



Morocco-UK
Power Project
Powered by Xlinks

Statutory Public Consultation Booklet

16 May 2024 to 27 June 2024



xlinks.co



Morocco-UK Power Project

STATUTORY PUBLIC CONSULTATION BOOKLET

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Introduction

Over the next few decades, the UK will undergo a revolution in the way it powers homes, businesses and transport.

To combat climate change, we need to replace the fossil fuels that once provided us with power with new sources of clean energy. We also need to increase the amount of electricity available to us, as we replace petrol cars with electric ones and gas boilers with other ways of heating our homes, schools and hospitals.

Importantly, this needs to happen fast. To meet its commitments to combat climate change, the UK needs to stop using carbon fuels in generating electricity by 2035. **The Morocco-UK Power Project (the 'Project') exists to help close this gap.**

By connecting the UK to reliable wind and solar resources available in Morocco, it will provide enough firm, clean power to meet around 8% of the country's needs. This is why the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero ('the Secretary of State') recognised the parts of the Project located in the UK as nationally significant last year.

We have already made substantial progress in developing our proposals. That includes speaking to many people in Devon across two stages of consultation to ensure that our proposals have been shaped by local views and expertise. We have refined our proposals considerably in response to local feedback and our ongoing environmental studies.

We're grateful to everyone who has already taken the time to speak with us and shape our proposals. We are asking for your views on our updated proposals as part of a final round of consultation. The feedback we receive at this stage will help shape the evolution of our proposals so that they are ready for submission to the Secretary of State as part of an application for development consent.

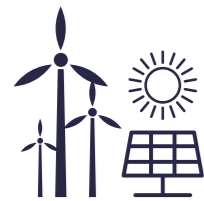
Our consultation will be held from **Thursday 16 May 2024 to 11:59pm on Thursday 27 June 2024.**

This booklet provides you with information about how we have updated our proposals, how we have identified and addressed potential environmental impacts, and how to take part in the consultation. The feedback we receive at this stage of consultation, along with outputs from technical assessments and environmental surveys, will inform our proposals for the Proposed Development. We encourage you to attend our consultation events and to share your views as part of this consultation.

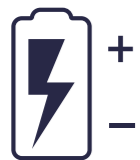


Richard Hardy
Project Director

Introducing the Morocco-UK Power Project



11.5GW
Solar and wind generation



22.5GWh
Battery storage



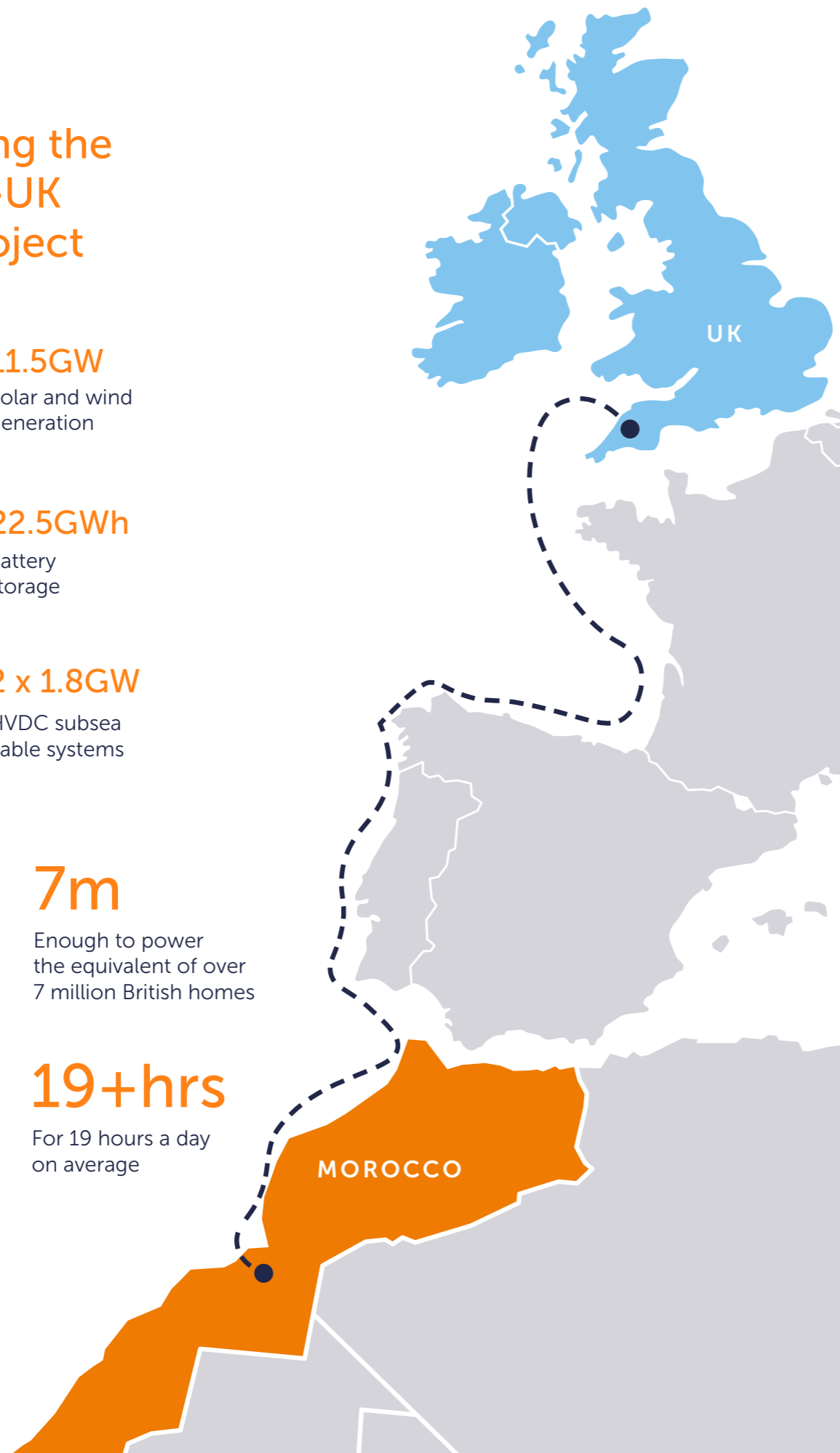
2 x 1.8GW
HVDC subsea cable systems

8%
Capable of meeting 8% of GB's annual electricity demand

7m
Enough to power the equivalent of over 7 million British homes

3.6GW
Supply of reliable renewable power

19+hrs
For 19 hours a day on average



Background

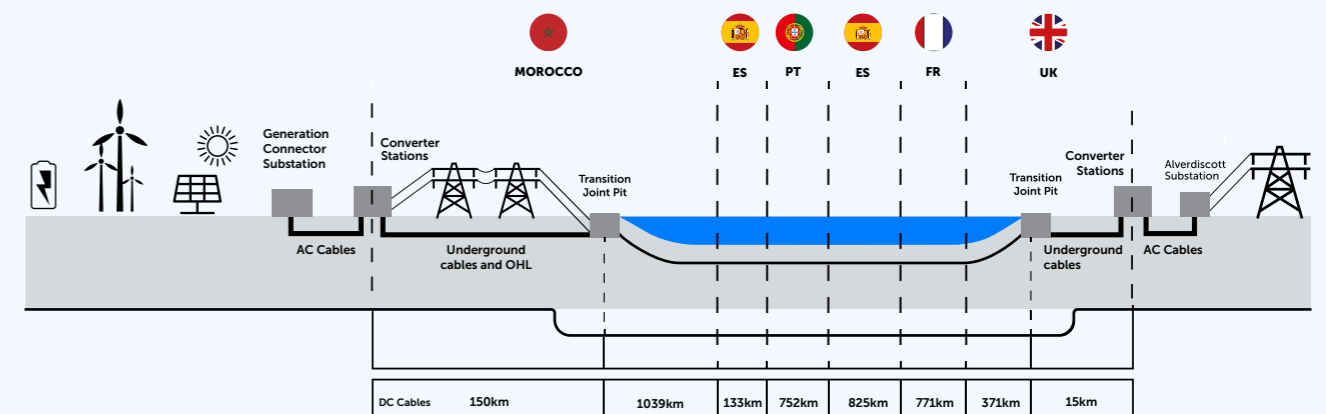
OUR MISSION

Xlinks 1 Limited ('Xlinks') exists to capture the power of nature to generate a near constant, affordable, clean energy supply and connect it to the point of consumption in real time.

