

Report to the Cabinet Member for Environment, Planning and Cultural Services
Report submitted by: Head of Planning and Environment
Date Thursday, 5 January 2017

Part 1

Electoral Division affected:
Heysham;

North West Coast Connections Project: Proposed Route Alignment Stage
(Appendices 'A', 'B' and 'C' refer)

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Executive Summary

National Grid is consulting formally on its North West Coast Connections project, a nationally significant infrastructure project, linking the proposed new nuclear power station at Moorside in Cumbria to the national distribution network in Carlisle and in Heysham. In Lancashire the project will consist of a tunnel carrying 4 new 400kv transmission circuits under Morecambe Bay, and a tunnel head building with cooling fans and substation extension at Middleton.

Under a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA), the consultancy WYG has been commissioned to provide some technical expertise to the PPA authorities (all of the County and District councils that are affected by the project) to assist in interpreting the technical information published as part of the consultation, and to work with the PPA authorities to produce a combined 'PPA Group Authorities response' to the consultation.

PPA officers and WYG technical specialists have undertaken an analysis of the consultation material, building on this earlier work, to produce more detailed feedback on the proposal. This has been used to produce a Preliminary Environmental Impact Headlines report (Appendix 'A' refers).

Building on this earlier work, and further more detailed analysis of the consultation material, WYG technical specialists have produced the combined 'PPA Group Authorities response'; expressed as a Technical Appraisal of the proposal, and an Executive Summary (Appendix 'B' refers). A final meeting will take place on 10 January 2017 to agree the final version of the documents to be submitted to National Grid as the combined 'PPA Group Authorities' response. This extension has been agreed with National Grid.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Member for Environment, Planning and Cultural Services is recommended to:

- i. Approve the submission of this report and the Preliminary Environmental Impact Headlines report (Appendix 'A' refers), and the PPA Group Authorities response Executive Summary (Appendix 'B' refers) as the County Council's interim response to the North West Coast Connections Section 42 consultation;
- ii. Agree to the County Council signing up to the combined 'PPA Group Authorities response, including the Executive Summary (Appendix 'B' refers), and authorise the Head of Planning and Environment to approve any minor changes to the document arising from the PPA Group Authorities meeting on 10 January 2017 prior to its submission to National Grid following that meeting.

Background and Advice

The North West Coast Connections project (NWCC) is a nationally significant infrastructure project proposed by National Grid. Whilst the County Council has been consulted on this project previously, this is the first formal consultation under the Planning Act 2008.

The Proposal:

North West Coast Connections consists of 4 new 400kv transmission circuits (a series of power lines carried on a run of new pylons or underground) linking the proposed new nuclear power station at Moorside in Cumbria to the national distribution network in Carlisle and in Heysham. In Lancashire the project will consist of a tunnel carrying the cables under Morecambe Bay, a tunnel head building with cooling fans, and a substation extension.

The proposal is for this to be constructed over several years, expected to start in 2019. Construction will consist of the sinking of two tunnel heads, one on land north of Middleton and a smaller one just off Penrod Way, and the boring of a tunnel under Heysham and Morecambe Bay, together with the construction of an islet in the middle of Morecambe Bay. The tunnel head site at Middleton is likely to see a significant level of construction works and vehicle movements, albeit for a temporary period of time. An indicative layout for the construction works at Middleton is provided in the consultation material at Figure 4.14.1. (Appendix C refers).

The Consultation:

Under Section 42 of the Planning Act 2008 (the Act) National Grid is required to consult with local authorities on their proposal before they submit their application to

the Planning Inspectorate. National Grid is also consulting with the public and land owners at this stage, under Section 47 of the Act.

Under a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) agreed between National Grid and the local authorities affected by the proposal (the PPA Group Authorities) the consultancy WYG has been commissioned to provide some technical expertise to the PPA Group Authorities to assist in interpreting the technical information published as part of the consultation, and to work with the PPA Group Authorities to produce a combined 'PPA Group Authorities response' to the consultation.

This consultation runs from 28 October 2016 to 6 January 2017. The PPA Group Authorities have written to National Grid expressing their concern that this consultation period is too short given the scale of the project proposed and the amount of technical information in the supporting documents.

Key Headline Issues

Officers from all of the PPA Group Authorities have submitted initial comments on the proposal to WYG.

