

## Press Release

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For immediate release

### Visual impact of overhead powerlines to be reduced in AONBs

The **National Association for AONBs** today welcomed plans to reduce the visual impact of electricity infrastructure in nationally protected landscapes across England and Wales following a new study by National Grid.

Sections of high voltage lines in four Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) have been shortlisted as having the most significant landscapes and visual impact, following an independent study overseen by leading landscape expert Professor Carys Swanwick.

The study assessed 571 km of National Grid's transmission lines in England and Wales's most treasured landscapes. It forms part of the Visual Impact Provision project, a major initiative to reduce the visual impact of existing transmission lines in protected areas.

The project will make use of a £500 million allowance made available by Ofgem\* until 2021.

The AONBs which have been singled out as having existing transmission lines with the most significant visual impact are

- Dorset AONB
- High Weald AONB
- North Wessex Downs AONB, and
- Tamar Valley AONB

Part of the £500 million fund will be used by National Grid to mitigate the visual impact of sections of transmission lines in some of these locations. A range of engineering measures could be implemented including the replacement of existing overhead lines with underground cables, the re-routing of existing lines, through to the screening of substations or overhead lines from public viewpoints.

Howard Davies, NAAONB CEO said: "People are passionate about AONBs and care deeply about their future so we are delighted to be working with National Grid on their VIP Project. AONB partnerships are trusted convenors who make things happen, translating vision and national policy into local action and we look forward to being involved in the positive changes that will take place over the next seven years."

**The National Association for  
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty**

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George Mayhew, National Grid representative on the project Stakeholder Advisory Group, comments: “National Grid’s electricity network is vital to our way of life, but this project will help reduce its impact on some of our most treasured landscapes. At the heart of the project is collaboration between National Grid, those organisations tasked with protecting Britain’s treasured areas and the people who live in and visit these landscapes.”

National Grid is also set to use part of the £500 million allocation for smaller localised visual improvement projects which can be accessed by all AONBs and National Parks with existing National Grid electricity infrastructure.

Set to be launched in 2015, this landscape enhancement initiative has an ambition to provide up to £24 million over six years. The aim will be to reduce the visual impact of National Grid’s existing infrastructure and improve the related visual quality of the landscape.

Chris Baines, Chair of the Stakeholder Advisory Group, who launched the VIP Project at the NAAONB’s Landscapes for Life Conference (<http://www.landscapesforlifeconference.org.uk/page/3/>) said: “By working with a range of stakeholders at a national level, we have a major opportunity to preserve and enhance beautiful landscapes throughout England and Wales. While a number of projects will involve removing existing pylons and replacing them underground, there is also the opportunity to undertake local landscape enhancement initiatives that will help AONBs and National Parks with National Grid’s power lines benefit from this important project”

## Ends

Contact Jill Smith, **Communications Manager, NAAONB** on [jill.smith@landscapesforlife.org.uk](mailto:jill.smith@landscapesforlife.org.uk) or 07969 888823 for further information.

## Notes to Editors:

### **\*About Visual Impact Provision**

All electricity transmission owners are funded by a price control mechanism which is agreed with and set by Ofgem, the electricity and gas markets regulator. Ofgem has agreed a set of price controls and incentives for the period from April 2013 to March 2021. The new price controls and incentives include a provision of £500 million to mitigate the visual impact of existing electricity infrastructure in nationally protected landscapes in Great Britain. For **National Grid**, which is the electricity transmission owner in England and Wales, this means considering the visual amenity of our existing infrastructure in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and National Parks. See <http://www2.nationalgrid.com/UK/in-your-area/visual-impact-provision/>

The **National Association for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (NAAONB)** was formed in 1998 as an independent organisation to act on behalf of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. It became a Charity in October 2014. Its membership is largely composed of AONB Partnerships and Conservation Boards, local authorities whose boundaries include AONBs and individuals who are concerned to improve AONB management and funding arrangements. For further information about the NAAONB see <http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk/about-the-association.html>

**Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**, along with National Parks, are considered to be the most special landscapes in the country and belong to an international Protected Landscape

Family. There are 38 AONBs in England and Wales, and a further eight in Northern Ireland. For further information about the AONB Family see [www.landscapesforlife.org.uk](http://www.landscapesforlife.org.uk)

**National Grid** is one of the largest investor-owned energy companies in the world. They own and manage the grids that connect people to the energy they need, from whatever the source.

**National Grid** in the UK

- own the high-voltage electricity transmission network in England and Wales, operating it across Great Britain
- own and operates the high pressure gas transmission system in Britain
- own a gas distribution business delivering gas to 11 million homes and businesses
- also own a number of related businesses including LNG importation, land remediation and metering