The Project proposes a new electricity generation facility entirely powered by solar and wind energy combined with a battery storage facility. Located in Morocco's renewable energy rich region of Guelmim-Oued Noun, it intends to be connected exclusively to Great Britain via approximately 4000km (2485 miles) of High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) sub-sea cables.

This Project would deliver 3.6 gigawatts (GW) of reliable wind and solar energy to Great Britain for 19+ hours a day on average. This is enough to provide affordable, clean power to the equivalent of over 7 million British homes and once complete, the Project would be capable of supplying 8% of Great Britain's electricity needs.

This would complement the energy we already generate from the sun and wind in the UK. When domestic renewable energy generation in the United Kingdom drops due to low winds and short periods of sun, the Project can provide access to the benefits of long hours of sun and consistent winds in Morocco to provide a firm but flexible source of zero-carbon electricity. The inclusion of a 22.5GWh/5GW battery facility in Morocco means this energy would be reliably available when it's needed in Great Britain.



Overview of the Morocco-UK Power Project

The Morocco-UK Power Project

We are seeking your views on all aspects of the UK elements of the Project ('the Proposed Development') as part of this statutory public consultation, which encompasses the following:

1 Offshore cables

Electricity would move between Morocco and the UK along four cables buried under the seabed. This would use proven HVDC technology which is already used to transport electricity between the UK and other parts of Europe. The approximate length of the cable corridor in UK waters is 370km.

2 Landfall

The cables are proposed to come ashore at Cornborough Range, about 2.5km south of Westward Ho! and 4km west of Bideford. The offshore cables would join a set of onshore cables here. This would take place underground in a safe and secure casing called a 'joint bay'.

3 Onshore cables

Four cables are proposed to run between the landfall at Cornborough Range and the converter stations. These would all be buried underground in pairs. We have carefully considered feedback from previous consultations, as well as potential environmental impacts, in proposing the route for the cables. For example, the planned cable route now avoids Abbotsham Village.

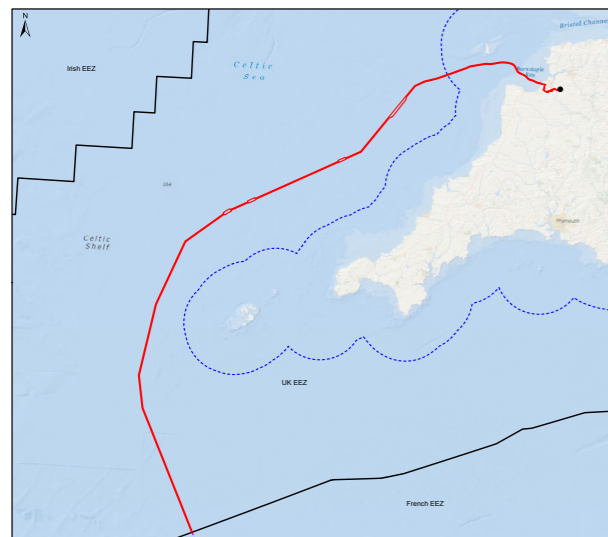
4 Converter stations

We need to convert electricity from the HVDC used to transport it efficiently from Morocco to High Voltage Alternating Current (HVAC) before it can be used in this country's electricity system and our homes.

We propose to do this at two converter stations at the old Webbery Showground, close to the point that the Proposed Development would connect into the National Grid. Each converter station would be able to convert 1.8GW of electricity from HVDC to HVAC.

5 Connection point

The Project would connect into the National Grid via a new substation adjacent to the existing Alverdiscott Substation. This would allow for the onward transmission of 3.6GW of electricity to where it's needed in the country. 12 HVAC cables would link the converter stations to the substation.



Offshore cable route



How have we developed our plans?

We made three commitments to the community when we first consulted on the Proposed Development in 2022:



We would **engage with local stakeholders** to ensure that we have the **fullest understanding of how to minimise disruption** during construction.



We would **explore all opportunities** to contribute to **social and economic development** in Devon.



We would be a **good neighbour to communities** in Devon and the natural environment.

These have informed our design principles - we challenge ourselves to find the best solution, balancing the needs and inputs for all aspects of engineering, environment and community. In designing the Proposed Development, we have asked:

- Is the engineering feasible and what are its impacts?
- Can we contribute to our community and our neighbours?
- Can we protect local ecology and the environment?
- Can we mitigate our impacts with an alternative engineering solution?
- What do our stakeholders think – have we listened?

THE PROJECT DESIGN ENVELOPE:

We can't always confirm the specific details of parts of the Proposed Development, such as the equipment we would use within the converter stations, right now. Where this is the case, we seek a consent based on a 'maximum design scenario' when looking at potential environmental impacts - e.g. if we don't yet know how tall a part of the converter buildings would be, we have assessed their largest possible height. You would see this referred to as a 'Project Design Envelope' or 'Rochdale Envelope' approach in technical documents.

How have we got to the current plans?

We have developed our proposals over time, taking into account technical requirements, our ongoing environmental surveys and studies, and feedback from stakeholders and the community.

Identifying a grid connection

We worked with National Grid to identify a suitable location for the Project to connect into Great Britain's electricity transmission system. The route that we need to take cables around Spain and Portugal means this search focused on the South West of England and Wales. Locations considered as part of this process included Alverdiscott, Pembroke in South Wales, Seabank near Bristol, Indian Queens near Newquay and Exeter.

Our work alongside National Grid identified Alverdiscott National Grid Substation as the preferred option for connecting the Project into the grid. This is because it had sufficient space close to the point of connection for the converter stations and a lower risk of interactions with nearby infrastructure.

Identifying landfall options

This included assessing multiple potential landing sites, considering factors such as distance from the point of connection at Alverdiscott, the suitability of the land for installing cables, the need to avoid steep cliffs, environmental constraints, and accessibility. We selected the proposed landfall at Cornborough Range because it was considered preferable in a number of areas to install the cables there than at other potential locations.

Converter station location

We conducted a search for suitable sites for the converter stations. The factors we considered to identify our initial proposed site included:

- distance from Alverdiscott National Grid Substation
- the availability of enough space to build the converter stations
- accessibility from existing roads
- avoiding impacts on environmental and heritage features, homes, areas at higher risk of flooding, and Public Rights of Way.

Through this process, we identified the site that we initially presented in our first round of consultation.

Onshore cable route corridor

At the same time as identifying proposed locations for the converter stations and landfall, we looked at options for the cables connecting them. We considered a range of factors in identifying our initial cable route. These included :

- the locations of settlements;
- existing infrastructure;
- statutorily designated ecological sites; and
- heritage features, and areas at high risk of flooding.

Initial public consultation (November 2022)

We published our early proposals at this time to seek feedback on the proposed location of the converter stations and our options for cable routes.

The proposals we published at that stage included locating the converter stations south of their current proposed location, south of Gammaton Cross.

Second public consultation (April-May 2023)

We carefully considered feedback from our first round of consultation and updated our proposals. This included:

- moving the converter station site to the old Webbery Showground to reduce visual and construction impacts on homes
- changing the route of our cable corridor to avoid impacts on new homes and the primary school in Abbotsham
- presenting more detailed information about construction.

We sought feedback on these updated proposals at a second round of public consultation.

Statutory consultation

Since the last consultation, the Secretary of State recognised the Proposed Development as nationally significant. We have also continued our environmental and technical assessment to refine our proposals. Changes made since the last consultation include proposing to rotate the eastern converter station south and west to reduce its potential environmental impacts.

The planning process

Last year, the Secretary of State recognised the Proposed Development as nationally significant and requiring development consent under section 35 of the Planning Act 2008. This recognised the major contribution it could make to the country's need for clean, secure and reliable energy.

The change means we need to apply for a Development Consent Order (DCO) from the Secretary of State to construct and operate the Proposed Development rather than seeking planning permission from Torridge District Council.

The DCO application process is managed by the Planning Inspectorate on behalf of the Secretary of State. You can find out more information about the DCO process by visiting the Planning Inspectorate's website: infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk

The stages that a DCO application must pass through involve extensive consultation and local involvement. We have included a diagram of the application process on page 13. We are currently at the statutory consultation stage. Following this, we will have regard to all of the feedback that we receive, further refine the Proposed Development design and prepare our DCO application for submission.

