

Stakeholder engagement from the Snowdonia options appraisal report

Having identified a shortlist of 12 subsections of line in eight designated areas using the landscape assessment, the Stakeholder Advisory Group asked National Grid to carry out early stage engagement with stakeholders and the public at a local level.

The aim of this early engagement was to gather information and intelligence on the areas to inform the options assessments and to gauge local attitudes and opinions on 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. It should be a requirement of any scheme taken forward to major engineering work that it has the support and involvement of local people.

It was also agreed at the Stakeholder Advisory Group that National Grid should work closely with the Snowdonia National Park Authority to present a collaborative, inclusive partnership approach to the local community.

1. Stakeholder meeting

1.1. A meeting was held on 2 December 2014, attended by National Grid, Camargue and representatives from the Brecon Beacons National Park (Julian Atkins) and Snowdonia National Park (Jonathan Cawley).

1.2. The following points were discussed and agreed during the meeting:

- Stakeholder engagement would take place as soon as practical in the New Year.
- Ideally engagement events would take place on the same day with a workshop for selected, relevant individuals / organisations followed by a drop in event for the public (afternoon and evening).
- This initial stakeholder engagement would inform the landscape and technical work.
- The workshop would be a closed session, focused on a smaller group and technical in nature. Attendees would comprise primarily key representatives from the National Park Authority and other key statutory bodies identified by the National Park Authority and agreed with National Grid.
- Personal invites would be issued to the workshop. Personal invites would also be issued to the drop in sessions to selected groups / individuals (as advised by the National Park Authority officers).
- General invites would be sent to other relevant groups / local affected communities primarily using the Park Authorities' networks / databases. National Grid would work with the Park Authorities' communications officers to ensure that the message was delivered to relevant audiences.
- Drop in events would need to take place at a convenient location for members of the community as advised by the National Park Authorities.
- National Grid would take responsibility for organising and delivering the events but they would be where possible collaborative activities between National Grid and the Park Authority teams.

2. Engagement events

- 2.1. On the advice of the Snowdonia National Park team, the events were held as follows. Both workshop and drop in events took place on Tuesday 27th January 2015. The workshop and drop-in were held at Plas Tan Y Bwlch, the headquarters of the Snowdonia National Park Authority.
- 2.2. The workshop ran from 9.30am until 1.00pm and was attended by 9 representatives from local stakeholders including Snowdonia National Park Authority officers and representatives from Natural Resources Wales, Cadw and the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust. Representatives from National Grid, Gillespies and Camargue were in attendance. Jonathan Cawley, Director of Planning and Cultural Heritage at the Snowdonia National Park Authority and Ashley Batten of CADW also attended on behalf of the Stakeholder Advisory Group.
- 2.3. The drop in event ran from 2.00pm until 8.00pm and was staffed by representatives from National Grid (VIP project team) and Camargue. It was attended by a broad cross section of the local community with a number of local landowners represented, as well as local residents. In total, 41 people attended the event.
- 2.4. The event was publicised as agreed with the National Park Authority with direct invitations sent to the National Park's mailing list of key stakeholders. The event was also promoted via the National Park's e-newsletter, an e-poster on its website and tweets by its communications officer. Snowdonia National Park Authority's Director of Planning and Cultural Heritage, Jonathan Cawley and his team were also active in encouraging people to attend via word of mouth. National Grid worked closely with the National Park's communications officer and provided material for use in publicity proactively and on demand.

A press release was produced and issued to local media resulting in Jonathan Cawley taking part in a television interview for S4C. Jonathan talked about the project and encouraged local residents to attend the event.

3. Stakeholder feedback

3.1. Technical workshop

The following key issues were discussed at the Technical Workshop:

3.1.1 Overview of the area

- Section 4ZC.1 runs from the west coast at the Dwyryd Estuary near Porthmadog past Cilfor before climbing up the rugged and complex landform towards the summit of Moel Tecwyn and beyond finishing at the western side of Ceunant Llennyrch Valley.
- 4ZC.2 spans over the Ceunant Llennyrch valley then deviates around Craig Gyfynys before terminating at the former Trawsfynydd Power Station.
- A section of 4ZC.1 is buried underground from Portmadog and comes to the surface near Minfford.
- There are important views from Porthmadog across to Snowdonia. The landscape becomes striking as the line drops down towards the river Dwyryd which is also the National Park boundary.
- 4ZC.1 has pylons which are visible from Harlech Castle.
- There is often heavy traffic on the road between Trawsfynydd and Bala and the line is visible from the road.

- The area is designated as a SSSI and SAC near to the new bridge crossing.
- It was noted that the visual impact of the 132kV line operated by Scottish Power which runs in parallel with the ZK.1 and ZK.2 is significant.
- The Cambrian railway line runs underneath the overhead line near Talsarnau.

3.1.2. *Landscape and visual*

- The area is on the register of landscapes of historic interest in Wales.
- There is a richness of features in the north of the park and the line is particularly visually intrusive near the Roman Fort.
- Attendees felt that ZC.1 has the least impact on known features in the historic landscape. In terms of known archaeology there is nothing significant in this area.
- A Landscape Character Assessment and Sensitivity Capacity Study has been undertaken by Snowdonia National Park Authority and this should be considered by National Grid.

3.1.3. *Ecology / environment*

- It was noted that east of Llyn Tecwyn it is a very sensitive habitat which would be difficult to restore if cables were buried underground.
- Ceunant Llenyrch is an SAC located north of 4ZC.1.
- When discussing the pylons that cross the estuary it was noted that there are shifting sands. Any solution to reduce the visual impact would require directionally drilling underneath the estuary.

3.1.4. *Archaeology*

- Arduwy and Carneddy are both outstanding areas of historic interest.
- A Roman fort can be seen from A470

3.1.5. *Land ownership*

- Sections of the National Park near 4ZC.1 are common land. There are also areas that have been split up and sold by Woodlands for Wales.
- Rights of way and highways are under the jurisdiction of Gwynedd Council.
- The All Welsh Coastal Path currently runs up the valley but it will run across the bridge when it is complete.

3.1.6. *Tourism*

- Portmeirion, Harlech Castle and the beaches are all located within the locality and very popular with tourists.

4. Feedback from drop-in event

13 feedback forms were completed at the Snowdonia event. Comments are summarised below.

- Public sentiment towards the Visual Impact Project was positive with the vast majority of the people who provided written feedback supportive of the project.
- Three respondents felt that the section identified (4ZC.1) was not as badly affected as other sections of line, further along the valley at Afon Dwyrdd, which is outside the National Park boundary.
- The representative from the North Wales Wildlife Trust suggested that the SSSI / SAC at Gwaith Powdr could benefit from the potential works at the site. This individual also felt that the VIP project could also generate improvements for key species in the area, specifically bats.
- Three respondents were concerned about the impact that burying cables underground would have on the local environment, especially the habitats of native wildlife.
- Two attendees highlighted the potential loss of grazing land near Glastreath and stated that any mitigation works should not lead to any loss of agricultural land in the local area.
- In addition to the benefits that burying the cables underground could have for local residents, two attendees believed that if the cables were buried, it would be most beneficial for tourism and the local economy.
- One respondent believed that the money would be better spent on boosting employment in the local area. However, the individual agreed that burying the cables underground would improve the locality.
- Overall, the majority of the attendees were strongly in favour of burying the section of line underground due to the visually intrusive nature of the pylons.