

UNDERGROUNDING OF OVERHEAD POWERLINES

Purpose

To update members on the undergrounding work of overhead powerlines and seek their approval for a further proposed scheme.

Recommendations

That the JAC endorses the proposed undergrounding of overhead powerlines across Offa's Dyke Path National Trail on The Kymin.

Key Issues

- Western Power Distribution (WPD) works in collaboration with the AONB Unit on identifying a programme of undergrounding of low voltage electricity power-lines in the AONB.
- WPD require the JAC to approve new undergrounding schemes prior to further investigation and evaluation work taking place.
- The new proposed scheme is for power lines across Offa's Dyke Path National Trail on the back of The Kymin (see maps below).
- A further scheme at Kerne Bridge is with the Gloucestershire WPD team who are progressing the necessary permissions.

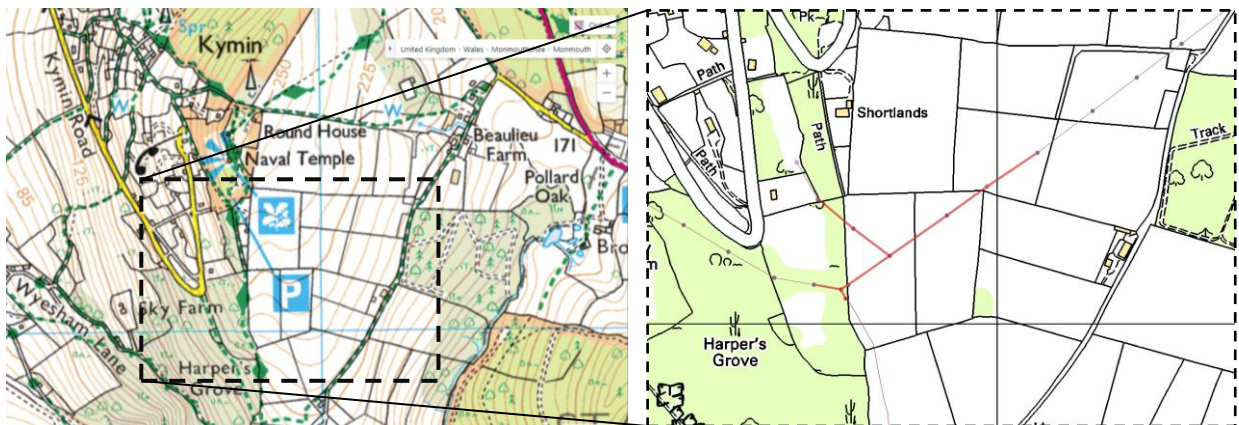
Reasons

Western Power Distribution (WPD) have a budget of £8million for undergrounding across all their regions (South Wales, the South West of England and the Midlands) in the current funding round to 2023. The AONB Development Officer continues to work in partnership with WPD to identify potential undergrounding schemes throughout the AONB. The Wye Valley AONB is covered by both the WPD South Wales and Midland Regions. Decisions on which schemes should proceed, within the corresponding Regional budget available, are taken by an area focus group attended by the respective protected landscapes in the Region.

WPD require that proposed undergrounding schemes are endorsed by the Wye Valley AONB Joint Advisory Committee prior to allocation of their budget for evaluation and, if viable, implementation.

Implications

There is one new undergrounding scheme of that is proposed to Western Power Distribution for inclusion in the current budget period to ensure full budget spend in South Wales. The scheme at the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail near The Kymin with the proposal to place underground 460m of 11kv cable and remove 7 wooden poles. Undergrounding has previously taken place removing overhead wires and poles running alongside the Offa's Dyke Path between Redbrook and The Kymin. However, that work was unable to remove some pole and wires close to The Kymin. This proposal is to extend the existing underground network to remove poles and cables from the view of walkers on the National Trail. Whilst a large portion has been removed, the remaining poles and wires, coloured red on the right hand map below, are a prominent feature in the landscape.



The scheme is currently with the South Wales WPD team who are undertaking landowner negotiations and considering the most appropriate underground route.

Background

As part of its Section 85 'Duty of Regard to the AONB' OFGEM, the official regulator for gas and electricity industry, provided a framework for allowing power distribution companies the discretionary option to underground overhead power lines.

Western Power Distribution (WPD) works with AONB and National Park partners across South Wales, the South West of England and the Midlands on undergrounding schemes that affect 'iconic sites' and manage a separate working group for AONB's across the region.