Once we have submitted the application, the Planning Inspectorate will review it and decide whether it can be accepted for Examination. If the application is accepted for Examination, an independent Examining Authority will be appointed to examine the application and to make a recommendation to the Secretary of State.

Once a recommendation has been made, the Secretary of State will then decide whether the DCO can be granted.

CONSULTING LANDOWNERS:

We are seeking to bring forward the Proposed Development with the agreement of landowners. However, it is standard practice for projects of this nature to seek powers of compulsory acquisition within the DCO to ensure the project can be delivered. The Planning Inspectorate (PINS) would determine whether it is appropriate to grant those powers. We are therefore working to identify and consult with people who have an interest in land which may potentially be affected by the Proposed Development before we submit our application for a DCO.

We are looking to permanently acquire the land for the converter stations, but for the cable route we will be looking for temporary access during construction and then an easement for access to underground cables where necessary for maintenance. The boundaries shown in plans in this document show the proposed extent of land affected currently, but we will continue to refine this as we progress our design and EIA.



Assessing impacts

The Proposed Development is classed as development requiring assessment of likely significant effects on the environment under the Infrastructure Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (EIA Regulations). This means we need to conduct a formal assessment of its likely significant effects and consult on that assessment.

Our EIA will look at the Proposed Development's potential environmental effects. These will include benefits as well as negative impacts. The purpose of the EIA process is to make sure that where we have identified potential impacts, we adopt measures in our design to avoid, address or mitigate them. EIA is broken down into many topics that we need to assess, across the construction, operation, maintenance and decommissioning of the Proposed Development.

We have already done a lot of work to get to know the land required for the Proposed Development, through site visits and surveys. This has helped shape the design of the Proposed Development.

We are now ready to publish the initial findings of our EIA. These are included in a document called the Preliminary Environmental Information Report (PEIR), which includes a non-technical summary, that we have published as part of this consultation. You can find out how to access the PEIR in the final section of this booklet.

Feedback from this consultation will inform our ongoing EIA. We will submit a document called an Environmental Statement (ES) setting out the final results of our assessments as part of our DCO application.



The converter station site

THE PROPOSALS

Our proposals include two converter stations, located at the old Webbery showground west of the existing National Grid Alverdiscott 400kV substation. Called 'Bipole 1 (East)' and 'Bipole 2 (West)', these would convert electricity from the HVDC received from Morocco to the Alternating Current (AC) used in our homes.

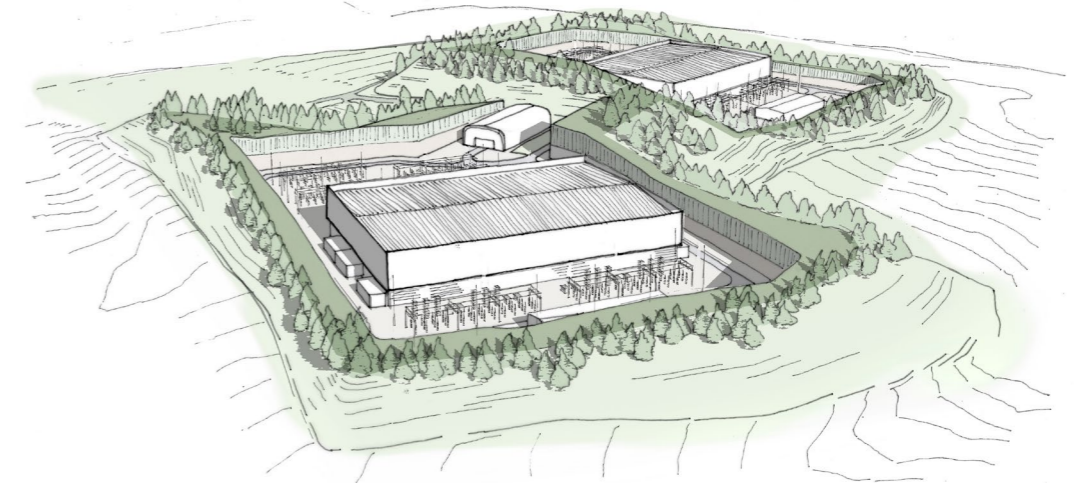
The equipment which would convert the electricity – known as valves and reactors – would be housed in a weatherproof building called a converter hall. Outside of the converter hall, there would be a variety of Direct Current (DC) and AC electrical equipment, such as transformers. The equipment located outside can withstand weather. Two control buildings (one per Bipole) would be required to monitor the electrical control systems managing the flow of electricity through the conversion process from DC to AC.

DC electricity is vital for transmission over a long distance efficiently, but it can't be used in our laptops, kettles and televisions. The converter station's primary purpose would be to change the DC electricity back into AC so that the electricity can be sent onwards to the National Grid for use where it's needed in homes, schools, hospitals and businesses.

Around Bipole 1 (East) and Bipole 2 (West), the converter station site would include the supporting buildings where people would work and critical spares could be stored, along with the landscaping and infrastructure shown on the artist's impression on Page 17.

The total area of the proposed converter station site is around 32ha (79 acres). This includes around 13 ha (32 acres) for the converter station buildings.

Artist's impression of the converter station site showing a potential appearance of the converter station for indicative purposes



REDUCING OUR IMPACT:

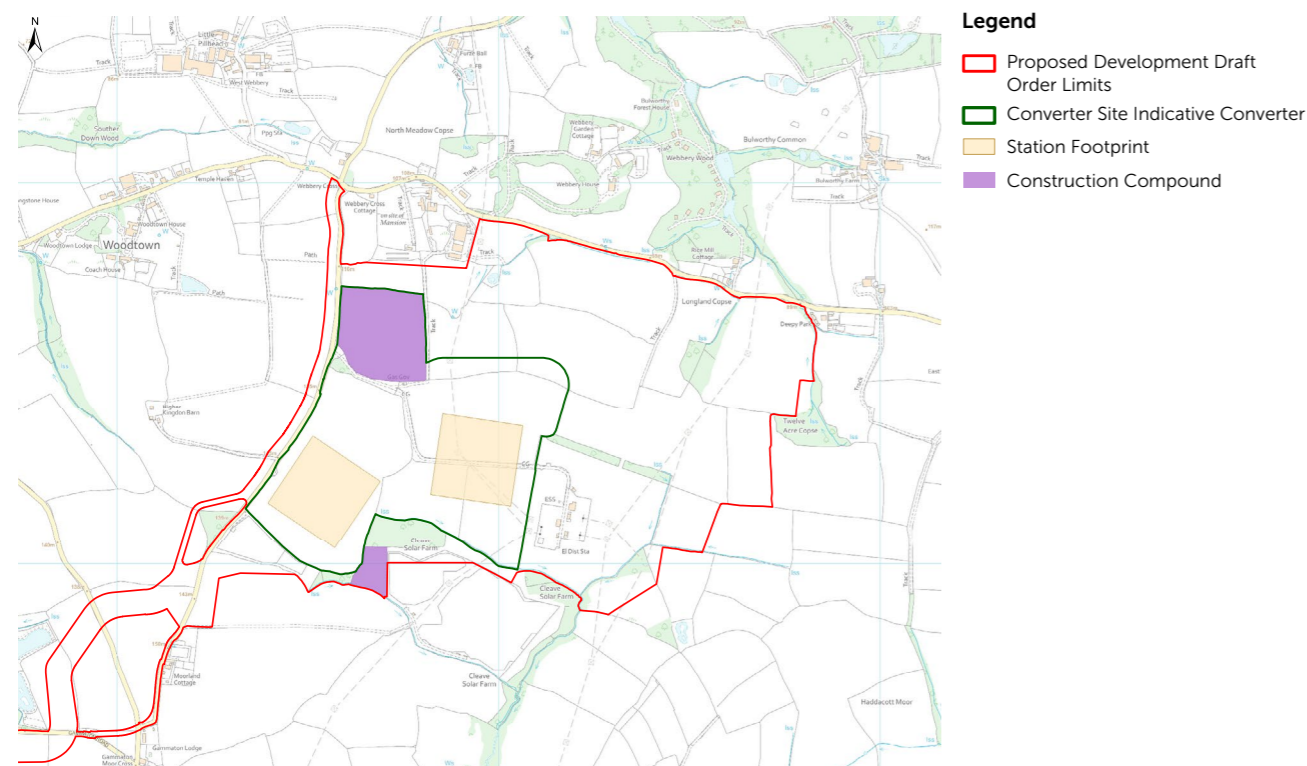
The current proposed site is closer to the National Grid substation, therefore the cables would be shorter, meaning less impact on the land.

