

Statement on Pylons

Background

The rapid increase of wind farms, particularly offshore, requires the transfer of energy into the National Grid (NG). This is achieved through the use of pylons and the development of sub-stations. In many cases these can be linked into the existing grid at the nearest convenient point, but, because of the surge of power, many of the existing pylons will have to be updated, or even replaced by much larger structures. NG have found considerable opposition from the public to new lines of pylons, especially where they would cross National Parks or AONBs; and strong local demands to put power lines underground. However, undergrounding currently brings with it separate landscape conservation issues.

Key Points

- NG have claimed that putting power lines underground is too costly: 12 to 15 times more than the cost of upgrading the existing pylons. Burying existing lines is even more expensive because of the demolition costs for existing pylons. Impacts of new pylons on the environment was not costed into NG calculations.
- At present there is no alternative to NG methods of undergrounding, which involve excavation of a 50 metre strip of land along the cable route while under construction and, after completion, an area of up to 30 metres kept clear of vegetation. This has implications for ancient woodland and other sensitive landscapes and habitats.
- The Institute of Engineering & Technology (IET) has calculated that the costs of undergrounding are, at most, only five times the costs of pylons, and that two cables, rather than three, could be used. This would reduce costs, and require a third less land.
- Ofgem has researched the willingness of the public to pay for non-marketed benefits (WTP); has required NG to research the costs to get rid of existing pylons in National Parks or AONBs; and has introduced an allowance for this purpose, starting in 2013.

What CPRE Norfolk is campaigning for:

- **Revision of NG guidelines:** new evidence on costs and techniques of undergrounding should be built into revised NG policy and practise to take into account the research by the IET and Ofgem, and the environmental costs of new and replaced overground cables and pylons.
- **Undergrounding of cables and sensitive siting of sub-stations in Norfolk:** CPRE Norfolk will continue to monitor any new pylon and sub-station proposals through the planning consultation process, and will call for undergrounding of cables coupled with implementation of appropriate routes across least sensitive landscapes.

How you can help

You can join us in our campaign to promote the undergrounding of new transmission cables by:

- writing to your MP and you local council highlighting these issues
- responding to local council consultations on planning proposals
- becoming a member of CPRE Norfolk

More information at

www.cprenorfolk.org.uk

Tel: 01603 761660

Email: info@cprenorfolk.org.uk

The Norfolk branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE Norfolk) exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural Norfolk by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country. As an independent voice for the landscape, we engage with local and regional planning systems and campaign locally for positive solutions that will support the long-term future of Norfolk - one of England's most rural areas.

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