be prioritised for further investigations in advance of more detailed discussions at the December meeting:

**PURPLE** sections:

- North Wessex Downs AONB YYM.4
- Peak District National Park western section
- Tamar Valley AONB

**RED** sections:

- Anglesey AONB
- Cotswolds AONB
- North Wessex Downs AONB (YYM.1 or YYM.5 and YYM.6 together – potentially combined with YYM.4)

Plus:

- Lake District National Park

For further consideration:

- High Weald AONB
- Hadrian's Wall

It was agreed that the further work and investigations on these schemes would:

- Summarise the history, provide indicative price ranges (including any early asset write-off costs) and carry out some landowner and stakeholder mapping. Where relevant, begin conversations with DNOs to explore opportunities for collaboration, and revisit previous work on residual scores if the DNO infrastructure cannot be removed.
- Peak District West and Tamar Valley – Provide a reminder of the work done to date (including the Long-term Futures Study for Peak West) and summarise the history of the Advisory Group's previous discussions on these schemes.
- Anglesey AONB and Peak District West – Find out more about any future infrastructure projects including the proposed timings and the potential for linking in with them.
- Hadrian's Wall – Review the work submitted by the Northumberland National Park Authority during RIIO-T1 and the LVIA work undertaken during the original assessment.
- Lake District extension – Revisit the results of the previous LVIA and carry out further assessments if required. Develop engineering solutions and explore potential sealing end compound locations.
- Cotswolds and North Wessex Downs – Develop engineering solutions and explore potential sealing end compound locations.

### 3.1 – Update on potential future projects

Michelle Clark and Chris Hawkins from National Grid gave an update on the work that has been carried out on each of the potential projects since the last meeting. There was also a reminder that the current RIIO T1 price control period runs for eight years from 2013–2021, and the RIIO T2 price control period which begins in April 2021 will run for five years.

- **Anglesey AONB 4ZA.1 (RED)** – Prominent short section seen from many nearby heritage assets that crosses the Anglesey AONB and over the Menai Strait, adjacent to Britannia Bridge to reach the mainland. National Grid has been holding discussions with the Welsh Government, Traffic Wales and their own team working in North Wales about the possible interaction with plans for a potential third crossing of the Menai Strait.
- **Cotswolds AONB ZF.2 (RED)** – A long section in the west of the Cotswolds running north / south to the east of Cheltenham. The line runs through a rural but well-populated landscape, past ancient woodland and designated sites and passes numerous heritage assets which would benefit from the line removal. This is a very long section of line with lots of complexities meaning that it would be a challenging and potentially expensive project to deliver.

- **North Wessex Downs AONB YYM.4 (PURPLE)** – The line section runs through mainly undesignated agricultural land along the broad flat Vale of Pewsey below a succession of hills from Pewsey in the west to Burbage in the east. A DNO line runs close in parallel for much of its length.

*and*

**North Wessex Downs AONB YYM.5 and YYM.6 (RED)** – A long section adjacent (east) of (and contiguous with) YYM.4 running through mainly agricultural land in open downland along the Vale of Pewsey from Burbage at the foot of the scarp and rising up to an elevated downland plateau. Part of YYM.5 (like YYM.4) has a DNO line running close in parallel for some of its length.

These three contiguous sections of line have been considered together for a number of reasons, including the fact that it is very unlikely that a suitable sealing end compound location could be found within one of the red sections. The project is relatively straightforward from an engineering perspective, however there is a DNO line right next to the middle section and National Grid has therefore been holding initial discussions with SSE about the potential for its line to be buried underground at the same time. Although these conversations have been very positive, there are issues around available funding and the different timing of price control periods for the DNOs [see also Section 3.3 below].

