What is the Report About? (Executive Summary)

1. National Grid plans to build a 400 kilovolt (kV) connection from the proposed Moorside Power Station to the national electricity grid at Harker, near Carlisle and Heysham, near Lancaster. This project – ‘North West Coast Connections’ – is a nationally significant infrastructure project (NSIP), which will be decided by the Secretary of State following an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) under the Planning Act 2008 (“the Act”).

2. National Grid is carrying out a public consultation on the North West Coast Connections (NWCC) project from 28th October 2016 to 6th January 2017. This is a formal consultation with the public and local authorities and is the main opportunity to comment on the project before the DCO application is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate, currently scheduled for April 2017.

3. Cumbria County Council is a statutory consultee and this report contains a summary of the proposed response of the County Council. The Corporate Director has delegated authority in consultation with the Lead Member to respond to the consultation on behalf of the County Council and will agree the full technical response, but it is considered that Cabinet may wish to be aware of the proposed headline response before it is finalised.

Recommendation of the Corporate Director

4. Recommendation – That Cabinet notes the content of Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 as a summary of the Council’s draft response to National Grid’s formal consultation on the North West Coast Connections Project.

Background to the Proposals

5. National Grid plans to build a 400 kilovolt (kV) connection from the proposed Moorside Power Station to the national electricity grid at Harker, near Carlisle and Heysham, near Lancaster. This project will only be implemented if the new nuclear power station at Moorside goes ahead.
The proposed project (the subject consultation) includes the following principal elements:

- Construction of 400kV transmission connections totalling approximately 163km from Harker to Heysham. This connection comprises overhead lines, underground cables and the use of tunnelling technology;
- Construction of new 400kV substations at Stainburn and Roosecote and extensions to the existing 400kV substations at Harker and Middleton;
- Relocation of existing 400kV overhead line west of Harker;
- Construction of a tunnel beneath Morecambe Bay between tunnel head houses at Roosecote and Middleton (Heysham);
- Modifications to existing 132kV distribution infrastructure and removal of certain existing 132kV overhead lines;
- Works to modify the existing Electricity North West Limited (ENW) 132kV and lower voltage network where necessary to allow construction of the 400kV connections;
- Modifications to the railway network to provide access to temporary rail sidings in certain locations;
- Areas of mitigation, restoration and/or reinstatement; and
- Associated works, for example, temporary access roads, highways works, temporary compounds (rail, helicopter and general construction) two temporary shafts, work sites and ancillary works.

The documents comprising National Grid’s consultation can be viewed on National Grid’s web site [www.northwestcoastconnections.com](http://www.northwestcoastconnections.com).

As a NSIP, the NWCC project needs approval from the Secretary of State following an application for a Development Consent Order (DCO). A DCO is a composite consent that avoids the requirement for several different consents for a single project. It authorises the carrying out of the development, so planning permission is not required, and can include provisions dealing with the compulsory acquisition of land and interests in land, the stopping up of highways and highway works. A DCO application is submitted to the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) for determination.

Cumbria County Council is a statutory consultee in the DCO process and is classified as a ‘host authority’. Local authorities have an important role in the process in providing a local perspective and influencing the preparation of an application. Local authorities are encouraged to engage proactively with a developer and nothing is to be gained by disengaging from the pre-application consultation process. The Council’s role should ensure that the developer considers the likely impacts of the proposal and develops solutions for mitigation and, where relevant, that legacy benefits are provided. The Council should engage with the developer to influence the drafting of the DCO, as it will include requirements (planning conditions) that will regulate the development, and to negotiate with the developer any legal agreements that are necessary to make the proposed development acceptable and that are directly related to the proposed development.
10. The Council (jointly with the other Cumbrian Authorities affected by project, together with Lancaster County Council and Lancaster City Council) has entered into a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) with National Grid to enable it to engage in a positive way and to reach an informed view on the impacts of the proposal. Consultants WYG are supporting the work of this PPA Group. WYG is preparing the technical consultation response to National Grid’s formal consultation on behalf of the PPA Group.

11. Following submission of the DCO, PINS will have 28 days in which to confirm their acceptance of the application. Within this period, the Council will have 14 days to submit comments on the Adequacy of Consultation. Once the application has been accepted, the Council will be asked to submit relevant representations within the next 28 days. To inform the Examination, the Council will also be invited to submit a Local Impact Report (LIR). The LIR sets out the Council’s view on how the project will affect the local area and its principal purpose is to highlight the potential impacts of the proposal with the benefit of local knowledge. The Council may also submit written representations, essentially detailed written evidence to the Examining Authority and participate in oral examination hearings, when invited to do so.