We chose the old Webbery showground as the proposed site for the converter stations in direct response to consultation feedback, to reduce the number of homes potentially impacted by construction or views of the converter stations. We consulted on a conceptual layout in April 2023.

We have now updated the proposed layout of the converter stations, rotating Bipole 1 (East) south

and west. This allows more space to include further landscaping on all sides of the converter stations to further reduce how visible it would be from homes and other viewpoints.

Our design would also involve digging down to set the converter station buildings further in the ground. This would help to reduce how much they could be seen from the north and west.



Indicative 2D converter station plan

DEVELOPING OUR DESIGN FURTHER:

Some parts of the converter station, such as the shape of the buildings and the materials that will be used on the outside, need to be developed alongside manufacturers. This can only happen at a later stage in the design process.

We will therefore submit a 'Design Code or Design Principles' with our DCO application. This is a document which sets out rules for how the design of the buildings will be developed further. We welcome feedback which will help inform this document.

CONNECTING TO THE NATIONAL GRID:

National Grid would need to carry out some upgrades to Alverdiscott National Grid Substation to accommodate the Proposed Development. This would include a new 400kV substation adjacent to the existing substation. It would carry out the upgrade, but we have included the work required in our EIA to ensure all potential environmental effects relating to the Proposed Development have been assessed.

Building the converter stations

Should the Proposed Development be granted development consent, we expect construction of the converter stations to take place over around 72 months – starting in 2026 and finishing in 2032. Levels of activity will vary during this period. We welcome your feedback on the construction process set out in these pages.

How and when we build the converter stations will be informed by their design, which will take into account feedback from this consultation, further environmental assessments and ongoing technical work. We will set out more information about the likely phasing, activity and timings for this period in our DCO application - and would welcome your feedback on these.

This will include an Onshore Outline Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which will set out the measures we will take to limit and manage impacts from construction. An Outline CEMP will be submitted as part of our DCO application and is available in draft as part of the PEIR. The Outline CEMP will set out mitigation

measures, controls and monitoring to reduce environmental effects during construction such as dust, noise and disturbance and would welcome your feedback on these too.

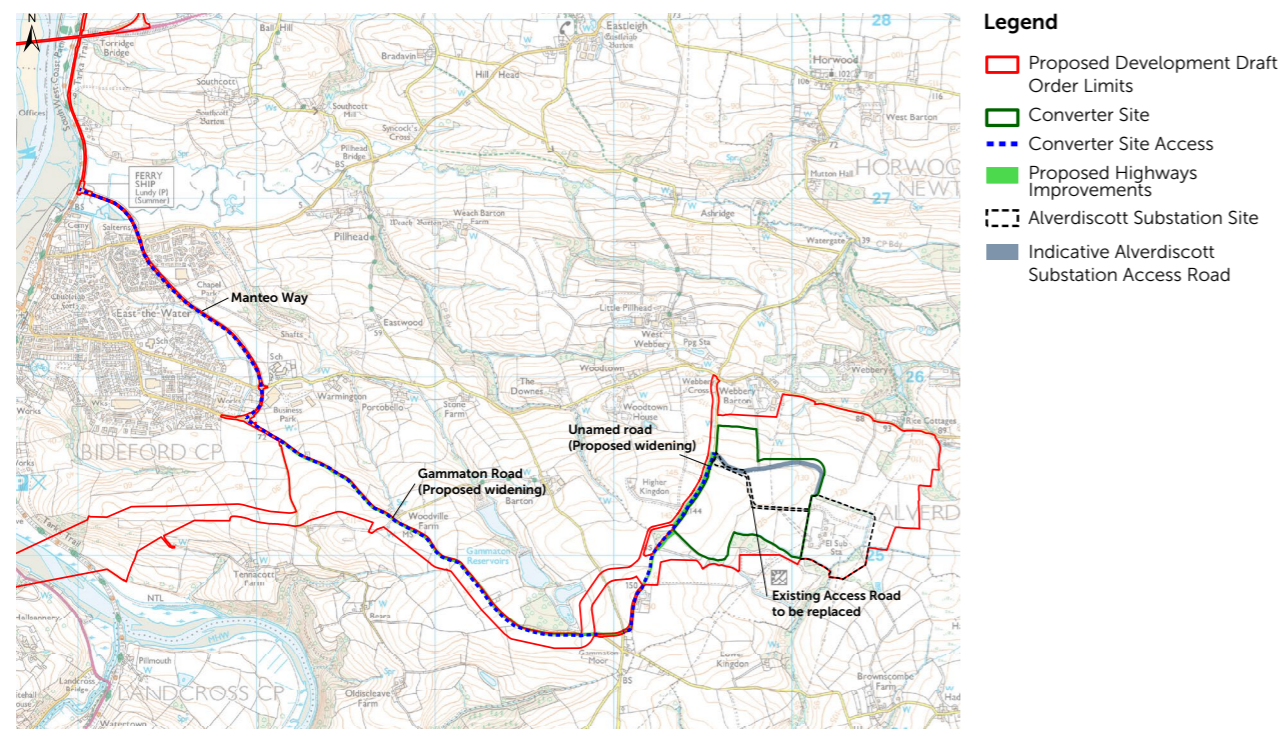
We would also prepare a Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP) setting out how we will manage vehicle and people movements to and from onshore construction sites as part of our DCO application. This will include agreed routes for accessing the converter station site, hours for deliveries, and activities to reduce our impact such as wheel-washing.

Working hours would typically be between 7am to 7pm Monday to Friday and typically 7am to 1pm on Saturday, with no working on Sundays or Bank Holidays. There may be times where we need to work outside these hours – for example, when we need to move a very large item like a transformer that cannot be broken up (called an 'Abnormal Indivisible Load'), we may do this at night or in the early hours of the morning. We would agree activities like this in advance with local authorities and communicate in advance with residents.

We will need to do some work before we can build the converter stations:

- **Gammaton Road construction compound:** We would establish a temporary construction compound at Gammaton Road. This would be the main construction compound for all onshore construction work and allow for staff parking, unloading materials, storage areas, welfare facilities and offices.
- **Haul road:** We would build a temporary haul road from the construction compound adjacent to Gammaton Road and the minor road leading north from Gammaton Cross towards the converter station site. This would reduce the need for construction vehicles to use Gammaton Road up to Gammaton Cross.
- **Utilities diversions:** We would need to divert existing utilities connections within the Converter building site to enable earthworks to proceed. These works would likely be completed by the relevant utilities companies prior to the earthworks commencing.
- **Road improvements:** We would need to improve the roads we would use to access the converter station site in places, including road improvement works at Gammaton Moor. We are looking at options for this, including improvements to the Manteo Way/Gammaton Road junction, selective widening of Gammaton Road, a new junction west of Gammaton Moor Crossroads and a new section of public highway, or selective widening of roads from Gammaton Cross to Webbery Barton, we would welcome your feedback on these proposals.
- **Earthworks:** To prepare the site on which the converter stations would be built, we would cut away soil from some areas of the site and build landscaping bunds in others. This is referred to as a 'cut and fill' technique. It would create a level platform for building the converter stations and help us screen views of them, once built.

To make the platform, we would aim to use as much of the soil from the areas dug out on site as possible. The amount we need to dig out and use for landscaping would be determined by our ongoing design.