- **North Wessex Downs AONB YYM.1 (RED)** - Short, most westerly overhead line section in the North Wessex Downs. The line runs through open downland along the foot of the scarp terminating just north of Devizes. In comparison to some of the other schemes, this would be a relatively straightforward and cost-effective project to pursue, and after an initial, high-level review not overly challenging from a technical or engineering perspective.
- **Peak District National Park 4ZO.3 & 4ZO.4 (Western section) (PURPLE)** – A section running west from the Woodhead Tunnel along the Trans Pennine Trail / Longdendale Valley to Tintwistle. The highly-designated, wild moorland landscape is dominated by five drinking water reservoirs and the Woodhead Pass. The Stakeholder Advisory Group was reminded of the discussions and investigations that have already taken place for this highly complex project. The two engineering solutions potentially available are a tunnel option, or an option to underground the majority of the route via direct burial and/or troughs along the alignment of the TPT. This latter option would mean that two short sections of overhead line would remain within the National Park at the end of the Bottoms Reservoir.
- **Tamar Valley AONB YF.1 (PURPLE)** – The overhead line dominates the tranquil landscape as it crosses the Tamar and Tavy estuaries and Bere Peninsula. Highly-designated and within the Cornish Mining World Heritage site. There was a reminder that this was the highest-scoring of all sections and that extensive conversations took place when the projects were first being looked at during 2014-2016. The only engineering option is to build a tunnel under the Tamar and Tavy estuaries which would be expensive and still potentially complex due to the environmental designations and access restrictions in the area. As with the current Snowdonia project, the fact that the project would necessitate the removal of pylons in the vicinity of an estuary designated for marine habitat and associated wildlife may also prove challenging.
- **Lake District National Park ZX.1** – A section of line was assessed during the original LVIA as it was on the boundary of the proposed Lakes/Dales extension. With the extension now in place, the line receives a score that would place it among the

'red' line sections (without the extension it scored amber in the original assessment). As the extension had not been confirmed at the time, this scheme was not included in the 2014 LVIA report. This section of line runs through a remote area but is also part of an 'infrastructure corridor' containing the A6 and a DNO line that runs through the same area. Replacing the overhead line would require either going through designated landscapes or a route much further out that is significantly longer. There is a DNO line running in parallel to National Grid's line for almost the entirety of its length and the landscape is heavily impacted by other infrastructure.

- **Hadrian's Wall** – The central 45km section of the wall (and associated National Trail) is the most heavily visited with some of the overhead line adjacent to/affecting the setting of the Northumberland National Park. The subsections of overhead line that are in/adjacent to the Northumberland National Park or in the Solway Coast AONB at the western end of the wall were assessed during the original LVIA and scored mainly amber and yellow. Although further LVIA work on the potential additional sections of line has not been formally carried out, it is felt that it is unlikely that they would be scored red or purple. The VIP provision is focused on National Parks and AONBs because they are statutory landscapes that Ofgem has a regulatory responsibility for, and World Heritage Sites as such are not included in that. For these reasons, the Stakeholder Advisory Group concluded that Hadrian's Wall does not fit the criteria of the project but, as sections of the line would fall under the scope of the LEI, they would be eligible for consideration under that scheme.

Stakeholder Advisory Group members were provided with a set of updated information sheets about each of the above schemes including route and constraints maps, photographs, the original and/or updated LVIA score (and breakdown), and an overview of the engineering options and technical/environmental issues for each project. The Advisory Group then split into sub-groups to discuss which projects they would prioritise in the next price control period, and which they would add to a list of potential projects in future price control periods.

There was a reminder that the Stakeholder Advisory Group was not being asked for a definitive or final shortlist, and that the focus of the discussions at this stage is to provide National Grid with guidance on where to focus its efforts in continuing with more detailed investigations and talking to relevant third parties, etc. All of the line sections discussed remain on the 'long list' and it remains the Stakeholder Advisory Group's aspiration over time to enhance the landscapes of all 12 of the sections scored purple in the original assessment as well as the sections that scored red noted above.