12. The expected timetable for the project is as follows:

- Submission of DCO application: April 2017
- Preparation of Local Impact Report: Summer/Autumn 2017
- Examination: Nov 2017 to April 2018
- Consent (if secured): October 2018
- Construction: 2019 onwards
- Operation scheduled to commence: 2024

13. The Council has worked with the PPA Group authorities to prepare a joint response to the consultation. Appendix 1 is a consultation response headline report prepared on behalf of the PPA Group. The detailed PPA Group’s technical response will be submitted jointly with the support of all the PPA authorities. The PPA Group’s concerns are focused on the following topic areas:

- Landscape and Visual Impact
- Visitor Economy
- Tunnel head impacts at Barrow and Heysham
- Transport and Connectivity
- Skills and Supply Chain.

**Landscape and Visual Impact**

14. Concern is raised about the likely significant impacts of the introduction of new and larger pylons both directly and cumulatively on the landscapes across Cumbria.

15. The principle to provide 23.4km (14.5m) of new 400kV underground cable through the western edge of the Lake District National Park and the removal of the existing ENW 132kV overhead line is welcomed. However it is important to recognise that the undergrounding in the Lake District National Park is a major
engineering operation. As such the implications of these works on ecology and the historic environment as well as the consideration of the location of compound sealing ends and their impact on vegetation loss and disruption to the landscape pattern needs to be properly addressed in far greater detail than currently to understand the impacts.

16. The alignment of the new overhead line beyond the boundary of the Lake District National Park is also a major concern. National Policy EN1; DCLG Guidance and the Electricity Act (1995) as well as current planning practice make it clear that the ‘setting’ of National Parks should be considered in the same way as those areas within National Parks. The County Council (together with the PPA Group) has previously raised strong concerns about impacts affecting landscape character and views in to and out of the Lake District National Park. Unfortunately National Grid’s consultation documentation makes little reference to the ‘setting’ of the Lake District National Park. This is of particular concern for the section of the proposed route that runs on overhead lines around the head of the Duddon Estuary. The County Council (together with the PPA Group) previously recommended undergrounding beneath the Duddon Estuary to avoid major adverse impacts, particularly at the Foxfield Ridge and the Duddon Mosses Special Area of Conservation, plus the wider landscape setting of the LDNP, but this recommendation has not been taken forward as part of the proposals now being consulted upon. The County Council disagrees with National Grid’s rejection of alternative options including the tunnel as this is based upon a flawed assessment of the landscape impact that does not appropriately take into account the ‘setting’ of the Lake District National Park. The County Council maintains the view that appropriate mitigation is required to ensure that any adverse impact, as a consequence of the NWCC project, on this area is avoided.

17. The Lake District has been nominated as a World Heritage Site (WHS), with an assessment currently being carried out by Unesco. The impact of the NWCC project has been identified by Unesco as a key risk to WHS designation, so it is imperative to avoid landscape impacts that may jeopardise a favourable outcome.

18. The cumulative impact of the vertical infrastructure, particularly in Allerdale, Carlisle and north Copeland and parts of the Furness peninsula (including Askam, Dalton, Ireleth and Lindal) is already a concern and larger pylons will further worsen this impact. The routing of the line from the Moorside site and the cumulative impacts on communities needs to be carefully considered and appropriate mitigation provided.

**Visitor Economy**

19. A large proportion of tourists to Cumbria are drawn to the scenery, the unspoilt nature of the area and for outdoor activities. The visual intrusion of a large overhead line has potential to harm the region’s tourism economy. A key concern is that the NWCC project (in combination) with other major projects has adverse impacts on perceptions of Cumbria and with significant potential to disrupt tourist trade through displacement and negative image. This will require proactive marketing activity to counter negative perceptions.
20. The linear nature of the proposals suggest that there is likely to be extensive disruption to cycle paths and public rights of way (PRoW), particularly during the six year construction period. These impacts need to be appropriately addressed. Suggested mitigation could include; permanency of required temporary paths and diversions, as well as a funded package of signage and promotion to improve recreational facilities and activities for visitors.