Construction access arrangements

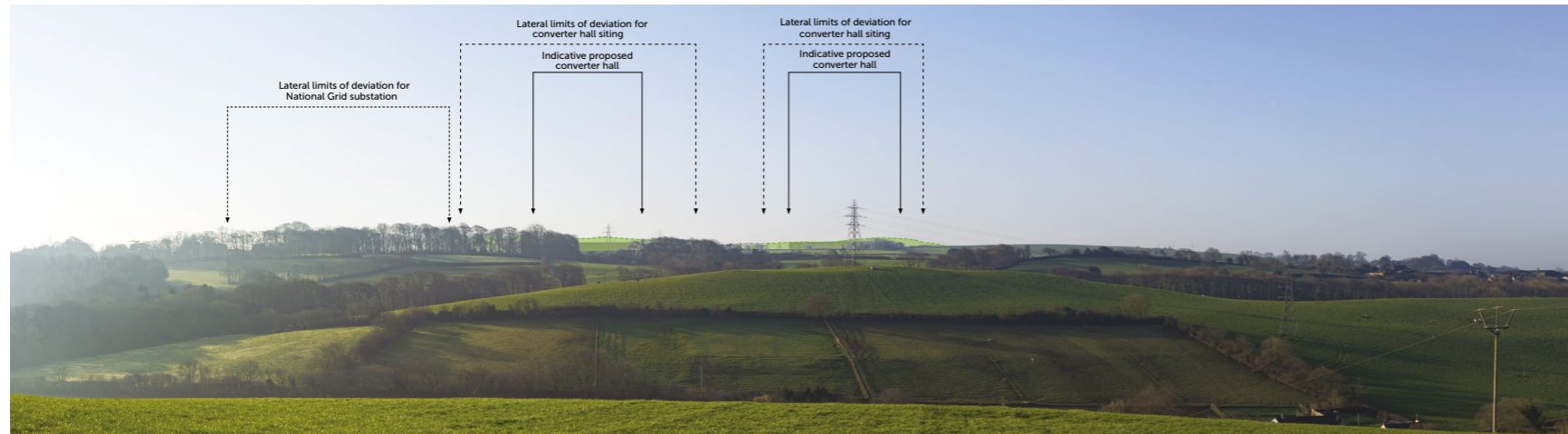
MOVING MATERIAL:

Building the converter stations would require the safe, efficient transport of materials to and from the site. We are proposing that vehicles travelling to and from the converter station site would use the A39, then follow Barnstaple Road, Manteo Way and Gammaton Road to reach the construction compound between Tennacott Lane and Gammaton Road. The majority of vehicles would then use the haul road, we would welcome feedback on this.

MOVING PEOPLE:

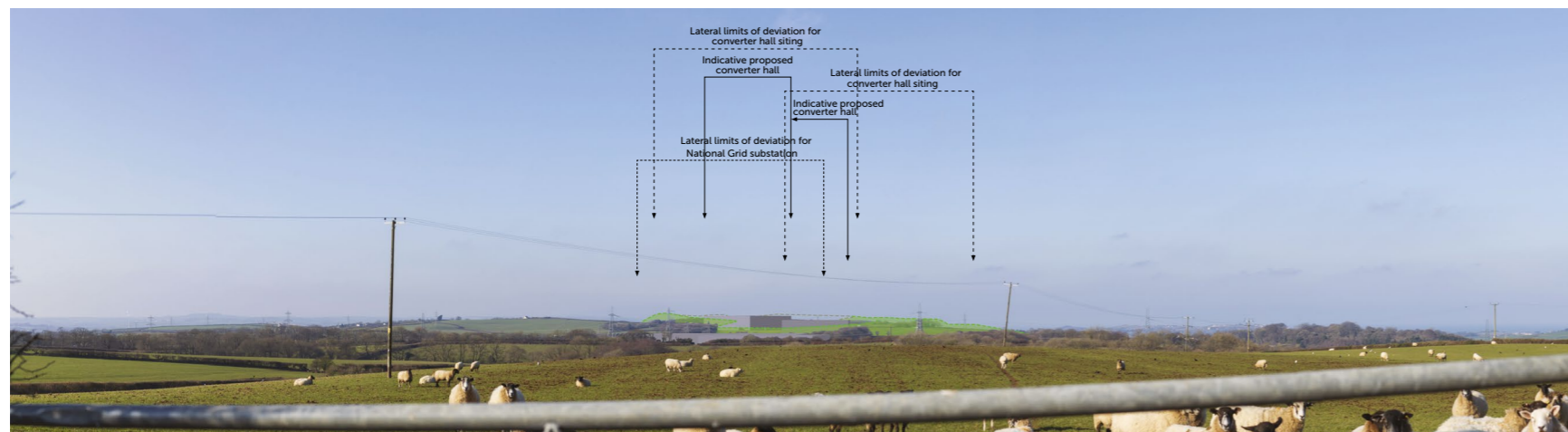
At the very peak of construction, we would expect up to 400 staff on site each day. Parking facilities would be located in Gammaton Road construction compound, with staff using a park and ride facility here to access the converter construction site and onshore cable route from the Torridge river to the converter station, we would welcome feedback on this.

Indicative images of the converter station site

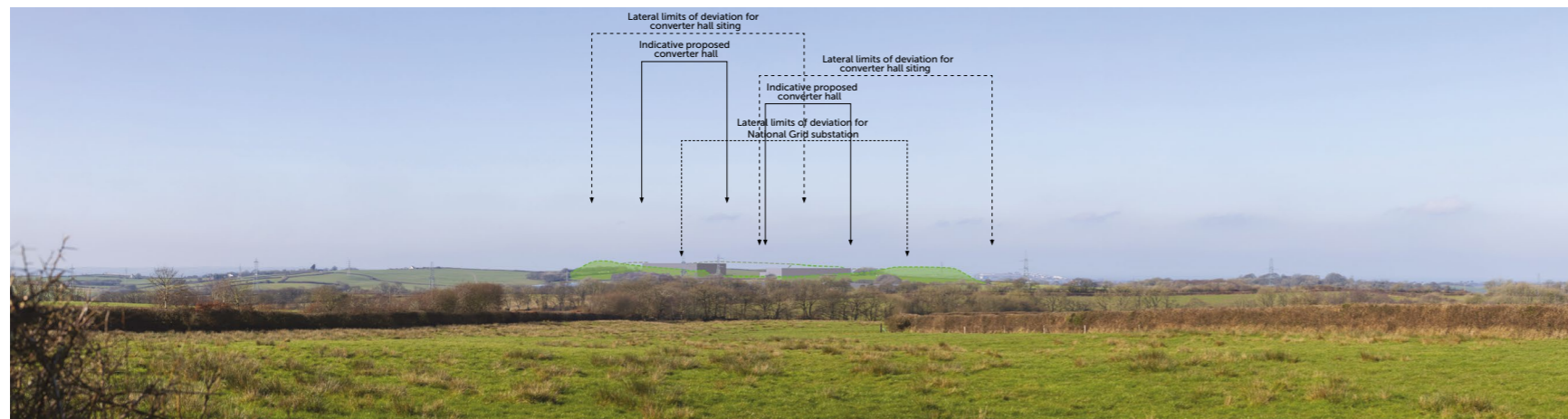


These photomontages are designed to give an indication of how visible the converter station site could be from different locations. The green line show the largest possible parameter that we have assessed in the PEIR, including bunding and other landscaping. Our design will continue to evolve with feedback from this consultation and our EIA.

Photomontage showing indicative view south from public right of way Newton Tracey Footpath 4 to the south of Horwood.



Photomontage showing indicative view west from junction of minor road with B3232 at Alverdiscott.



Photomontage showing indicative view west-northwest from minor road to the south of Alverdiscott.

Larger copies of all these images are available online and at consultation events.

Assessment

We have identified a number of potential effects from the converter stations through the EIA process, as well as some initial proposals for how we would avoid, address or mitigate them.

