

P L A C E

- produces artworks, exhibitions, papers for publication (see PLACE résumé)
- facilitates debate and exchange around art, society, infrastructure, architecture and the environment. PLACE “Open Meetings” provide occasions for presentations on any subject followed by discussion (see PLACE résumé)

PLACE INITIATIVES (Ongoing Projects)

- to reduce the intrusion of mobile telecoms infrastructure in rural landscapes – Masts
- to reduce the intrusion of electricity transmission lines in rural landscapes - Pylons

Less intrusive solutions already exist. Why have high impact infrastructures been built without using these solutions?

Often companies allege technical, financial and legal difficulties stop them using these better solutions. With will and innovation such problems can be solved. The principal problem is the relatively low priority given by both government and commerce to the protection and enhancement of the environment.

Part of PLACE’s work is to research and document less intrusive environmental practice that could be used more widely. Publicity is needed to alert people to less intrusive possibilities. Examples can be used as leverage on government and industry.

ONGOING PROJECT – MOBILE PHONE BASE STATIONS (MASTS)

PLACE is now two years into a collaboration with the Forestry Commission (FC) to reduce the impacts of mobile phone base stations on the FC estate. All the mobile phone companies have been both formally and informally invited to collaborate in a project with the FC and PLACE. Their response, via the industry association the Mobile Operators Association, was to re-iterate their view that technical constraints do not allow this solution to be used except in very few circumstances. PLACE does not agree with this view, it is a smoke screen to avoid extra expense.

The FC has over 100 base stations on its estate and it has made clear that it wants a positive, innovative and collaborative project with the companies which will have benefits for all the community and the environment.

The current copy of the non-statutory Code of Best Practice on Mobile Phone Network Development published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2002, under paragraph 149: Design Innovation by Operators, states:

“If the impact of telecommunications development is to be minimised then it is essential that the telecommunications industry continues to develop innovative mast designs. The use of outside designers by operators will enable them to take on board fresh ideas. Operators are encouraged on a site by site basis to collaborate with each other in seeking new design initiatives. It would also be beneficial for operators to include the local authority and local community in the design process on a site by site basis.”

The Code also publishes an image of a live tree mounted antennae (see below) but there is no encouragement to use this system, indeed there is no reference to it in the text.

The use of the word ‘if’ at the beginning of paragraph 149, in tandem with the non-statutory status of the Code ensures that it is as toothless as it is possible to be in terms of controlling the industry. Repeated requests for base station developments to require a full planning application, the most recent being the All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Planning Law as it Affects Mobile Phone Masts 2004, at which PLACE gave written and oral evidence, have been ignored by the government. In 2002 the government sold licences to the mobile phone industry for £22.5bn.

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For examples of the approach taken by mobile phone companies to reduce the impact of their systems on communities and the environment see page 7 and Views, Vistas and Reverie pages 30-34; 101-2.

Below are examples of mobile phone base stations. To the right is the considerably less intrusive live tree base station with antennae attached directly to the trees (see white arrows). Once the shrubs have grown around the equipment cabin, this base station will be virtually invisible at 50m. Landowners and planners can require that this solution is used. Experience shows that the mobile operators are likely to raise a smoke screen of technical issues and cost to avoid using this method, although if their infrastructure were less intrusive they would clearly suffer much less aggravation from the public! There is one live tree base station in the UK that we know of and; there are ten or more in Norway where the technique was pioneered. It is strongly suspected that inertia and the low priority given to environmental matters by the companies are the only reasons the system has not been widely adopted. If it were, visual intrusions in rural and semi-rural areas could be vastly reduced.

BAD PRACTICE



A typical site by Orange. Grid Ref. SO584 020

BETTER PRACTICE



photos: Andrew Darke

Vodafone site No.4788 at Crieff, Scotland. Grid Ref. NN864 224

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Further examples of better practice (which could still be improved!) see also “Views, Vistas and Reverie” / best practice



Antennae mounted on wooden poles in the midst of a copse – photographed from the point of greatest visibility; barely visible from most view points; small stone equipment cabin within copse. O2 installation at Grid Ref. SD849 720

See below for more distant landscape photographs of these installations.



photos: Andrew Darke

Modest cylindrical antennae mounted on the gable end of the barn; two small white dish antennae on a wooden pole within the tree canopy. Dishes would be improved if olive green. Installation barely visible from most viewpoints. Orange installation at Grid Ref. SD903 615



Wood poles with antennae mounted on top concealed within the copse.



photos: Andrew Darke

Red arrow indicates cylindrical antennae on the barn, dishes on the pole concealed behind and within the copse to the left.

ONGOING PROJECT – NATIONAL GRID OVERHEAD TRANSMISSION LINES (PYLONS)

PLACE has been in correspondence with National Grid (NG) and the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) for over five years, about the Thorpe Marsh to Stalybridge 400kV overhead transmission line, approximately nine miles of which runs through the Peak District National Park (PDNP). The line is a major intrusion in the NP and dominates Longdendale to the west and the Upper Don Valley to the east of the pennines damaging the quality of a fine landscape in this part of the NP.

The statutory duties laid upon NG and PDNPA policies require them to reduce the intrusiveness of the line during refurbishments / upgrades. A major refurbishment begins this year. During the 13/7/07 planning committee meeting of the PDNPA, NG was asked to improve its public consultation efforts; a question remains as to how well the statutory duties and policies are being followed.

