

NWIFCA Quarterly Meeting

19 April 2013: 10.30.a.m.

AGENDA
ITEM NO.

14

BRIEFING TO NWIFCA COMMITTEE ON STRATEGIC OPTIONS FOR ROUTING TRANSMISSION CONNECTIONS TO THE NORTH WEST COAST ENERGY DEVELOPMENTS - NORTH WEST COAST CONNECTIONS

Connecting new energy projects in the North West

National Grid (NG) has been asked to provide a connection into the National Electricity Transmission System (NETS) for the proposed 3.2 GW Moorside nuclear power station, to be built near Sellafield in West Cumbria and for a number of new wind farms in the Irish Sea. This project is an important step towards meeting National Grid's challenge to modernise and extend the country's existing energy infrastructure. They see its development as essential to ensure energy security in years to come, and to meet the UK's carbon reduction targets.

Along with UK energy policy, these proposals also align with the wider Masterplan for Britain's Energy Coast. This is a £2 billion package of regeneration projects that aims to establish West Cumbria as a major national hub for low carbon and renewable energy generation.

While there is a distribution system serving homes in West Cumbria, there is currently no transmission system to allow the connection of new energy generators to the NETS. NG's job is to find the best way to reinforce the national electricity transmission system to provide the required new connections. At the same time they must maintain a secure and reliable system that can support electricity users at all times, even during maintenance or unexpected disruptions that could result from extreme weather, for example.

Before the connection can be built, they will be undertaking a great deal of technical and environmental investigation work, as well as extensive public consultation.

Where they are now – Stage 2 Outline Routing and Siting

For nearly three years NG have been carrying out extensive technical and environmental studies. They have also been working together with local authorities and key groups (including the NWIFCA and previously the NWSFC) from across Cumbria, Lancashire and beyond to explore how these new energy projects could connect to the existing electricity transmission system.

These organisations have shared their wealth of experience and insight with them and NG state they have been guided by them and by the views of the public in shaping their Strategic Options and in selecting the ones they will now be taking forward to develop further.

Initially, they identified six broad connection options for connecting new energy projects with the existing transmission system; these are known as '**Strategic Options**'. These were consulted on for a ten week period that started on 11 May 2012, and ended on 19 July 2012. NG sought feedback on the Strategic Options themselves and on the issues that key stakeholders and the public believed they should consider when it came to making a decision on which Strategic Option (or Strategic Options) to take forward for further development.

NWIFCA officers took part in the Stage One consultation and made representation over the concern that there will be considerable pressure exerted on NG to route cables as far as practically possible underwater in the marine environment. To the general public this may seem on the face of it like the most acceptable option – an 'out of sight out of mind' solution to the problem. It is highly likely that the majority of those involved in the consultation will understand the

issues of routing cables across terrestrial environments, but that not many will understand the potential implications of routing undersea, or indeed have a (known) vested interest. The implications however could affect large marine ecosystems with knock-on effects on food webs.

The NWIFCA has two major concerns about siting the cables in the marine environment:

- a) the potential impacts of Electro Magnetic Fields (EMFs) on marine organisms;
- b) the use of Morecambe Bay for routing cables by overhead cabling, burying in sediment or tunnelling.

Having taken on board the views expressed during this consultation, ***the Project team has decided to take forward two of the Strategic Options for further development. Both of these would connect coastal areas into the existing grid system***, as well as providing the opportunity for additional power generators to link into the system in the future. These two options give them the chance to continue exploring all types of technologies available to deliver the project.

National Grid's **Strategic Options Report (SOR)**, which sets out its views on Strategic Options for the project following consultation, is available to view on the project documents page of their website:

<http://www.nationalgrid.com/uk/Electricity/MajorProjects/NorthWestCoastConnections/Documents/index.htm>

The **Consultation Feedback Report (CFR)** is also available, which summarises responses to consultation and provides feedback from the project team about these responses.

What happens next?

NWIFCA Officers continue to attend the quarterly Stakeholder Reference Group meetings to ensure that fisheries interests are heard. National Grid will now assess the two Strategic Options being taken forward to identify potential route corridors where new infrastructure could be located. Work will now focus on looking for onshore routes to the north of Moorside where there is the potential to follow the path of existing low voltage power lines which are operated by Electricity North West.

To the south of Moorside, National Grid will also consider routes where there is the potential to follow the path of existing power lines ***in addition to studying possible routes offshore through the Irish Sea and across Morecambe Bay.***

Notably NG have parked (ie. not investigating further at present but not totally ruling out) the options of cabling or burying cables across Morecambe Bay. The options of tunnelling from the Barrow peninsula to Heysham power station, and of routing cables offshore from Sellafield area, south and round the windfarms and bringing them ashore at Heysham, Rossall or Blackpool are very much still alive.

Once the work to identify and develop potential route corridors is complete, they will start to consult intensively with communities. ***Consultation events are expected to take place in 2013 and will be well publicised in advance.***

In addition to inputting into the consultation through written and online feedback forms, people will be able to meet with members of the Project team to discuss the project in more detail and express their views and comments on the route corridors put forward for consultation. These views and comments will be taken into account in developing the project.

People who wish to be updated directly about engagement activity for the North West Coast Connections project are invited to register their details through the project website – www.northwestcoastconnections.com

For any other enquiries please contact the project team direct using any one of the following methods:

- Call: 0800 876 6990
- Email: nationalgrid@northwestcoastconnections.com
- Freepost: FREEPOST NG NWCC

Mandy Knott
Science and Morecambe Bay Fishery Order Officer
28 February 2013