

UPDATE FROM UK POWER NETWORKS IN RESPONSE TO QUERIES FROM A PARISHIONER

The good news is we are very close to completion of the pull back of the duct through the 2nd drill with works then to reinstate the areas concerned, we will be completed drilling this week, hopefully by Thursday 9th November.

We have continually updated and attempted to inform local residents but complex engineering tasks such as we are undertaking can be difficult to predict for duration as the geology can be unpredictable.

With the works completing this week, we will then commence the removal of the plant and then commence the cable laying element of the scheme followed by reinstatement leading into the Christmas break. Planting and seeding etc may have to be completed fully in the Spring when it is more suitable, but the area will be open for free access very shortly.

We have consulted widely in concern to the scheme with many bodies individually and collectively through many meetings with the Stour and Orwell Group, presenting on two occasions as well as an open evening at the village hall and attending the Parish Council twice myself. We will use the Parish Council to facilitate communication to a wider audience; any plans around the open space reinstatement will be consulted widely with those to start in the next week or so.

Please see my fuller response as promised in my earlier email today. Apologies I was not in a situation to compose a longer email immediately;

Q On precisely what dates and times have your works obstructed the right of way comprising the coastal path and what steps have you taken to comply with your legal obligations in this respect?

UKPN response -

It was a temporary measure taken to assess and mitigate upon consultation with the relevant authorities, with it being quickly resolved and the path re-opened

Q What signage have you deployed to advise walkers of the status of the right of way and of alternative routes to mitigate extensive detours?

UKPN response -

The route is fully open and passable with usual care.

Q What is the precise chemical nature of grey sludge which has erupted through the soil, swamped the path, overflowed the sea wall and left substantial deposits on the foreshore and mudflat? What Risk Assessments were carried out relating to this issue before the drilling starting and what were their conclusions?

UKPN response -

Its Eco – Bentonite, an inert clay based suspension and drilling material mixed with potable water.

Q What environmental assessment was carried out before the drilling started, and has this been updated in the light of the sludge eruption? Given that this is an AONB and SSSI please supply a summary of its findings. In particular, please address the issues of damage to flora and fauna in the Heritage Park and effects on the foreshore and mudflats which are the feeding grounds of so many wading birds and waterfowl at this time of year.

UKPN response –

The impact on the area was assessed by our consultants SWT with discussion at the Orwell and Stour working group. It was unexpected in this position but it was assessed and the spill was contained. We had plant and vehicles on hand as part of our mitigation plan. The material has no environmental impact in small volumes with the area closely monitored and when

required the works have stopped to ensure no impact occurs. The SSSI-RAMSAR status was considered in our planning and Natural England consent was obtained for the scheme

- Q You have publicly stated that the issue has arisen 'as a result of the drill running through ground weakened by rotted tree roots'. Was a survey of the site undertaken before the drilling started? If so, did it take into account that the Heritage Park, only metres from the drill site, is a heavily wooded area, with trees that have roots?

UKPN response –

A full geology and design was carried out with a mitigation plan put into place to assess and reduce any small spills such as this, which has been successfully deployed

- Q Given that Shotley Cliffs are known as being unstable and have been subject to major subsidence in the recent past, what assessments have been carried out relating to the geological effect of the drilling, and the effect of the sludge eruption on the stability of the area through which it has erupted?

UKPN response -

The hole drilled is filled with a duct designed to be fully structurally stable, in fact it's used under railways where around 5mm is the tolerance.

- Q Your 'update' on 24 October stated 'We will continue to monitor this section throughout the 2nd drill and ensure that it is kept open. Once we have finished the drill works, we will of course reinstate this section to its original standard

Clearly your first assurance was inaccurate as a further eruption occurred yesterday and resulted in yet another pouring of sludge over the path and overflowing the seawall onto the foreshore. However, please confirm that your reinstatement will include:-

Repair / replacement of the sea wall pilings which have clearly bowed outwards and been severely weakened by the weight of the sludge backing up on the path and overflowing onto the foreshore.

Substantial damage caused to the slipway and adjacent sea wall caused by the use of heavy machinery / diggers to remove the sludge from the foreshore.

UKPN response -

I refer back to my original commitment - *Once we have finished the drill works, we will of course reinstate this section to its original standard, that will include any works undertaken in any open space.*

- Q Shotley has recently been accredited as a Walker Friendly parish and this issue has seriously damaged the reputation of one of its main walking routes. In addition to this, there has clearly been substantial environmental and structural damage as well as major disruption and nuisance to residents, with yet another overrun of deadlines. The project was supposed have been completed on the 6 October, extended to 27 October. Has another target completion date been set?

UKPN response -

As above.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any further questions. We are happy to meet you at any point face to face to discuss further or to share the plans at a later stage.

Many thanks

Chris Sugars

**UK Power Networks
Felixstowe 132kV Reinforcement scheme - Project Manager**