

## **National Grid VIP project in the New Forest National Park**

**Statement from the VIP project's Stakeholder Advisory Group – 29 March 2019**

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Following extensive consideration, the independent Stakeholder Advisory Group to National Grid's Visual Impact Provision (VIP) project has reluctantly advised National Grid that the VIP project at Hale Purlieu in the New Forest National Park should be paused.

The Stakeholder Advisory Group strongly supports the principles of the VIP programme and the process for the initial selection of this landscape and environmental enhancement project in the New Forest. However, it has become clear from legal advice provided to National Grid that the European legal position relating to the habitats in the area is complex and untested for a project of this nature. It is likely that it would not be possible for a planning application for this project to receive approval within the timescales of the current Visual Impact Provision (the RIIO-T1 price control period).

The Stakeholder Advisory Group would like the guidance for the relevant legislation to be tested further as it believes that the guidance was not intended to block schemes which have the potential to deliver significant environmental and landscape benefits in the mid- and long term but require short-term temporary disruption.

The Group is aware that this advice will come as a disappointment to the many stakeholders, residents and users of Hale Purlieu who have expressed their support for the project.

The Stakeholder Advisory Group hopes that, should National Grid decide to pause the New Forest project, it will be possible to develop and achieve Regulatory approval for a similar-scale VIP project at a different shortlisted location within the current timeframe.

**Ends**