21. During the construction of the project there is potential for the influx of workers to have an impact on the supply and availability of visitor accommodation. Directly this is likely to lead result in over 1,800 workers over the breadth of the project, including a concentration of workers at the tunnel head at Barrow, where current shortages in worker accommodation and other major projects will emphasise the impact. Equally with under-grounding through the National Park, there will be a demand for worker accommodation in this locality that will need to be appropriately mitigated in Grid’s proposals.

Tunnel head impacts at Barrow and Heysham

22. National Grid proposes to construct a tunnel across Morecambe Bay tunnelling from both Roosecote and Heysham. The tunnel element of the project represents a significant project in its own right, with a build programme of 6 years, 1.2m tonnes of spoil generated and requiring over 380 direct workers at each tunnel head. It is disappointing that at this stage in the project there is no clarity on the waste disposal strategy because there is not agreed transport strategy. The preference of the Council to see spoil removal from the tunnel to be transported by rail.

23. Significant issues have been raised regarding the impact of the tunnel construction on the local community, transportation links and social infrastructure. Given the number of directly employed workers required for the construction of the tunnel, and the other major projects in the Barrow area, accommodation for workers is a key concern. In addition, the level of construction materials and tunnel spoil generated will place additional pressure on the transport infrastructure if a road based strategy is followed, hence the preference for a rail-led solution.

Transport and Connectivity

24. The County Council is concerned that National Grid is not consulting on a single and coherent transport strategy. Instead National Grid is consulting on both a ‘road based’ option and a ‘multi modal’ transport option. The County Council needs to understand the impact of the extensive traffic related to the importing (and decommissioning) of material for access and haul roads, construction materials, cables and waste. This needs to be informed by the modelling of traffic flows for the project and the cumulative impact of other developments. Given the lack of information it is suggested that a subsequent consultation be undertaken prior to the submission of the DCO.

25. The County Council strongly disagrees with National Grid’s assumptions of the impacts relating to the ‘road based’ and ‘multi modal’ options and assertions for not favouring the ‘multi modal’ option. For example the County Council does not agree that railway capacity issues should be a reason for not selecting the ‘multi
modal’ option. The approach should be that the use of the railway would help to mitigate road capacity and disruption issues by helping to keep traffic off the highway network and also provide a legacy benefit of improved rail capacity. Furthermore, the Council believes there is potential for greater use of the ports at Workington and Barrow, in particular the Port of Workington can offer facility for consolidation and logistics activity.

26. Additionally, a number of rail and road construction sites are proposed to store and deploy materials; these are all along the route and are more concentrated in the areas where underground technology will be used, such as Drigg, Silecroft and Foxfield. The transport infrastructure across the many areas along the route and in these areas in particular is constrained, therefore, the impact of the movements are likely to require mitigation measures.

27. There is a lack of appropriate measures to mitigate the traffic impacts on the highway network and any measures need to be informed by appropriate modelling of traffic flows. The lack of mitigation is a serious concern that needs to be addressed to enable a full assessment of the project to be made.

Skills and Supply Chain

28. The PPA Group has been working with National Grid, local LEP’s and other key stakeholders to secure the maximum employment and skills benefits. National Grid has developed an Outline Employment and Skills Framework that sets out key principles that will be deployed to provide opportunity to local businesses and workers. This will require further development to ensure there is appropriate mitigation measures included within the final DCO application proposals. National Grid needs to satisfy the Council that it will ensure appropriate training is provided to enable local people, particularly economically inactive people, to be able to access the employment opportunities, as well as make commitments to creation of apprenticeship opportunities, Equally, National Grid also needs to demonstrate that measures will be put in place to develop local supply capacity and capability to maximise opportunities for local supply chain businesses.

Member Views

29. Members have had the opportunity to comment on the proposal at a National Grid briefing to the Nuclear Issues Working group on 15 November 2016. Their subsequent feedback has been collated and is attached as Appendix 2. Member’s comments related mainly to:

- Landscape impact both localised and extensive, particularly in respect of the Duddon Estuary. Members have expressed strong support for a tunnel under the Duddon Estuary to mitigate any adverse landscape impact;
- The cumulative impact of the vertical infrastructure, particularly in Allerdale, Carlisle and north Copeland and parts of the Furness Peninsula (including Askam, Dalton, Ireleth and Lindale);
- Support the implementation of a ‘multi modal’ transport strategy that would make wider use of the ports and rail and not just the road network;
- The need to consider the cumulative impact of other developments taking place and carefully consider the impact on existing infrastructure and consider what mitigation is required;
- The adverse impact on the visitor economy;
- The need to secure a legacy benefit from this major infrastructure investment and that National Grid support skills and supply chain development.

