



New evidence shows pylon plans need rethinking

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A new independent report published today has demonstrated that National Grid has greatly overestimated the costs of burying electricity cables underground. Campaigners are now calling for current plans to build nearly 300 miles of new overhead cables to be rethought [1].

The report found that although under-grounding electricity cables is more expensive than overhead lines, the cost is just 4.5 to 5.7 times more expensive [2], not 10 to 25 times more expensive as has previously been quoted by National Grid [3].

The report did not attempt to look at the wider benefits that would come from undergrounding, such as a faster planning process and environmental and social improvements which could lead to financial savings. It did, however, acknowledge these could also be an important factor in the final overall cost of any transmission method.

These findings vindicate the arguments of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) who have questioned previous cost estimates made by National Grid. The charity is calling for power cables to be put underground in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and evidence shows the public is willing to pay more for this to happen [4].

Tom Leveridge, Senior Energy Campaigner for CPRE, says: “We believe we have been vindicated in our claims that National Grid has historically over-estimated the cost of undergrounding power cables.

“This evidence from this report shows that the current public consultations into nearly 300 miles of new power lines have been proceeding with inaccurate information. We want National Grid to call a halt to any planned construction and restart the consultation process but this time with the real costs and benefits made clear.

“We are also calling for a further study that looks at the wider social and environmental costs of energy transmission.”

The Campaign for National Parks (CNP) has also welcomed the report’s findings. Its Deputy Chief Executive **Ruth Chambers** said:

“We welcome the report’s conclusion that underground solutions for electricity transmission are cheaper than previously thought - this is significant for the landscapes of the UK and will prevent cost being used as an excuse not to place infrastructure underground. There will now be a more level playing field between

overhead and underground technologies, making it easier for solutions that respect England's finest landscapes to be implemented."

The report was produced by Energy consultants Parsons Brinckerhoff in association with Cable Consulting International, with the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) providing quality assurance.

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A two page media briefing on undergrounding electricity cables is available to download: <http://bit.ly/xyHDYB>

As well as a map of current and proposed overhead 400v power lines: <http://bit.ly/z1ywHH>

Notes to Editors

[1] Institution of Engineering and Technology, Comparative costs of new electricity infrastructure, 31 January 2012, <http://bit.ly/wWN2OR>

[2] Cost of overhead lines = £2.2m - £4.2m per KM, Underground cable (UGC) = £10.2m - £24.1m per KM, Deep tunnel = £12.9m - £23.9m per KM.

[3] Letter dated 7 December 2010 from Martin Kinsey, Senior Project Manager, National Grid to David Kirkland, KEMA Ltd. Copied available from the CPRE Press Office. National Grid cost estimates: Overhead lines: £1.6 million - £1.8 million per km; Underground cables (direct burial): £18 million - £22 million per km; Underground cables (tunnel): £26 million - £45 million per km

[4] Brunswick Research, Attitudes to Energy Transmission: Summary of Key Findings, <http://bit.ly/zF5TlN> and London Economics, Review of company surveys on consumers' willingness to pay to reduce the impacts of existing transmission infrastructure on visual amenity in designated landscapes, <http://bit.ly/zvTE3n>

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