

Hydrology and hydrogeology

Potential effects during construction include possible pollution of surface water caused by release of sediment to watercourses from excavated/stockpiled materials or as a result of works near streams.

There is also the potential for pollution of surface water through operation of machinery (e.g. spillage of fuels, oils etc) as well as modifications to groundwater flows and agricultural field drainage systems.

The planning permission includes a planning condition requiring the submission of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for the approval of the planning authority prior to the commencement of construction.

The CEMP is required to include:

- a Soil Management Plan showing details of the proposed locations of stockpiles of excavated materials and their management
- a Site Waste Management Plan detailing pollution prevention monitoring and mitigation measures for all construction activities
- a scheme for the identification of drainage systems and measures for their protection during construction and reinstatement following the completion of construction.

The employment of the CEMP during construction will ensure that there are no significant effects upon hydrology and hydrogeology as a result of the cable installation.

Agricultural land use and soils

The cable route includes prime quality agricultural land which will be temporarily taken out of agricultural use during cable installation. Once construction is complete, the land would be fully reinstated back to agricultural use.

The construction works have the potential to affect the quality of the existing agricultural soil on site. It is proposed that soils be excavated, handled, stored and reinstated in accordance with the Soil Management Plan agreed with the planning authority.

Following the implementation of such a plan, no significant effects are predicted upon land use or soils as a result of the proposed development.

Biodiversity

The onshore cable route predominantly comprises land under agricultural cultivation which is considered likely to be of limited ecological value.

There are areas of trees and hedgerows present which may provide potential nesting habitats for a range of birds.

In addition, areas of open ground could potentially support ground-nesting species. To mitigate for potential impacts on breeding birds, it is proposed that vegetation clearance will be avoided where possible within the breeding bird season (March to August).

In areas where this is unavoidable, a suitably experienced ornithologist will first check areas to be cleared to confirm active nests are not present. If active nests are recorded, these areas will not be cleared until the nest is empty and any young have fledged.

Trees along the route may have the potential to support roosting bats. To avoid potentially disturbing bats, pre-construction surveys will be undertaken. Proposed mitigation will include avoiding any trees with high or medium bat roost potential wherever possible.

Where this is not possible it will subsequently be determined through daytime tree inspection or emergence/re-entry surveys whether a bat roost is present. This will inform further mitigation.

A suitably qualified and experienced ecological clerk of works (ECoW) will be appointed for the duration of the construction works to ensure compliance with the approved CEMP and wider environmental protection legislation and best practice.