### **3.2 – Potential pipeline of projects for RIIO T2 and T3**

Following the sub-group and plenary discussions it was agreed that the following shortlist of schemes should be prioritised for further investigations in order to feed into National Grid's preparations for their submission to Ofgem for RIIO T2:

- **Cotswolds AONB** – Although it was acknowledged that this would be a costly and complex project due to the length of the section of line under consideration, it was felt overall that there are no other reasons why it should not be pursued during T2 and that investigative works should therefore be brought forwards.
- **North Wessex Downs AONB** – There was an overall preference for pursuing the three contiguous line sections YYM.4, YYM.5 and YYM.6 together as a joint project, and for discussions with SSE to continue regarding removal of the parallel DNO line. While some felt that the shorter section YYM.1 should be pursued as a standalone project as it provides a relatively cheap 'quick win', others felt that it should be considered as a lower priority, and only pursued if it becomes apparent that the other sections cannot go ahead or if removal of the residual DNO line proves to not be an option.

- **Tamar AONB** – further work should be undertaken potentially to understand the geology and practicality of pursuing this project. The Group felt that, although complex and potentially expensive, further work needed to be done in advance of T2 to scope out the project fully.

For the following projects it was agreed that there should be a watching brief on the associated infrastructure developments as these will determine the feasibility and/or options for the schemes:

- **Peak District National Park western section** – It is anticipated that there will be an update early in 2019 from Transport for the North regarding plans for the strategic road network, and as this could have a significant impact on the options for the scheme, it was felt to be better to wait to understand the outcomes of the report.
- **Anglesey AONB** – Plans for a potential third bridge crossing of the Menai Straits will determine whether it is feasible for this scheme to commence in T2.

For the **Lake District National Park**, it was agreed that this project could potentially be pursued in RIIO-T3 if there was ongoing consumer willingness-to-pay, and that it could be brought forward if it is found that other projects cannot be progressed.

For **High Weald AONB** and **Hadrian's Wall** it was agreed that the relevant authorities should be contacted and encouraged to pursue projects through a possible LEI Plus variation on the current LEI programme.

With regards to including World Heritage Sites for consideration under the VIP provision, it was noted that only some of the sites are designated due to their landscape qualities, and whilst there is a statutory basis for the inclusion of AONBs and National Parks within Ofgem's scope of work this does not apply to World Heritage Sites. The consideration of projects within World Heritage Sites has now been discussed by the Stakeholder Advisory Group on a number of occasions, and it was agreed that if they are to be included in future, it would need a separate discussion regarding the overall VIP policy.

### **3.3 – Collaboration with DNOs**

In relation to collaborating with DNOs regarding the co-ordinated removal of their lines, it was reiterated that early discussions with SSE have indicated that there is support for pursuing a joint project in North Wessex Downs AONB. It was, however, noted that the different timing of the DNOs' regulatory periods means that they cannot necessarily commit to expenditure during RIIO-T2, which could mean that any joint projects would need to move into RIIO-T3. Despite these potential complications, Stakeholder Advisory Group members felt that options to pursue a joint project should still be pursued.

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## **4 – Future meetings and any other business**

### **4.1 – Stakeholder Advisory Group membership**

It was confirmed that Amanda Chadburn has replaced Shane Gould as the representative from Historic England. George Mayhew is leaving his role as Director of Corporate Affairs for National Grid and his replacement is due to start in the new year.

### **4.2 – Future meetings**

The next Stakeholder Advisory Group meetings will take place in early 2019, towards the end of April 2019, and in September/October 2019. The autumn meeting will be held in Dorset to include a site visit to the Dorset VIP scheme once construction is underway.

#### **4.3 – RIIO T2 consultation**

Ofgem confirmed that their consultation on RIIO T2 will open on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and will run for three months. The consultation documentation will have a specific chapter on Visual Amenity including questions on the future of the VIP Provision. Stakeholder Advisory Group members were encouraged to respond to the consultation.

#### **Actions:**

- **Camargue** – Circulate dates for the next meetings and send a prompt to Stakeholder Advisory Group members when the Ofgem consultation opens.

**[Post meeting note: the Ofgem consultation opened on 18<sup>th</sup> December. Stakeholder Advisory Group members were notified on the day]**