

Compton Bishop Parish Council National Grid Route Consultation

Update – 14th December 2011

1 . Introduction

Compton Bishop Parish Council (CBPC) is a committed and active member of the consultation process with the National Grid's (NG) *Route Corridor Options for Connecting Hinkley C to the National Grid* as defined by NG. The consultation has been on-going since 2009. Various papers have been submitted to CBPC which can be made available if required.

This document is intended to provide an update on Stage 1, the selection of the preferred route corridor for the Hinkley to Avonmouth connection. The following timetable for completion of the connection is as follows :

- **Stage 2** will say where, within the corridor, the actual construction will be. Stage 2 ends December 2012.
- **Stage 3** will present the output of environmental assessments and NG's final proposal for the consultation period January–March 2013.
 - The application for permitted development will be presented to the Infrastructure Planning Commission by mid-2013.
 - Construction will commence January 2014 and be complete by mid-2019.

2. Consultations

The NG pre-planning meetings with councils raised common issues for Parish Councils in the local area. A sub-group of Compton Bishop, Loxton, Badgworth, Mark and Winscombe-and-Sandford was formed. This group is still successfully engaged and has links with other Parishes and action groups in Sedgemoor and North Somerset.

In October 2010, after our local consultations, both in Bridgwater and Bristol, with The Department for Energy and Climate Change (DECC), the National Policy Statements (NPS) 5 and 6 were changed to give undergrounding a more favourable position. These statements define the policies against which all proposals for major energy projects will be assessed.

At this meeting, the DECC also agreed that NG's costings for undergrounding were not sound and requested an independent report on the comparative costs of overhead and underground installations. This task is now with the Institute of Engineering and Technology (IET) but is almost one year behind schedule.

Stage One

Stage 1 has been completed and the preferred route was announced in September in their "August 2011 report Selection of Preferred Selection" report. The relevant points from the announcement are :

Conclusions

- *Corridor 1 Option 1A should be selected as the basis for developing a scheme for an overhead line connection between Bridgwater and Seabank*
- *further studies should be undertaken to evaluate where the undergrounding of sections of the proposed 400kV or existing WPD (Western Power Distribution) overhead lines may be appropriate to mitigate the potential impacts of the connection on sensitive locations, and be subjected to further consultation at Stage 2*

- *further studies should be undertaken to determine the extent and location of works required to maintain supplies on the 132kV distribution network, and be subjected to further consultation at Stage 2.*

NEXT STEPS

- *Following the adoption of a preferred route corridor, detailed consideration will be given to possible alignments for overhead lines, and pylon locations, within the preferred corridor. The potential justification for certain sections of transmission line to be undergrounded will also be considered, in accordance with National Grid's revised approach, when a detailed connection design is being developed. The detailed connection design will be subject to environmental impact assessment and further public consultation. The Consultation Strategy for Stage 2 will include the establishment of Community Forums and Thematic Groups to inform the development of a preferred connection option alongside the EIA survey work. It is anticipated that these groups will meet regularly throughout the project life cycle. The refinement of a proposed connection design will emerge as part of the ongoing consultation process.*
- *National Grid's public consultation on the preferred connection option will be undertaken in autumn 2012. The proposal will then be finalised and it is anticipated that a submission will be made to the IPC (or its successor) in 2013, seeking consent for the connection and associated development. Timescales and activities may be subject to alteration as the project progresses.*

The Community Forum was advised, at a meeting on 1st November 2010, that the existing 132,000 volt overhead electricity WPD lines would be decommissioned and incorporated within the new 400,000 volt line.

Stage Two

Two meetings between NG and the 58 participating representatives of councils and interested parties have agreed :

- Community Forums, representing interested parties, will be organised in two levels :
 - Strategic Community Forum (SCF) – dealing with strategic issues affecting all geographical areas i.e. undergrounding and costs of other technologies.
 - Local Community Forum (LCF) – dealing with issues which are specific to local geographical areas.
- The SCF will comprise a north and a south group separated along the southern borders of Bleadon, Loxton and Winscombe & Sandford.
- There will also be an 'AONB group', comprising the parishes of Compton Bishop, Badgworth, East Brent, Loxton, Bleadon and Winscombe & Sandford, which have a shared interest with both north and south and will be included in both North and South Community Forums.
- There will be no detailed definition of LCF's until the IET report has been received and discussed.
- The next SCF meeting will take place on 18th January specifically to discuss the IET report. A period of 10 days from publication will be allowed for members to read the report and prepare for this meeting.

