

SERIOUS CONCERNS

Llandyfaelog and the Swansea North substation. Full details of the Proposed Development are provided in Chapter 2 of this draft ES.

1.3.5 Following a period of strategic optioneering that identified a preferred connection option, the Proposed Development has been the subject of studies and consultation carried out according to a series of stages, which are illustrated in Figure 1.2 (Volume 2). These stages have sought to firstly identify and define a study area followed by broad route corridor options and then route alignment options, each approximately 300m wide, within the preferred corridor(s). Following selection of the preferred route alignment option, a preferred route alignment was derived, together with a limit of deviation. This preferred alignment (a corridor up to 25m wide for the OHL and up to 20m wide for underground sections (with a maximum working width of 16m) within which, subject to detailed design, the final OHL alignment and pole locations and underground sections will be located) will be used as the basis for the environmental impact assessment (EIA). An EIA study area will be defined (which may vary depending on the topic/ issue under consideration) either side of the Proposed Development.

1.3.6 As part of the process for selecting the preferred alignment, sections of the route alignment options were identified that would result in serious concerns for OHL. A 'serious concern' was understood to mean an adverse significant landscape and/or visual impact resulting from an OHL that cannot adequately be mitigated and is therefore unlikely to be acceptable in planning terms. WPD have therefore identified the undergrounding of the cable within these sections. Consistent with NPS EN-5¹ where there are serious concerns, the Planning Inspectorate will need "... to balance these against other relevant factors, including the need for the proposed infrastructure, the availability and cost of alternative sites and routes and methods of installation (including undergrounding)".

1.3.7 Thus, the preferred alignment subject to EIA is a corridor up to 25 m wide containing an OHL mounted on wooden pole structures or in places an

¹ DECC, National Policy Statement for Electricity Networks Infrastructure (EN-5), July 2011

- Potential impacts on FSC certification;
- Potential impacts on current Forest Design Plans; and
- Compliance with Woodlands for Wales strategy 2009.

8.4.6 The study area for the purpose of this chapter includes the Proposed Development (including the stated limits of deviation), which is the land potentially directly affected by the Proposed Development, plus an area up to 25 m either side of this corridor to account for potential tree removal¹ adjacent to an OHL where the tree height exceeds the topple distance. The potential for indirect impacts to soils, agriculture or forestry over longer distances arising from the scheme is very low.

Identification and assessment of impacts and mitigation measures

- 8.4.7 Potential impacts on land use, agriculture and forestry were identified from considering the planned construction, operation and decommissioning of the proposed development. Decommissioning impacts were judged to be no different or worse than those likely to arise during the construction phase, most activities being the reverse of the construction phase activity. As such, decommissioning impacts are not considered separately.
- 8.4.8 The assessment considers activities that would result in impacts ranging from adverse to beneficial as well as acknowledging those that would have a negligible impact. The assessment includes primary/ direct impacts on receptors/ resources as well as secondary/ indirect impacts that may be mediated through a connected pathway (or 'knock-on' effects either from an impact source or as a side-effect of proposed mitigation). The assessment considers frequency and duration of the impact occurrence – either temporary (e.g. only during the construction phase activity) or permanent. Care was taken to identify and distinguish temporary actions that would result in an impact that could have a long term effect on the resource

¹ Note that this is assumed as a worst case but in reality trees do not necessarily need to be felled. Within a certain distance from a high voltage cable the vegetation is subject to a routine maintenance check and on-site decisions are taken as to the most appropriate and desirable approach to vegetation management, preferably by leaving in place (where tree location and health indicate that topple risk is low) and pruning/ lopping rather than total removal.

(e.g. tree felling). Also, impacts occurring at a high frequency (i.e. repeatedly) may have the same effect on a receptor/ resource as a permanent impact if the recovery time of the resource is greater than the frequency of the repeated impact event. Short term impacts (less than a season or year) were distinguished from medium term (up to 5 years) or long term (greater than 5 years).

- 8.4.9 Where applicable the extent of the impact was determined – ranging from a local level (confined to the ‘working width’ of the construction activity or affecting the adjacent local area); district level (e.g. relevant parish or Borough); regional level (e.g. Carmarthenshire); National level (Wales/UK); or International level. Where not stated explicitly then it has been assumed that direct impacts would be localised.
- 8.4.10 Significance was established as a function of sensitivity of the receptor and magnitude of change (impact) affecting the receptor, which is defined in the tables below. With respect to forestry operations, sensitivity of the receptor (i.e. the importance of forest resource) is considered to be of constant importance and ascribed a ‘medium’ rating since implementation of the Proposed Development will be achieved with the agreement of NRW forest managers and as such significance has been assigned largely as a function of magnitude of change.

Table 8.1 – Sensitivity/ importance of the environment

Receptor sensitivity/ importance	Description
High	Marginal agricultural holdings. High quality (Grade 1, 2 or 3a) Agricultural Land. Soils highly vulnerable to structural damage and erosion including peatlands.
Medium	Grade 3b Agricultural Land. Soils seasonally susceptible to structural damage or erosion.
Low	Large agricultural holdings. Grade 4 Agricultural Land. Soils with medium to coarse material with some resistance to structural damage.

Negligible	Agricultural Land poorer than Grade 4. Soils with greater resistance to structural damage.
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Table 8.2 – Magnitude of impact

Magnitude	Definition
High	Where the extent of impacts on land use and forestry is large in scale, and a large number of activities will be affected (either positively or negatively).
Medium	Where the extent of impacts on land use and forestry is small in scale, but a large number of activities will be affected (either positively or negatively). <i>Or:</i> Where the extent of impacts on land use and forestry is large in scale, but only a small number of activities will be affected (either positively or negatively).
Low	Where the extent of impacts on land use and forestry is small in scale, and will only affect a small number of activities (either positively or negatively).
Negligible	Where the extent of impacts on land use and forestry is barely noticeable in scale, and will only affect a very small number of activities (either positively or negatively).

Table 8.3 – Significance of potential effects

Magnitude	Sensitivity/ Importance			
	High	Medium	Low	Negligible
High	Major	Major	Moderate	Minor
Medium	Major	Moderate	Minor	Negligible