



Department for  
Energy Security  
& Net Zero

Ross Anderson  
Northern PowerGrid  
Via Email

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Our ref: 1733U  
Your ref: RA/ENQ23037084

1 July 2023

Dear Mr Anderson,

**SCREENING DECISION BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE UNDER THE  
ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT)  
(ENGLAND AND WALES) REGULATIONS 2017 (“THE 2017  
REGULATIONS”)**

**NAME OF SCHEME: Coquet Valley Electrification Scheme**

Screening decision covering four applications for a proposed development (“the proposed development”) to:

- Convert an existing single phase 20 kilovolt (KV) overhead electricity line into a three-phase overhead line from pole 1 to pole 13;
- Build a new 20KV overhead line from pole 13 to pole 140 in the Coquet Valley, Northumberland.

The Secretary of State has considered the factors set out in Schedule 3 of the 2017 Regulations, together with the information within the supplied documentation (“the Application”) by Northern PowerGrid (“the Applicant”) in relation to the impacts on the environment of the proposed development and the views of Northumberland National Park Authority (“the LPA”). In particular, in reaching his decision the Secretary of State notes the following factors:

1. The proposed development does not fall within Schedule 1 (mandatory EIA);



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2. The proposed development falls under Schedule 2 of the 2017 Regulations as the electricity line is to be installed above ground in a sensitive area;
3. The proposed development is within Northumberland National Park as well as in Sites of Special Scientific Interest (“SSSI”). These are:
  - Lindbrigg SSSI
  - Barrow Burn Meadows SSSI
  - Barrow Meadow SSSI
  - River Coquet and Coquet Valley Woodlands SSSI
  - Harbottle Moors SSSI

Parts of the proposed development is within the Harbottle Moors Special Area of Conservation (“SAC”) and the North Pennine Dale Meadows SAC as well as going near areas of ancient woodland. A full list of the designations can be found in the appendix to this letter.

4. The applicant has consulted with the LPA and Natural England on the development. The LPA were supportive of the scheme and commented that it did not raise significant issues that would require an EIA, subject to conditions which it has requested. Natural England have granted assent to the works to be carried out between 1 September 2023 and 31 December 2023. For the works which are taking place within the River Coquet and Coquet Valley Woodlands SSSI, Natural England have provided the applicant with detailed instructions on how to carry out the work within this area. The Secretary of State has reviewed the information the applicant has provided regarding works in this area and is satisfied that suitable mitigation is in place to avoid any environmental damage.
5. The applicant had commissioned an ecological survey to be carried out in the North Pennine Dales SAC. The results of the survey were submitted to the Secretary of State along with a method of working and mitigation measures to ensure no lasting damage to the SAC is caused.
6. The LPA received a report from the council’s conservation and environment officer which objected to the development from a visual perspective. The Coquet Valley and wider Northumberland National Park is a remote region of the country with little existing infrastructure in place. The conservation and environment officer also raised concerns that, although an initial Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) has been carried out, this was not carried out during the initial design of the overhead line. There was a concern that the LVIA which was done, was not a full report and that at various points within the Coquet Valley, there will be a detrimental impact on the landscape if a new overhead electricity line were to be built in the area. The Secretary of State has been in contact with the LPA to get a



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better understanding of the concerns raised by the conservation and environment officer and was informed that they are happy for consent to be granted, and that a tree planting scheme will take place to help lessen the visual impacts of the development.

7. The applicant's client, the Ministry of Defence (MoD), is currently working with the LPA on a tree planting scheme, which will aid the biodiversity of the area and help screen out the visual impacts of the overhead line. It is noted that this proposed mitigation falls outside of the applicant's remit. However, the LPA has informed the Secretary of State that they are working with the MoD to develop a tree planting scheme within the Coquet Valley in line with the route of the proposed development.
8. One section of the overhead line goes over a scheduled monument. The applicant has consulted with Historic England to discuss how they will carry out this part of the works. There will be one span of overhead line which goes across the scheduled monument, and the poles either side of it will be outside of the boundary area for the scheduled monument. Historic England were happy with how the applicant is approaching this part of the works and informed them that a Scheduled Monument Consent from the Secretary of State for the Department for Culture Media and Sport would not be required.

Taking account of the abovementioned factors and information received, the Secretary of State concludes that the proposed works are not EIA development under the 2017 Regulations and do not require a statutory EIA as they are unlikely to have significant effects on the environment due to their nature, location and size. A copy of this letter has been sent to the LPA for information.

Yours sincerely,

John McKenna  
Energy Infrastructure Planning



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Appendix – list of sensitive areas

Northumberland National Park

Barrow Burn Meadows SSSI

Barrow Moor SSSI

Harbottle Moors SSSI Impact Risk Zone

Linbrigg SSSI

River Coquet and Coquet Valley Woodlands SSSI

Harbottle Moor SAC

North Pennine Dale Meadows SAC