**Options Considered and Risks Identified**

**Option (a)**

30. **Do Nothing.** The Council could choose not to respond to the National Grid’s consultation, however, it would not be fulfilling its obligations under the Planning Performance Agreement and as a statutory consultee. In addition, the Council would miss the opportunity to influence the development of the project and secure the best outcome for the community.

**Option (b)**

31. **Respond to the consultation.** The Council can respond to the consultation as set out in Appendix 1. This ensures the Council fulfils its responsibility as a statutory consultee and will maximise the opportunity to influence the project and achieve appropriate mitigation of impacts and legacy for the local community.

**Risks**

32. The size of the project and volume of consultation documentation provides a challenge, which the Council has addressed by entering into a PPA to adequately resource its involvement with the support of external consultants. Due to the scale of the project, it will have a significant impact on the economy, infrastructure and communities within Cumbria. It is important for the impacts to be properly assessed locally and therefore there is a risk that if the Council doesn’t respond, the local impacts may not be adequately considered by PINS.

**Reasons for the recommendation/Key benefits**

33. Ensure that the Council submits a robust response to National Grid to influence the design and delivery of the project, identify issues of concern, represent the interests of the local community, seek appropriate mitigation and maximise legacy benefits.

34. Enable the Council to fulfil its role as a statutory consultee.

35. Ensure appropriate engagement with National Grid in accordance with the terms of the PPA.

**Financial – What Resources will be needed and how will it be Funded?**

36. There are no direct financial implications for the County Council arising from the recommendations within this report. The impact of construction of the connection between the proposed Moorside Power Station to the National Grid at Harker, near Carlisle and Heysham, near Lancaster on transport requirements, on economic activity within the County and on affected communities is likely to have implications for the Authority both in terms of consultation and potential financial implications. This will be considered in
preparing the response. Where further information is required to assess the implications this will be made clear in the response.

37. The County Council, as lead authority and accountable body for the Planning Performance Agreement, is able to recover costs incurred both in responding to this consultation, and in producing the Local Impact Report and Statement of Common Ground.

**Legal Aspects – What needs to be Considered?**

38. Local authorities have an important role in the DCO process. Participation is not obligatory but is strongly advised as a local authority will provide an important local perspective. Such participation will allow the Council to influence the proposal and have an input into mitigation measures that are considered necessary, if development consent is granted.

39. In addition, some restrictions that the Council considers necessary and some benefits that might accrue in connection with the proposal might not be secured by the requirements (conditions) attached to a DCO and separate legal agreements may be required. By participating in the process the Council may be joined as a party to such agreements and be able to enforce those obligations that relate to County Council functions.

**Council Plan Priority – How do the Proposals Contribute to the Delivery of the Council’s Stated Objectives?**

40. The Council is seeking to influence this multi-billion pound nationally significant infrastructure project to ensure the best possible outcome for Cumbria. If delivered successfully, the NWCC project will help in particular to meet the following Council Plan priority:

Infrastructure: *To provide a safe and well managed highways network, secure infrastructure improvements and support local economic growth.*

**What is the Impact of the Decision on Health Inequalities and Equality and Diversity Issues?**

41. The Council will seek to ensure that the health impacts of the NWCC project are considered. The Council have advised National Grid that a Health Impact Assessment needs to be prepared. Any adverse impacts of the development which are identified should be the subject of mitigation measures which the Council will work to consider through the DCO process.

**Appendices and Background Documents**

Appendix 1 – Proposed Response to NWCC consultation – WYG Consultation Response Headline Report
Appendix 2 - Local Member Feedback
Key Facts

Electoral Division(s): ALL.

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<th>Executive Decision</th>
<th>Key Decision Included in Forward Plan</th>
<th>Exempt from call-in</th>
<th>Exemption agreed by scrutiny chair</th>
<th>Considered by scrutiny, if so detail below</th>
<th>Environmental or sustainability assessment undertaken?</th>
<th>Equality impact assessment undertaken?</th>
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Agreed with the Cabinet Member/s on (please state date) 5 December 2016

Previous relevant Council or Executive decisions

Cabinet Decision on 27th November 2014 - National Grid Strategic Issues Consultation Response

Consideration by Overview & Scrutiny

None

Background Papers

None

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