

P L A C E

ONGOING PROJECT – UNDERGROUNDING OF NATIONAL GRID 400kV OVERHEAD TRANSMISSION LINES

Page 1

PLACE is a group of artists / initiators with a particular concern for landscape quality.

Most people are familiar with the idea of endangered species. There are also endangered experiences. An empty sky, for instance, or the dark of the night sky unaffected by manufactured light, both of which would have been common experiences in the relatively recent past, have all but disappeared from the British Isles. Spatial freedom in landscapes clear of human structures is ever more rare. Absolute aloneness is difficult to find.

A sense of the frailty and inconsequence of human life, when immersed in the vastness of the elements, gives a much needed and powerful change of perspective. We believe that humanity is diminished by the ongoing loss of such experiences. Many of these losses are unnecessary.

Many infrastructures have been built with a minimum regard for their impact on the environment – they could be much less intrusive.

Less intrusive solutions to many environmental problems already exist. Why have high impact infrastructures been built without using these better solutions?

Often companies allege technical, financial and legal difficulties stop them using these solutions. With will and innovation such problems can be solved.

Part of PLACE's work is to research and document less intrusive environmental practice that could be used more widely. Publicity is needed to alert people to less intrusive possibilities. Examples can be used as leverage on government and industry.

PLACE has been in correspondence with National Grid (NG) and the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) for over five years, about the Thorpe Marsh to Stalybridge 400kV overhead transmission line, approximately nine miles of which runs through the Peak District National Park (PDNP). The line is a major intrusion in the NP and dominates Longdendale to the west and the Upper Don Valley to the east of the pennines damaging the quality of a fine landscape in this part of the NP.

The statutory duties laid upon NG and PDNPA policies require them to reduce the intrusiveness of the line during refurbishments / upgrades. A major refurbishment begins this year. During the 13/7/07 planning committee meeting of the PDNPA, NG was asked to improve its public consultation efforts; a question remains as to how well the statutory duties and policies are being followed.

PLACE has initiated a project advocating increased 'undergrounding' of the line as part of the refurbishments and is collaborating fully with the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) to this end. Two A4 folded cards have been produced (see below). A leaflet asking for letters to be written to PDNPA was distributed with CPRE's July issue of "Peakland Guardian." (16 were received). A third, four panel folding card has been produced bringing together the work of Jo Spence, photographer and Stephen Spender, poet, on the subject of pylons. See website (currently being updated).

For further information about PLACE see: www.viewsvistasandreverie.org also www.atlasplace.clara.net

A pair of folded A4 cards show landscapes as they would be if the present from overhead transmission lines (OTLs) were underground / surface troughed. The cards also compare different transmission systems.



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A new vision for Longdendale in the Peak District National Park and the Upper Don Valley



Longdendale would be like this
if the 400kV overhead transmission line were 'undergrounded'/surface troughed



The Upper Don Valley would be like this
if the 400kV overhead transmission line were 'undergrounded'/surface troughed



The National Grid (NG) Thorpe Marsh to Staibridge 400kV overhead transmission line dominates Longden Dale west from Woodhead and the Upper Don Valley east from Duxford Bridge (Page 3 above). Note the old Manchester to Sheffield railway track bed in Longden Dale, now the Toss Pennine Trail (green line), and surface troughing to its right (red line). Photographs 2006



Surface troughing crossing the river Etherow and entering the Woodhead tunnels (carrying six 400kV cables - a double circuit)

This NG transmission system follows the railway track bed above and below ground for 11.25 miles. 3.5 miles have already been 'undergrounded' through the Woodhead tunnels and surface troughed, for amenity reasons, after a public inquiry and recommendation by the National Parks Commission in the early 1960s

Why not extend 'undergrounding'/surface troughing along the old railway track bed?

Another NG 400kV 'underground' circuit in use in the UK



Three views of Kingsland Basin footbridge showing the route of six NG 400kV cables beneath the towpath of Regents Canal, London



Metal casing containing six 400kV cables (within the red line), Kingsland Basin footbridge. (See also above right)

Front cover above, opposite page above
Longden Dale and the Upper Don Valley after digital removal of the Thorpe Marsh to Staibridge transmission line

This document is tinted with a similar one advocating a specific 'undergrounding'/surface troughing project at Duxford Bridge



Pedestrian route above six 'undergrounded' NG 400kV cables in Regents Canal towpath, London.
The track bed of the old Manchester to Sheffield railway appears to offer similar opportunities for 'undergrounding'



Image of "full undergrounding" from National Grid's current booklet "Overhead or Underground? National Grid's approach."

The booklet states "installing underground circuits entails construction activity amounting to the width of a dual carriageway. The total width required ranges from 15 to 30m depending mainly on the power to be transmitted." pp10.

The width of the 'undergrounding'/surface troughing on Regents Canal varies between 2 to 4m. NG's booklet does not mention surface troughing, or any width of land-take for undergrounding less than 15m



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Making a start in the Upper Don Valley by extending the 'undergrounding'/surface troughing of the Thorpe Marsh to Stalybridge 400kV overhead transmission line east from the Woodhead tunnels to north-east of the river Don.

National Grid (NG) intends to begin work replacing and transferring cables in the Woodhead tunnels sometime between 2007 and 2010. Present thinking in NG indicates this may include adjustments to the cable sealing end and pylons at Dunford Bridge.

PLACE and Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)/Friends of the Peak District believe there is now a unique opportunity at Dunford Bridge to 'underground'/surface trough from the Woodhead tunnels to north-east of the Don.

An initial modest project would release the community of Dunford Bridge, the Peak District National Park and the important Dunford access point onto the Trans Pennine Trail from the dominating presence of the cable sealing end and the overhead transmission line



Dunford Bridge from the embankment of Winscar Reservoir showing the existing 400kV overhead line



The red line indicates possible 'undergrounding'/surface troughing routes east from the Woodhead tunnels.

Note the digitally manipulated image shows the removal of approximately 8km of the existing overhead line from the Upper Don Valley

This document is twinned with a similar one advocating further 'undergrounding'/surface troughing along the old Manchester to Sheffield railway track bed



THESE TWO NG TRANSMISSION SYSTEMS CARRY THE SAME POWER



Above: Pylon and 400kV double circuit overhead transmission line seen from Dunford Bridge.
Below: 'Undergrounding'/surface troughing (left of the red line) of a 400kV double circuit in the towpath of Regents Canal, London. Photographs 2006

Is there any reason why 'undergrounding'/surface troughing combined with the new XLPE cable technology should not be used at Dunford Bridge along the old railway track bed, or in similar circumstances?



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'Bees in a garden make a specialty of honey and so does honey.'

Pamela Day. Drawing 5. 7 May 2004