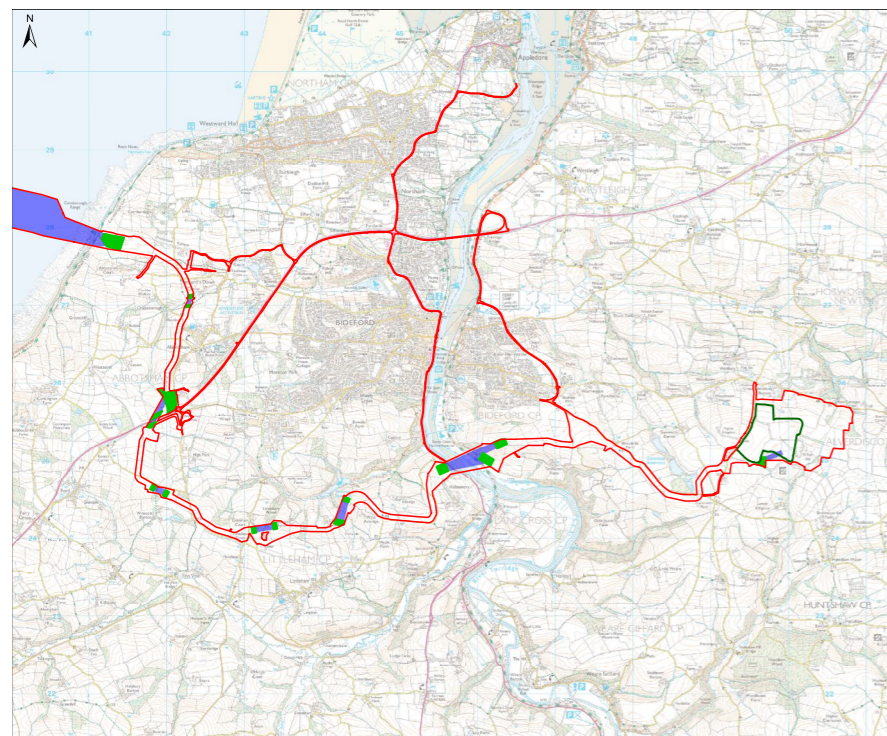
| | EFFECT | MITIGATION | | EFFECT | MITIGATION |
|--|--|---|--|--|--|
|  Ecology | There would be some permanent habitat loss of improved grassland and semi-improved grassland at the converter site. | We are proposing to provide onsite and offsite habitat creation, improvements, enhancements and compensation. These would contribute a minimum net gain in biodiversity of 10%. |  Ground conditions | There is a suspected cattle burial pit within the converter site. We need to understand the potential impacts of contamination from this pit as a result of digging. | We would put in place a pollution prevention plan, based on the Environment Agency's pollution prevention guidance. This would include measures to identify and avoid any potential contamination. Construction workers would also wear appropriate personal protective equipment. |
|  Traffic and transport | Construction would result in maximum of 545 additional vehicle movements per day, including 105 Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs). The majority of these would be travelling to and from the converter station site. | The Outline CTMP will include measures for managing vehicle movements, including agreed routes for accessing the converter station site, hours for deliveries, and activities to reduce our impact such as wheel-washing. |  Air quality | There is potential for dust during construction. | We would adopt a Dust Management Plan, which will include the Institute of Air Quality Management's guidance on controlling dust. These include, for example, the use of hoarding where dust may be produced and avoiding leaving construction vehicles running unnecessarily. |
|  Noise | While there is the potential for noise during the building and operation of the converter stations, their location means the impact of this would be limited. | The converter station buildings are designed to reduce the impact of noisy equipment. The Outline CEMP will include measures to reduce impacts from noise during construction. |  Land use | Building the converter stations would result in a loss of agricultural land. | We are still carrying out surveys to understand the quality of the agricultural land at the converter station site and would present more information on this as part of the ES. |
|  Landscape | There is potential for landscape character and visual impacts from the converter buildings. | We propose to mitigate this using cut-and-fill earthworks and the creation of bunding to screen the buildings. There would be planting on top of the bunds. |  Climate change | There will be emissions associated with the construction of the converter site. | We will explore opportunities to reduce construction related emissions. Overall, the Proposed Development will result in a significant carbon saving due to its provision of renewable energy. |
|  Archaeology | There is potential for setting impacts on a Scheduled Monument including an Iron Age enclosure and a Roman marching camp. This would be as a result of the potential landscape impacts of the converter buildings. | This impact would be mitigated by the measures adopted to address the potential landscape impact of the converter buildings |  Socio-economics | It is expected that a proportion of the construction workforce would require accommodation locally. | We will work with local authorities to identify any potential mitigation needed for impacts from this during the construction phase. |
|  Hydrology | The Proposed Development would increase the non-permeable area locally. New areas of hardstanding may also affect groundwater flow. | While the overall flood risk for the converter station is low, we would agree a Drainage Strategy with relevant stakeholders. This would be designed to maintain existing surface water and groundwater discharge rates. | | | |

The onshore cables

THE PROPOSALS

We would install four HVDC cables in pairs underground for around 14.5km along a single corridor from the proposed landfall at Cornborough Range to the converter station site. The width of this corridor would vary depending on the technique required to install cables, but will typically be 65 metres during construction and 32 metres once the cables are installed.

Once the installation of the underground HVDC cables is complete, the land would be reinstated to its previous use and condition. There would be no permanent infrastructure above ground along the HVDC cable route. The converter station site would connect to the new substation proposed to be built at Alverdiscott National Grid Substation using 12 HVAC cables. These would all be buried underground and located within the converter station site or National Grid substation.



- Legend**
- ▭ Proposed Development Draft Order Limits
 - ▭ Proposed Converter Station Site
 - ▭ HDD Compound
 - ▭ Indicative HDD Cable Crossing

Working areas for cable installation

DEVELOPING OUR ROUTE:

We have sought to select an underground cable route that avoids or minimises disruption to local communities and the environment. In selecting our preferred route corridor, we have taken into account consultation feedback, environmental effects, engineering requirements, construction requirements and how the land is currently used. This has included re-routing the cable corridor around Abbotsham in response to consultation feedback.

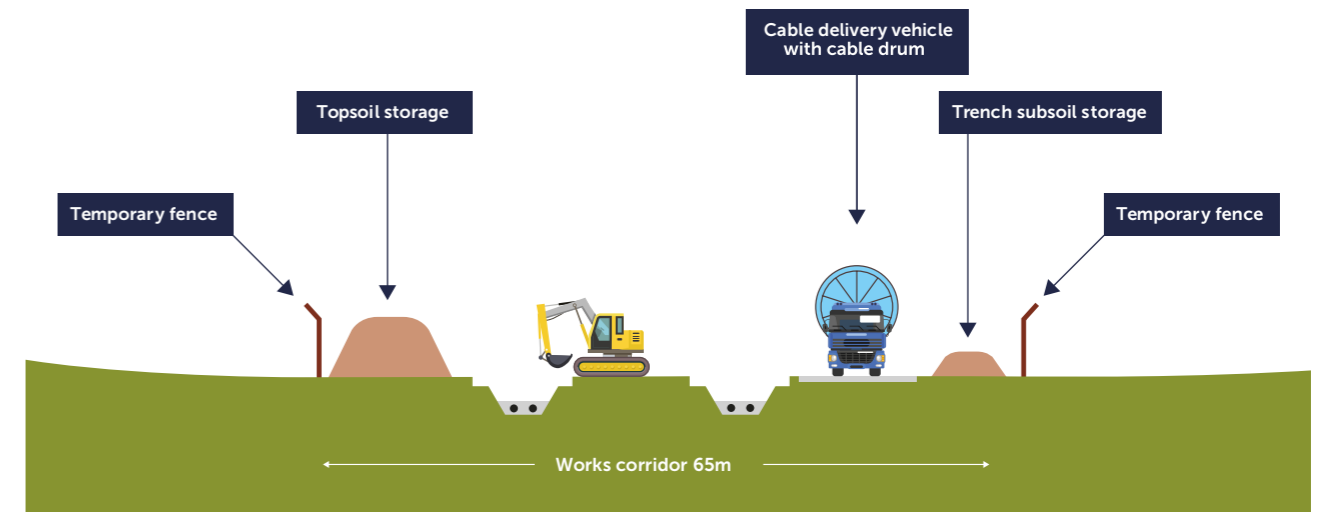
CONSTRUCTION

We would work in phases to install the cables across each of the zones shown in the plan on the facing page. Overall, it would take around two years to install the cables – but we would only be working in each zone for a part of this. All of the measures set out in our Outline CEMP and Outline CTMP see page 18 would apply to the areas where we would install the onshore cables.

The cables would be installed in ducts, each generally about 1km long. In most places, we would dig a trench, install a duct, restore the land over the duct, and then pull the cable through the duct. Where we need to cross obstacles such as the River Torridge or a major road, we would use trenchless installation techniques like Horizontal Directional Drilling (HDD). This involves digging down either side of the area to be crossed, drilling underneath them, and installing the duct. Each section of cable would be joined together in a safe and secure underground casing called a 'joint bay'.

We would need to carry out some works before we begin installing the cables:

- **Construction compounds:** We would establish a small number of temporary construction compounds (primarily at proposed HDD locations) in addition to the main construction compound off Gammaton Road.
- **A386 improvements:** We would improve an existing junction along the A386 to provide access to the area where we would install the cables under the River Torridge using HDD.