WYG has used these comments, and their technical specialists' interim views, to produce a Preliminary Environmental Impact Headlines report (Appendix 'A' refers). This report provides a summary of the key headline issues identified by the PPA authorities, which are listed below:

- Landscape and visual impact
- Socioeconomic, recreation and land use
- Tunnel head impacts
- Transport and connectivity
- Terrestrial and avian ecology
- Historic environment and cultural landscapes

Specific issues raised in comments submitted to WYG by Lancashire County Council officers include:

- The layout and size of plant and buildings on the Middleton tunnel head, and the construction activities proposed, are not properly addressed in the consultation material. These have the potential to give rise to significant amenity impacts on local residents, and along with the lack of information described above, there is a lack of information relating to the avoidance of these impacts, and their mitigation;
- The transport impact arising from the operation of the tunnel head construction site, in particular the delivery and removal of plant, the delivery of tunnel segments from Roosecote or further afield, and the removal of over half a million tonnes of spoil, have not been fully addressed. Neither have the opportunities of a multimodal transport strategy been fully explored and set out, particularly in relation to the movements of tunnel spoil and tunnel segments;
- Baseline ecological surveys have not been completed, and there appears to be large local loss of habitat during the tunnel head construction works, and the potential for significant impacts on the adjacent Site of Special Scientific Interest and Biological Heritage Site;

- There is likely to be an impact on local businesses arising from the tunnel head construction site:
 - The consultation material states there is likely to be approximately 380 workers at the tunnel head construction site, with 80% of the workforce likely to come from outside of the area. This is likely to result in a significant demand for worker accommodation yet the consultation material has no evidence of engagement with local suppliers on accommodation quality or on accommodation availability.
 - This could also be partly mitigated through skills training initiatives to make local out of work or underskilled people available to meet this need, and reduce the number of workers required from outside the area. This mitigation could also occur by specifying the use of local contractors wherever possible.
 - This demand for workers and materials could have an effect on other construction projects locally, yet is not quantified in the consultation material.

A key issue for the PPA Group Authorities is the impact of overhead lines proposed in the Duddon Estuary. Whilst it does not directly affect Lancashire the consultation material refers to discounted alternatives one of which, the High Voltage Alternating Current offshore route, would see cables laid across the sea floor from north of the Duddon to Fleetwood, significantly changing the nature of the project and its effects on Lancashire. However, this is not part of the proposal consulted on and any change of this magnitude to the project would require further consultation. The PPA Group Authorities response seeks mitigation to the visual impacts of the project on the Duddon Estuary, but does not specify a preferred alternative.

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Environment, Planning and Cultural Services agrees to submit this report, and Appendix 'A', as the Council's interim response to the North West Coast Connections section 42 consultation.

Building on this earlier work, and further more detailed analysis of the consultation material, WYG technical specialists have produced the combined 'PPA Group Authorities response'; expressed as a Technical Appraisal of the proposal. The Executive Summary of this Technical Appraisal is attached at Appendix 'B'. There have been several meetings of the PPA Group Authorities to consider the drafting of these documents. A final meeting will take place on 10 January to agree the final version of the documents to be submitted to National Grid as the combined 'PPA Group Authorities' response. This extension has been agreed with National Grid.

It is recommended that the Cabinet Member agrees to the County Council signing up to the combined 'PPA Group Authorities response', including the Executive Summary (Appendix 'B' refers), and authorises the Head of Planning and Environment to approve any minor changes to the document arising from the 10 January PPA Group Authorities meeting prior to its submission to National Grid following that meeting..

Consultations

A bite size briefing for County Councillors was held on 3 November 2016 where National Grid briefed County Councillors on the North West Coast Connections project. Several points were raised by County Councillors on skills training and the

use of local contractors. These points have been incorporated into initial officer feedback, and will be incorporated into the final response.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

The County Council is being consulted under Section 42 of the Planning Act 2008. Under Section 49 of this Act the applicant has a duty to take account of responses received under Section 42. Failure to respond to this consultation would mean the project may not be designed or undertaken in a way which reflects councillor or officer concerns, and may mean representations contained in the Local Impact Report and Statement of Community Consultation submitted at the next stage in the process receive less weight.

Financial

There are no financial risks associated with this proposal.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
PPA Group Authorities Technical Appraisal response	5 December 2016	Richard Sharples (01772 534294)
North West Coast Connections Project: Proposed Route Alignment Stage	8 December 2016	Richard Sharples (01772 534294)
North West Coast Connections Project: Stage 2 Consultation on Outline Route Corridors/Substation Siting	5 November 2014	Phil Megson (01772) 534162

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A