Kronospan 132kV Cable

Green Infrastructure Statement

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1.1 This Green Infrastructure Statement (GIS) has been prepared in relation to the proposed Kronospan 132kV Cable Installation (the Proposed Development). The GIS has been prepared in support of a planning application made to Wrexham County Borough Council (WCBC).

1.1.2 The GIS has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of paragraph 6.2.12 of *Planning Policy Wales*[1] (PPW), which states that:

"A green infrastructure statement should be submitted with all planning applications. This will be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development proposed and will describe how green infrastructure has been incorporated into the proposal. In the case of minor development this will be a short description and should not be an onerous requirement for applicants. The green infrastructure statement will be an effective way of demonstrating positive multi-functional outcomes which are appropriate to the site in question and must be used for demonstrating how the step-wise approach (Paragraph 6.4.15) has been applied".

1.1.3 The GIS draws upon information presented in greater detail in other drawings and documents that form part of the planning application including:

i) Planning Drawings.
ii) Planning Statement (PS), and supporting assessments comprising:
    a) Planning Statement Technical Appendix 1: Historic Environment Assessment (HEA).
    b) Planning Statement Technical Appendix 2: Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA).
    c) Planning Statement Technical Appendix 3: Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS).
    d) Planning Statement Technical Appendix 4: Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA).
    e) Planning Statement Technical Appendix 6: Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA).

[1] Welsh Government, 2024. *Planning Policy Wales, edition 12*

f) Planning Statement Technical Appendix 7: Highways Technical Note (HTN).

2.0 THE SITE OF THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

2.1.1 The Site of the Proposed Development (the Site) comprises the routes of proposed cables which would run between the existing Scottish Power Energy Networks (SPEN) Legacy to Oswestry 132kV wood pole overhead line and the Kronospan 132kV substation (the latter approved under planning permission P/2022/1080).

2.1.2 The proposed cable routes are illustrated on (Planning Drawing) Route Planning – Key Plan Drawing (EDES-1249-101-002A-P02) and (Planning Drawing) Route Planning (EDES-1249-101-002-P02-Sheets 1-19). Each route would be located within the existing highway corridor, other than within the existing Kronospan landholding, at a short section where the southern cable route would run beneath the A5, and at the points of connection with the existing Legacy to Oswestry 132kV overhead line.

2.1.3 The Site is located within the town of Chirk and the countryside to the north-east and east. Chirk is located off the A5 and just north of the England-Wales border (within Wales). The residential areas of the town mostly lie east of the B5070, with the existing Kronospan Facility to the west of this road. Chirk town centre lies south-east of the existing Kronospan Facility and includes various commercial and community buildings and areas of public open space.

2.1.4 A sewerage pumping station and one property, owned by the Applicant, are to the immediate north of the existing Kronospan Facility. Immediately north of this is the site of the consented North Access Road and associated development (approved under planning permission P/2022/1080), including the 132kV Substation referred to above.

2.1.5 An undulating agricultural landscape extends east of Chirk. The A5 corridor runs north-south in what is almost a straight line along the eastern edge of a ridge approximately 1km east of the existing Kronospan Facility. The Brynkinallt estate (Grade II* Registered Park and Garden) is bisected by the road. The wholly separate Brynkinallt Park lies west of the road, at the eastern edge of Chirk, on reclaimed colliery land.

2.1.6 The existing Legacy to Oswestry 132kV overhead line is further east, approximately 1.6km from the A5, and approximately 2.7km from the consented Kronospan 132kV substation. This runs through the valley of the River Dee, which is a steep-sided landform, approximately 60m lower in elevation than the land to the west, and sections of which are densely wooded.

3.0 THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3.1.1 The Proposed Development would comprise is the installation of two 132kV circuits and cables running between the existing Legacy to Oswestry 132kV wood pole overhead line and the consented Kronospan 132kV substation.

3.1.2 The cable routes are summarised as follows:

i) (Red) Cable Route 1 (approximately 4.4km long) – 132kV single circuit cables and one fibre cable.
ii) (Green) Cable Route 2 (approximately 4.8km long) – 132kV single circuit cables.
iii) (Orange) Fibre Cable Route (approximately 3.3km long) – one fibre cable.

3.1.3 Apart from the immediate approach to make separate connections to the existing Legacy to Oswestry 132kV overhead line, both the Red and Green Cable Routes (Cable Routes 1 and 2) would be in the same cable trench (the southern cable route).

3.1.4 The Orange Fibre Cable Route would be in a separate trench (the northern cable route).

3.1.5 The fibre cable (to be installed in the Red Cable Route and the Orange Fibre Cable Route are required to ensure the 132kV cables can be monitored (to ensure the protection of system conditions and enable periodic testing).

3.1.6 The location of each route is illustrated on (Planning Drawing) Route Planning – Key Plan Drawing (EDES-1249-101-002A-P02) and (Planning Drawing) Route Planning (EDES-1249-101-002-P02-Sheets 1-19).

3.1.7 The proposed cables would typically be installed via open trench. Where specific engineering or environmental constraints prohibit this, horizontal directional drilling would be used.

3.1.8 Upon completion of trench excavation and ducting installation, the trenches and cable joint bays would be backfilled and the surface would be reinstated to its original specification.

3.1.9 Two no. cable sealing end platforms would be installed to provide the interface (or 'transition point') between the proposed underground cables and their proposed connection to the existing Legacy to Oswestry 132kV overhead line. Details are illustrated on (Planning Drawing) H-Pole Cable Terminal (LDT-ENA-435016 Rev C Sheets 1-2).