Indicative diagram of cable installation

Assessment

We have identified a number of potential effects from the onshore cables through our EIA, as well as some initial proposals for how we would avoid, address or mitigate them.

| | EFFECT | MITIGATION |
|---|---|--|
|  Ecology | We have identified some effects on hedgerows and grassland during installation. In places, these could impact species including bats and dormice. | We would develop a Outline Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) . This would set out how we would avoid, address or mitigate these impacts. We will submit an outline version of the LEMP with our DCO application.. |
|  Flood risk | Parts of the HVDC cable route are identified as being at higher risk of flooding where they are near watercourses like the River Torridge. | We would adopt measures including locating the cables away from watercourses where possible, use of trenchless techniques to cross watercourses, and the use of permeable materials in haul roads and compounds to reduce flood risk. These would be controlled by an Onshore Infrastructure Drainage Strategy (OIDS) and Onshore Infrastructure Construction Drainage Scheme (OICDS). Taking these measures into account, we have not identified any significant impacts from flood risk from the Proposed Development. |
|  Noise | We have identified potentially significant noise impacts from trenchless techniques such as HDD. This is due to the equipment that we may use and the potential need for night-working – for example, where we are laying a cable under a road. | We are continuing to work to reduce the potential impact of noise from construction. This could include using less noisy equipment, avoiding working at night as much as possible, and shielding certain pieces of equipment. |
|  Traffic and transport | The majority of vehicles would travel to and from the converter station site, with smaller numbers involved in installing the cables. | The Outline CTMP would include measures for managing vehicle movements, including agreed routes for accessing the converter station site, hours for deliveries, and activities to reduce our impact such as wheel-washing. Taken alongside the road improvements and temporary work included in the Proposed Development, we do not expect there to be any significant effects on traffic and transport. |

| | EFFECT | MITIGATION |
|--|---|--|
|  Archaeology | There is some potential for buried archaeological assets within the onshore cable corridor. | We are carrying out a programme of trial trenching to understand the presence of buried archaeological evidence in more detail. We would prepare an outline Written Scheme of Investigation with the DCO application which would set out how we manage potential impacts on archaeology. |
|  Air quality | There is potential for dust during construction | We would adopt a Dust Management Plan, which would include the Institute of Air Quality Management's guidance on controlling dust. These include, for example, the use of hoarding where dust may be produced and avoiding leaving construction vehicles running unnecessarily. |
|  Climate change | There would be emissions associated with the installation of the cables. | We would explore opportunities to reduce construction related emissions. Overall, the Proposed Development would result in a significant carbon saving due to its provision of renewable energy. |
|  Landscape | There would be some temporary effects on landscape character and visual impacts while we are installing the cables. | We would always ensure that our construction sites are well managed and maintained, including the use of hoardings and minimising use of lighting as much as possible. |

The offshore cables

THE PROPOSALS

Electricity would move from Morocco to the UK along four cables either buried in or protected on top of the seabed. To ensure the most efficient method, electricity will be transmitted using proven HVDC technology, already used to transport electricity between the UK and Europe.

Within UK waters, the cables would be located in a corridor around 370km in length, from the edge of the UK's exclusive economic zone (EEZ) to the point they are proposed to reach shore at Cornborough Range. The cables would be placed in pairs with a fibre optic cable which would allow us to monitor the cables once installed up until the point they approach the land. The cables would then be separated out as they approach the shore.

Ultimately, the space that the cables would occupy once installed is one metre wide for each pair of cables.

DEVELOPING OUR ROUTE:

We have completed multiple studies and surveys to inform our proposed route offshore. These include investigations of water depth, seabed features and geohazards, metocean influences, external stakeholders (e.g. seabed leaseholders, general fishing activities, shipping etc) and environmental constraints such as marine protected areas including Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), and Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ). We will continue to work with relevant stakeholders in developing our proposals offshore in further detail.

However, while we plan our route, we need to allow enough space within the corridor to take into account conditions we encounter during construction and feedback from stakeholders.

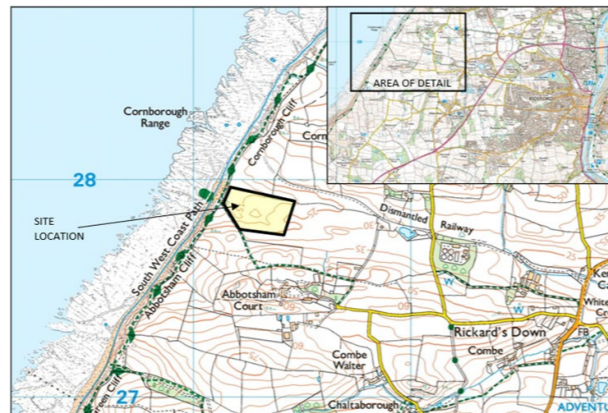
We are therefore looking at routing options in a corridor 500m wide in most places, extending to 1500m in some places where the cables would cross existing power and telecommunications cables.

COMING ASHORE:

The cables are proposed to come ashore at Cornborough Range, about 2.5km south of Westward Ho! and 4km west of Bideford. The offshore cables will join to a set of onshore cables here. This will take place underground in two safe and secure casings called 'joint bays'.



Indicative image of a cable-laying vessel



Area for HDD at Cornborough Range

CONSTRUCTION

If a DCO is granted, we expect to install the offshore cables between 2028 and 2029. This would take place in a series of phases: we would lay sections of cable of around 160km each working from the landfall initially and then moving seawards.

The offshore cables would be installed using specialised cable-laying vessels. These carry a pair of drums with a length of cable, which is then bundled and laid off the ship onto the seabed. We would then bury the cables to protect them and avoid disrupting other maritime activities, such as fishing. In most places in UK waters, we would do this using a trenching machine on a remotely operated vehicle (ROV). In places, we may also put in place additional rock protection over the cables.

There would be some amount of work we need to do to prepare the cable route before this could take place. This includes surveys to check the condition of the seabed before we begin work, debris clearance, removal of out-of-service cables along the route, boulder removal, and ploughing trenches in certain areas.

LANDFALL:

The landfall at Cornborough Range would be constructed using HDD under the seabed and shoreline, pulling the offshore cables (most likely from the sea towards the land) through underground ducts and connecting to the onshore cables at the joint bay. This would require the use of a jack-up barge where we are working near the shore. We would need to widen the existing junction from the Cornborough Sewage Treatment Works access road should we bring the cables ashore at this location.

We are aware of the need to make sure that we coordinate cable laying carefully with people and businesses using the water along the route. We are engaging with relevant authorities such as the Marine Management Organisation and Maritime and Coastguard Agency, as well as other marine users, when planning and carrying out our cable installation works.

We would also submit a number of documents with our DCO application setting out how we will plan and manage offshore construction in more detail. These include an Outline CEMP.



Vessel used as part of offshore work

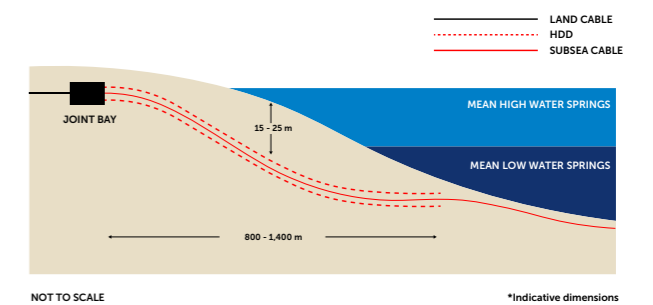











Diagram showing HDD in the intertidal area

Assessment

As the cables would either be buried in or protected on top of the seabed, the main potential impacts offshore are during the construction period or where the cables cross other infrastructure. We have conducted a range of offshore studies and surveys as part of our EIA, as well as engaging with relevant expert bodies like Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. We have identified a number of potential effects from the offshore cables through our EIA, as well as some initial proposals for how we would avoid, address or mitigate them.