3. Summary of Issues

There are two **main** issues :

1. The new Pylons are 46.5 metres high compared to the existing 26 metres. The height and width will severely impact the visual landscapes in the approaches to and within our parish.
2. If undergrounding is proposed for 'The Loxton Gap' then any overhead cables will be transferred underground at a 'Sealing End Compound'. This

compound will house one pylon and terminating equipment. The dimension of the compound is 50 metres x 50 metres with a 24 foot fence surrounding it. These compounds are usually screened by trees which are not available on the approaches over the Somerset Levels and so would remain obtrusive. The most probable location for the compound would be near to Kennel Lane.

4.Route and Rules

The following was presented in the previous CBPC report and is included for the benefit of councillors who have not been previously involved.

4.1. The Route

Of the proposed 37 mile route, the sections which will have a significant impact on Compton Bishop Parish can be divided into three sections:

1. From Brent Knoll to the south of the Mendip hills.
2. The passage through Mendip between the Parishes of Compton Bishop and Loxton, adjacent to the M5 motorway. Note that this appears to be the only section of the whole 37 mile route that does not have a possible alternative.
3. To the North of the Mendips through Barton and the parishes of Winscombe and Banwell.

4.2. Scales

The areas of concern apply equally to all three sections. Not only are the residents in the parish of Compton Bishop directly affected by the proposed upgrading, but also the quality of the landscape will be adversely impacted which will have a detrimental effect on the main employment business in our area, namely tourism and visitors.

It is noted that pylons to carry the necessary power are to be 46.5-metre high and 18.24 metres width. This represents an increase of 76% in height and 95% in width. The scale of these structures and associated furniture, compared with the existing, will damage the visual quality of the AONB, the proposed Somerset Levels World Heritage Site and immediate areas.

A major impact will be the overshadowing of The Webbington Hotel, Webbington Farm, The Wheelwrights Shop and Kennel Lane private dwellings. These properties will have enormous structures towering over them. In the case of The Wheelwrights Shop the top of the pylons will be 40 metres above roof level and with regard to The Webbington Hotel, the pylons will exceed roof level by over 20 metres.

The contours of this area, supporting this point, are as follows:

- a) The levels rise from 6 metres, above sea level, at Brent Knoll to 8-10 metres between Loxton and Webbington (referred to as The M5/Loxton Gap).
- b) Crook Peak, at Webbington, rises to 191 metres above sea level and is 750 metres from the existing grid route.
- c) Brent Knoll rises to 139 metres above sea level and is 1200 metres from the existing grid route.
- d) Loxton Village is situated on a hill and the church is located at a ground height of 10 metres above sea level and is 300 metres from the existing grid route.
- e) The Webbington Hotel is situated at a height of 30 metres above sea level and is 300 metres from the existing grid route.
- f) Webbington Farm is situated at a height of 10 metres above sea level and is 150 metres from the existing grid route.
- g) The Wheelwrights Shop, Webbington is situated at a height of 6 metres above sea level and is 50 metres from the existing grid route.

- h) Kennel Lane properties are situated at a height of 10 metres above sea level and 600 metres from the existing grid route.

4.3 Applicable Statutory Rules

National Grid's policy within the framework of the Holford Rules (specifically Rule 7) is understood to be to reserve detailed consideration of the use of undergrounding of high voltage transmission lines for 'exceptionally constrained areas'. It is further understood that protection of important landscape features in nationally or internationally designated areas of amenity value (comprised of National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Heritage Coasts and World Heritage Sites) is of special concern in the siting of overhead transmission lines. Detailed consideration of undergrounding will occur when considering alignments within route corridors which include areas of exceptional constraint.

Exceptionally Constrained Rural Areas comprise locations within or immediately alongside designated areas where the scale of new high voltage transmission towers and conductors would dominate unspoilt landscape and cause serious damage to major open views or spectacular panoramas, crests of prominent ridges and skylines or attractive small scale valleys seen from important locations within or immediately alongside the designated areas.

It is clear that all three of the route sections identified above (and particularly the 'M5/Loxton Gap' section) fall within the definition of 'exceptionally constrained rural areas' and therefore the presumption must be that undergrounding will be adopted throughout their entire length. It is for National Grid to provide substantive technical arguments as to why undergrounding should **not** be adopted, rather than for local councils and residents to be required to provide arguments in its favour.

5. Attachments :

Maps showing :

- Corridor option 1A – Huntspill River to Webbington
- Corridor option 1A – Webbington to Yatton

Typical Transmission Towers

Sealing End Compounds

Author :

R Parker
Compton Bishop Parish Council
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