3.1.10 The existing field access to the northern transition point would need to be widened, and there would be an associated loss of existing hedgerow vegetation. Replacement planting would be provided post-construction.

3.1.11 In addition, temporary compounds and working areas would be required during construction, the locations of which are illustrated at Planning Statement Appendices G, J and K. These areas would be reinstated post-construction.

4.0 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE BASELINE

4.1 Site Context

4.1.1 The baseline environment of the Site is described in detail in the assessments that support the PS. The HAR, AIA, AMS, EcIA and LVA are the key relevant documents.

4.1.2 The Site itself is located largely within the highway corridor. Land west of the B5070 within the Kronospan landholding will be developed as part of the North Access Road and associated development (approved under planning permission P/2022/1080). The transition points would be located within existing pasture fields. A short section of the southern cable route located at the point where this would cross the A5, would run outside of the highway corridor through existing pasture and woodland cover.

4.1.3 The highway corridor itself runs through both urban and rural areas. Within Chirk, the roads are predominantly surrounded by suburban housing, or by the Kronospan Facility. However, Chirk town centre includes commercial and civic premises and a recreation ground. The town centre is designated as a Conservation Area, and several individual buildings are listed.

4.1.4 To the east of Chirk, the Brynkinallt Estate Registered Park and Garden extends either side of the A5. The southern cable route runs along the northern boundary of this historic parkland, with short sections located wholly within the boundary.

4.1.5 Outside of the town, other than the B5070, the roads are minor rural roads. East of the A5, they often reduce to single track width. Roads tend to be bounded by hedgerows on both sides, some of which include trees. Scattered properties are located at the roadside.

4.1.6 Some of areas of woodland within the Dee Valley are Ancient Woodland, one of which extends up the Site boundary. The river itself is designated as the River Dee and Lake Bala Special Area of Conservation (SCA) and the Afon Dyfrdwy Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

4.1.7 The majority of each cable route is located within a Special Landscape Area (SLA), designated locally within the WCBC Unitary Development Plan. As part of the process to inform the replacement WCBC Local Development Plan, the SLA boundary has been substantially revised, and the cable routes lie outside this revised boundary, with a short section of the northern cable route adjoining the revised boundary

4.2 Committed Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

4.2.1 Recent woodland planting has been undertaken by the Applicant to discharge planning conditions attached to several permissions.

4.2.2 Some of these conditions required the preparation of a landscape strategy to mitigate the visual effects of the Kronospan Facility from public viewpoints. As such, the Applicant submitted a landscape strategy for the area surrounding the Kronospan Facility to WCBC in 2017 (updated in 2018). The landscape strategy was approved in 2019, and planting has subsequently been carried out within land owned by Kronospan. This planting (which comprises narrow woodland belts) is beginning to become effective in screening views, including views towards the Site.

4.2.3 Further similar planting is required by several more recent (i.e. post-2019) planning consents.

4.2.4 Additional measures to enhance the cultural heritage resource within the surrounding area have also been proposed by the Applicant via a Conservation Management Plan which will be implemented and managed via a s106 Agreement attached to the planning permission for the North Access Road (P/2022/1080).

5.0 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

5.1 Design Approach

5.1.1 The approach to the environmental design of the Proposed Development is described in the Planning Statement.

5.1.2 In relation to the requirements of PPW, the design has followed the step-wise approach, which is set out in paragraphs 6.4.15-6.4.17 of that document as follows:

i) Avoid (and enhance).
ii) Minimise (and enhance).
iii) Mitigate/restore (and enhance).
iv) Compensate on site (and enhance).
v) Compensate off-site (and enhance).

5.2 Design Considerations

5.2.1 Key considerations were siting the Proposed Development in a location that avoids or minimises the potential for adverse effects on the wider environment, including impacts on:

i) Biodiversity (habitat, trees and hedgerow).
ii) The historic environment (below ground archaeology).
iii) The water environment (drainage ditch and watercourse crossings).
iv) Agricultural land.
v) The amenity of local residents.
vi) Traffic management.

5.2.2 Following consideration of the potential benefits and disadvantages of cable installation in open fields versus cable installation within the highway corridor, the Applicant determined that the effects of installation within the highway corridor would result in a lower level of environmental effect. Installation within open fields would require the construction of temporary haul roads, greater environmental management, and more extensive restoration, all of which are more likely to result in adverse effects on nearby receptors.

5.3 Proposed Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

5.3.1 The effects of the Proposed Development would be very limited in scale and extent and would be largely temporary in duration (and hence reversible following construction), with only very localised permanent above ground infrastructure at the transition points.

5.3.2 Loss of tree cover is not envisaged, subject to monitoring of construction activities by a qualified Arboriculturist.

5.3.3 As such, mitigation and enhancement would comprise:

i) The implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which would include standard best practice measures to manage the construction process.
ii) Arboricultural supervision of excavation works near trees, with subsequent pruning, and/or removal/replanting if deemed necessary on-site.
iii) New native hedgerow planting to replace the section lost to accommodate the widened access to the northern transition point. This would comprise a more diverse range of species than the existing hedgerow and thus would be more 'species-rich' and more beneficial for biodiversity.

5.3.4 In relation to the step-wise approach, the Proposed Development would generally avoid or minimise environmental effects due to its proposed location. Any replacement planting would comprise compensation (on-site) and enhancement.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1.1 The Proposed Development would not result in any direct physical disturbance to any sensitive environmental features, other than very localised removal of hedgerow, which would be compensated for by replacement planting. Environmental effects would be very limited in extent and duration. There would be no residual effect on green infrastructure.