

## Grid line satisfaction survey, November 2002

1. Coverage The survey was mailed Friday 16.11.02 with prepaid return envelopes to the Revolt list of 104 affected landowners, plus two later, mainly one per land-holding, whereas there are more “grantors”. The list is out of date and incomplete, and includes 3 inappropriate (e.g. Church Commissioners) and 7 likely duplicates for the same land-holding, so the realistic cover is 96 land-holdings. One return was received by fax 16.11.02, then 29 by mail on 18-25 November. The total of 30 returns (31 % of 96) is not a random sample, but is a reasonably proportionate mixture of voluntary & compulsory “grantors” (6 & 23, 1 unknown) and of the three geographic zones Lackenby - Picton (8), Picton - South Kilvington (12) and South Kilvington - Shipton (9).

2. Main satisfaction scores: (note this is satisfaction with service, not with the line itself)

The table shows the number of ticks received for each score calibrated as follows.

[1] = very dissatisfied, leaving a feeling of grievance

[2] = dissatisfied, but content to put up with it

[3] = satisfied, received a professional service

[4] = very satisfied, received better than normal professional treatment

Column 5 gives numbers left blank or unclear. Each row should total 30 except row4 and row6 which each had one return split into two scores.

Questions on dealing with National Grid	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	-?-
Has information generally been clearly and fully communicated and questions answered by NG?	8	9	8	2	3
Did you feel fairly informed and able to negotiate without disadvantage or foregone conclusion?	12	6	6	3	3
Were you able to get firm written offers from NG on points negotiated?	8	7	9	1	5
Does the compensation offered seem clear and fair?	12	3	13	1	2
Have points agreed verbally been honoured by NG in good time?	7	8	8	3	4
Has the attitude and conduct of personnel on the project been satisfactory?	6	9	11	3	2
How satisfied are you in general with NG compared with other companies or utilities?	9	8	6	4	3

There is a broad mix of responses, not particularly aligned with zone or with voluntary / compulsory status. Individual returns were noticeably compact: 19 returns (63 %) had at least 5 scores in one column and the remaining one or two in an adjacent column.

Combining scores of [1] and [2] as dissatisfied, and scores of [3] and [4] as satisfied, the returns, as sets of 7 scores, were somewhat polarised:

	all 7 scores dissatisfied	6 dissatisfied 1 satisfied	at least 2 of each	6 satisfied 1 dissatisfied	all 7 scores satisfied
all returns (3 blanks)	10	3	6	3	5
voluntary (1 blank)	1	2	1	1	0

Voluntary means grantors not listed with compulsory wayleaves in the DTI decision letter of 26.3.98 or in later DTI letters. One gave all blanks but was clearly dissatisfied.

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From all returns, 5 scored all 7 as [1] very dissatisfied, of which 3 are prominent objectors to the project. Other prominent objectors gave discriminating scores or did not send a return. No returns scored all 7 as [4] very satisfied. The best set had 5 scores of [4].

### 3. Comments received

Comments are mixed. They are not necessarily in conflict as they can properly reflect different experiences. They are reported in the order received, i.e. of opening the envelopes. They are reported verbatim below, except National Grid is abbreviated to NG.

### 4. General comments:

4.1 “NG have provided us with a professional service, but this does not make us feel any less grieved about the pylons, and the possible effect it may have on our health. Also the visual impact on the countryside for generations to come.”

4.2 “Nothing is agreed with NG. They are on the land because they have threatened us with costs and prosecution, so there is no change. We have no choice but to put up with them.”

4.3 “I read with horror of your acceptance of the Lackenby line.”

4.4 “A total shambles. Lack of simple liaison much of the time.”

4.5 “NG have taken possession of our land without any agreement or permission to build pylons from us.”

### 5. Comments received on information and communication:

5.1 “Every communication by staff or letter told a different story as to size, location, necessity, health implications, wayleaves.”

5.2 “We have never been given a project plan / timetable nor a layout of their proposed activities, despite numerous requests. We still don’t know when they will start or what they want to do except in very broad outline.”

5.3 “No questions have been answered by NG, for example ...”

5.4 “Their performance in putting out deceiving information remains very accomplished.”

6. Comments received on negotiation and compensation: (see also 4.2)

6.1 “We were told that the line would go ahead no matter what we said, and that we would only lose out (in terms of money) if we continued to object.”

6.2 “... told us as tenants that the landlord had signed and told landlord that we had signed - untrue - followed by two girls in mini-skirts to offer incentive (money) to sign.”

6.3 “NG would not negotiate with us, and only made any written proposals once we took on a land agent.”

6.4 “Their negotiating position has been ‘we can’t give you anything that other farmers do not get’, i.e. our particular situation is not taken into account.”

6.5 “They are terrible payers of bills. They are typically 4-6 months overdue, and require us to chase them to get anything at all.”