| | EFFECT | MITIGATION | | EFFECT | MITIGATION |
|---|--|---|---|--|---|
|  Physical processes | We are assessing the effects of construction on sediment dispersal underwater, including how widely it could be dispersed. This is important to understand for many of our other assessments. | We are continuing to carry out our assessments in this area as well as engaging with Natural England, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Marine Management Organisation. |  Commercial fisheries | We have conducted a detailed review of fisheries along our route. The main potential impact would be during our construction phase. | We would employ dedicated fisheries liaison officers throughout the construction period. The entire design adheres to best practice in terms of avoiding impact on fisheries. This includes any cable protection being over-trawlable. |
|  Benthic Ecology | We have collected detailed survey data to inform the assessment of impacts to seabed habitats along the offshore cable corridor. The bedrock at the Landfall is designated as a geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) known as Mermaid's Pool to Rowden Gut. | Our proposed route avoids all subtidal protected sites so that there will be no loss of protected habitats. We do not anticipate any significant effects on benthic ecology. Where we have identified fragile habitats, we would route the cable to avoid impacts. At the Landfall we propose to use trenchless construction techniques (HDD) to pass beneath, and avoid any risk to the geological SSSI. |  Ornithology | There is very limited potential for impacts on marine birds. However, given the very large foraging ranges of some seabirds, this remains part of our EIA. | We propose to avoid all protected sites with the offshore cable route. We are engaging with Natural England to ensure all proposed mitigation is appropriate. |
|  Archaeology | We have collected detailed survey data. We are currently reviewing this information to identify impacts on specific archaeological features. | We have avoided all known archaeological features. Where we identify new potential features, we will develop site specific mitigation strategies. |  Other marine users | There are a number of other developments proposed offshore that we would avoid impacting. We would also seek to avoid cumulative impacts with these developments. | Our proposed route avoids the locations of renewable development areas and aggregate extraction. As part of this, we have engaged with the Crown Estate to understand future plans for offshore wind development in the region. Our construction phase does not overlap with any planned development. |
|  Fish | We have conducted a detailed desk-based assessment of fish and shellfish. | Our assessments have identified no significant impacts from the Proposed Development on fish. |  Shipping | We have conducted a detailed review of shipping in the area, including a navigational risk assessment. The main potential impact on other shipping is during our construction phase. | The Proposed Development would employ guard vessels and fisheries liaison officers throughout the construction phase. These would help ensure that our construction activity is properly coordinated to maintain safety and avoid disruption. |
|  Marine mammals | The offshore cable corridor passes through a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) designated for harbour porpoise. This cannot be avoided through the routing of the cable. We have assessed impacts from the Proposed Development including noise in this area. | There is no impulsive noise from the Proposed Development – this is one of the main potential concerns for marine mammals. We have identified no significant impacts from the proposals on marine mammals. | | | |

Enhancing the local environment

We have put protecting and enhancing the local environment at the heart of our proposals. Overall, we plan to deliver a net gain in biodiversity through the work we do in Devon.

We will develop an Outline Landscape and Environment Management Plan (LEMP), which will set out in more detail how we will create and improve local habitats to encourage biodiversity.

We are still looking at the best way to do this across the Proposed Development. Measures we could employ in the Outline LEMP include:

- Strengthening existing hedgerow and field boundaries
- Replacing or reinstating hedgerows on a like-for-like basis where these are impacted by the cables
- Planting new areas of habitat including Atlantic rainforest, scrub and species-rich grassland
- Using native and locally appropriate plant species.

We would very much welcome feedback through the consultation about what you currently value about the local environment and any opportunities you feel exist for enhancing it.

We will include more information about our plans to enhance the local environment, including an outline version of the LEMP, as part of our DCO application.



Jobs, skills and investment

We aim to be an integral player in, and to fully contribute to, the social and economic development of the communities in which we operate.

Be it in Morocco's southern villages, Devon or the coastal communities of Spain, Portugal, and France, we are consulting with local authorities and communities to maximise the economic benefit of the projects.

Locally, we expect to create 110 jobs in construction and 30 permanent full-time equivalent jobs once the converter stations are operational. As part of our DCO application, we will identify how the Proposed Development can contribute to local and regional jobs, community projects and the local economy over its lifetime.

We will also look for opportunities to source materials from the UK and encourage the use of domestic suppliers wherever practicable. We are already planning ahead here: our sister company, XLCC, is establishing a world class cable manufacturing facility at Hunterston in Scotland that will provide HVDC subsea cables for the Project.





Responding to the consultation

Your views are important and we welcome your feedback. Please respond by **11:59pm on Thursday 27 June 2024** through the methods below.

FIND OUT MORE

You can find out more about our updated proposals and take part in the consultation by:

- Getting in touch with us by phoning **0800 038 3486**, emailing **hello@xlinks.co** or writing to **Xlinks Morocco-UK Power Project consultation, FREEPOST SEC NEWGATE UK LOCAL**
- Visiting our Project website: **xlinks.co/devon**
- Coming along to our exhibitions or online events:

Monday 20 May 2024, 4pm - 8pm

Abbotsham Village Hall, Abbotsham, Bideford EX39 5AP

Tuesday 21 May 2024, 4pm - 8pm

Alverdiscott Village Hall, Stoney Cross, Bideford EX39 4PZ

Friday 31 May 2024, 1pm - 5pm

Pollyfield Community Centre, Avon Rd, Bideford EX39 4BL

Saturday 1 June 2024, 11am - 3pm

Huntshaw Parish Hall, Huntshaw, EX38 7HH

Offshore stakeholder event

Wednesday 22 May 2024, 12:30pm-4:30pm

Caddsdawn Business Centre, Caddsdawn Industrial Park, Clovelly Rd, Bideford EX39 3BE

- Get in touch by post, email or phone to request a printed copy of our consultation booklet and questionnaire or a USB containing all the consultation materials. We will post these to your address free of charge. Requests for printed copies of the PEIR will be considered on a case-by-case basis and might be subject to a reasonable printing charge.
- Collect a copy of our consultation booklet and questionnaire from the following locations (please check opening hours with the venue before attending), where a printed copy of the PEIR including a Non Technical Summary will also be available to review:

Sign-up for a Webinar

Wednesday 29 May 2024, 6pm - 7:30pm

Wednesday 5 June 2024, 6pm - 7:30pm

Email **hello@xlinks.co** to register

DOCUMENT DEPOSIT POINTS*

Northam Library

Fore St, Northam, Bideford EX39 1AW

Monday/Saturday: **10am - 1pm**

Wednesday/Friday: **10am - 5pm**

Tuesday/Thursday/Sunday: **CLOSED**

Pollyfield Community Centre

Avon Rd, Bideford EX39 4BL

Monday to Sunday: **9:30am - 11pm**

*Please check opening hours with the venue before attending

SHARE YOUR VIEWS

You can share your views on the Proposed Development by:

- Completing an online questionnaire at: **xlinks.co/devon**
- Submitting your comments or completed questionnaire by email to: **hello@xlinks.co**
- Submitting your questionnaire or comments by post (no stamp required) to **Xlinks Morocco-UK Power Project consultation FREEPOST SEC NEWGATE UK LOCAL**

All responses must be received by the consultation deadline of **11:59pm on Thursday 27 June 2024**.

The following questions are all included in our consultation questionnaire. We would particularly welcome your responses on these topics as part of the consultation:

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

1. Do you have any comments on our proposals for the converter station site during:
 - a. Construction?
 - b. Operations?
2. Do you have any comments on our proposals for onshore cables during:
 - a. Construction?
 - b. Operations?
3. Do you have any comments on our proposals for offshore during:
 - a. Construction?
 - b. Operations?
4. Do you have any thoughts on benefits to the community and how we can support local initiatives?
5. Do you have any thoughts on opportunities that you feel exist locally to enhance the local environment, particularly biodiversity?
6. Do you have any other comments you think we should consider?



Next steps

We will consider all the feedback that we receive at this stage of consultation, along with outputs from technical assessments, and environmental surveys to help us refine our proposals.

Following further development to finalise our proposals, we propose to submit our DCO application, including a Consultation Report showing how we have taken account of feedback, to the Planning Inspectorate. We anticipate this happening in autumn 2024. The Planning Inspectorate will appoint an independent Examining Authority to examine our proposals and make a recommendation on the application to the Secretary of State, who will make the final decision on whether or not to grant development consent.

You can get in touch with us at any time throughout this process using the contact details on this page.

CONTACT US

Phone: **0800 038 3486**

Email: **hello@xlinks.co**

Website: **xlinks.co/devon**

Post: **Xlinks Morocco-UK Power Project consultation, FREEPOST SEC NEWGATE UK LOCAL**

Notes



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