6.6 “What compensation?” (from two respondents)

6.7 (on firm written offers on points negotiated) “No, but verbal agreements were honoured.”

6.8 (on able to negotiate fairly) “No. The inspector, Alan Walker, commented at the enquiry of our wayleave hearing, that he was here to get the line through for NG. His comment did not appear in the transcript minutes.”

6.9 “No compensation was offered.”

6.10 “Our gutter was supposed to be drained. It has not happened yet several months on and winter is now here.”

6.11 (on firm written offers on points negotiated) “eventually and after challenge”.

6.12 (NG are) “resistant to making any changes regarding compensation or prudent avoidance as regards health.”

6.13 “As the work on the pylons has not yet been completed it is difficult to tell whether they will honour their agreements.”

6.14 “Compensation cannot be assessed in its entirety until the development is complete, to date the recompense has been satisfactory.”

6.15 (on compensation clear and fair) “Initially: [1] very dissatisfied. After much argument and pressure: [3] satisfied.”

6.16 “Found it very important to get every detail in writing - which gave me the power to hold them to agreement details (contractors tried to do what suited them). Had to take them to task many times.”

6.17 “Had to insist on written info.”

6.18 “We have been threatened with court action. NG have taken away all rights of landowners and have ruined our farm and the countryside for profit without any agreed compensation.”

7. Comments on attitude and conduct: (see also 6.2)

7.1 “Secretive, domineering and arrogant at all times - a belief that still a nationalised company able to do as they please.”

7.2 “The examples are endless.”

7.3 “We just get the impression that landowners are minor annoyances to be brushed aside by NG.”

7.4 “Staff and contractors very good.”

7.5 “All staff very commendable.”

7.6 “Small survey problems on the land when too wet.”

7.7 “The attitude etc. has been OK.”

7.8 “NG staff ... are rude and sometimes threatening. Balfour Beatty staff in general are OK, just men trying to do their job, although bread buns, sausage rolls etc. have been thrown in the fields, against Foot & Mouth precautions.”

7.9 “The attitude of NG staff is appalling. ... attempted to enter our home, by banging on the door, shouting ‘open this door’ and trying the handle of the locked door. The police warned NG of the conduct of wayleave staff.”

7.10 “Re. a drainage problem caused by them. After initial difficulties ... had been commendable.”

7.11 “... refused bio-security on three occasions.”

7.12 “Pig ignorant, very bad character, not to be trusted, on very short fuse, talks as he walks, two-faced. Impossible to get agreement with.”

7.13 “... can’t keep a promise. Never comes back to us. Word means nothing.”

7.14 “... is pleasant and helpful within the limitations of his job / powers.”

7.15 “... uses bullying tactics.”

7.16 “Letters to directors are never answered by themselves or to our satisfaction.”

7.17 “All NG employees and contractors have performed in a professional manner.”

7.18 “... give a very good service. Twice they have ordered contractors off site for operating unsatisfactorily.”

7.19 “The gang installing access to main road left us without access at times. All the other contractors have been very good especially ... and his gang who installed the roadways during harvest. They were super.”

## 8. Comments comparing with other companies:

8.1 “Other companies, i.e. telephone masts, BP etc. pay proper compensation and therefore people do not feel robbed and victimised.”

8.2 “Very bad.”

## 9. Comments on trends over time: (see also 6.15)

9.1 “They were poor / incompetent to start with and have shown no improvement.”

9.2 “NG are constantly improving in terms of public relations, they are learning by experience, that P/Cs have to be competitive and accommodating, unlike former nationalised industries.”

9.3 “Yes they are getting better as they learn. However their processes for controlling sub-contractors still leave something to be desired.”

9.5 “Prior to commencing site work NG pretty awful. Once contractors on site seem to be displaying more practical approach.”

## 10. Previous surveys

In answer to the question whether they had been surveyed before by NG, 22 said no and 5 said yes. It seems clear there has been no general or systematic survey of customer satisfaction, although informal individual enquiries will have been made.

One respondent commented: “NGC Wayleave Officer has on several occasions inquired as to whether the development was proceeding satisfactory”. This was counted as a yes.

## 11. Audit

Peter Edmonds, NFU Group Secretary, Northallerton, agreed to audit the survey. He was asked to inspect

- (a) the survey form and letter;
- (b) the franked envelopes bringing the returns;
- (c) the returns themselves;
- (d) the survey report.

In particular he was asked to choose

- (a) at least two of the main score boxes in the report and to check it by counting up the scores from the returns;
- (b) at least one of the boxes in the report showing combined satisfaction scores and to check it with the returns;
- (c) at least two of the comments on the returns, and to check they are recorded in the report;
- (d) at least one other point of his choosing to check.

He then gave the following Audit Statement: “I have carried out the inspections and tests as listed above and confirm that in my opinion the survey is objective, fair and balanced and the report is accurate. - Peter Edmonds 25.11.02”