PLACE has initiated a project advocating increased 'undergrounding' of the line during the works and is collaborating fully with the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE). Three cards have been produced (Pages 1-3 and below) and a leaflet asking for letters to be written to PDNPA was distributed with CPRE's July issue of "Peakland Guardian." (16 were received)

A pair of folded A4 cards show landscapes as they would be if the present overhead transmission lines (OTLs) were undergrounded / surface troughed. The cards also compare different transmission systems.

pp.1, pp.2 of the left-hand card (Note for on-screen readability, information in the margins of both cards has been removed and placed above on page 11

A new vision for Longdendale in the Peak District National Park and the Upper Don Valley



Longdendale would be like this if the 400kV overhead transmission line were 'undergrounded'/surface troughed



The Upper Don Valley would be like this if the 400kV overhead transmission line were 'undergrounded'/surface troughed



The National Grid (NG) Thorpe Marsh to Stalybridge 400kV overhead transmission line dominates Longdendale west from Woodhead and the Upper Don Valley east from Dunford Bridge (Page 10 above). Note the old Manchester to Sheffield railway track bed in Longdendale, now the Tans Pennine Trail (green line), and surface troughing to its right (red line). Photographs 2006



Surface troughing crossing the river Etherow and entering the Woodhead tunnels (carrying six 400kV cables - a doubling circuit)

This NG transmission system follows the railway track bed above and below ground for 11.25 miles. 3.5 miles have already been 'undergrounded' through the Woodhead tunnels and surface troughing, for amenity reasons, after a public inquiry and recommendation by the National Parks Commission in the early 1960s

Why not extend 'undergrounding'/surface troughing along the old railway track bed?

Another NG 400kV 'underground' circuit in use in the UK



Three views of Kingsland Basin footbridge showing the route of six NG 400kV cables beneath the towpath of Regents Canal, London



Metal casing containing six 400kV cables (within the red line), Kingsland Basin footbridge. (See also above right)

Front cover above; opposite page above: Longdendale and the Upper Don Valley after digital removal of the Thorpe Marsh to Stalybridge transmission line
 This document is twinned with a similar one advocating a specific 'undergrounding'/surface troughing project at Dunford Bridge



Pedestrian route above six 'undergrounded' NG 400kV cables in Regents Canal towpath, London.

The track bed of the old Manchester to Sheffield railway appears to offer similar opportunities for 'undergrounding'

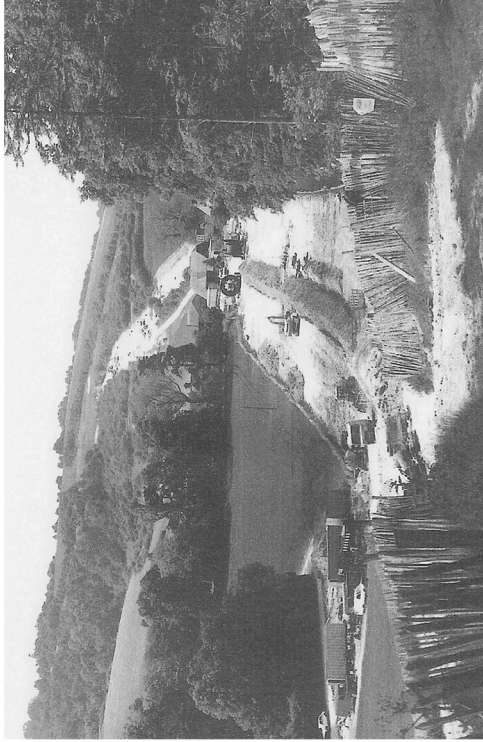


Image of "full undergrounding" from National Grid's current booklet "Overhead or Underground? National Grid's approach."

The booklet states "installing underground circuits entails construction activity amounting to the width of a dual carriageway. The total width required ranges from 15 to 30m depending mainly on the power to be transmitted," pp10.

The width of the 'undergrounding'/surface troughing on Regents Canal varies between 2 to 4m. NG's booklet does not mention surface troughing, or any width of land-take for undergrounding less than 15m



PLACE © 2007



pp2,3 of the right-hand card

Making a start in the Upper Don Valley by extending the 'undergrounding'/surface troughing of the Thorpe Marsh to Stalybridge 400kV overhead transmission line east from the Woodhead tunnels to north-east of the river Don.

National Grid (NG) intends to begin work replacing and transferring cables in the Woodhead tunnels sometime between 2007 and 2010. Present thinking in NG indicates this may include adjustments to the cable sealing end and pylons at Dunford Bridge.

PLACE and Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)/Friends of the Peak District believe there is now a unique opportunity at Dunford Bridge to 'underground'/surface trough from the Woodhead tunnels to north-east of the Don.

An initial modest project would release the community of Dunford Bridge, the Peak District National Park and the important Dunford access point onto the Trans Pennine Trail from the dominating presence of the cable sealing end and the overhead transmission line



Dunford Bridge from the embankment of Winscar Reservoir showing the existing 400kV overhead line



The red line indicates possible 'undergrounding'/surface troughing routes east from the Woodhead tunnels.

Note the digitally manipulated image shows the removal of approximately 8km of the existing overhead line from the Upper Don Valley

This document is twinned with a similar one advocating further 'undergrounding'/surface troughing along the old Manchester to Sheffield railway track bed



THESE TWO NG TRANSMISSION SYSTEMS CARRY THE SAME POWER

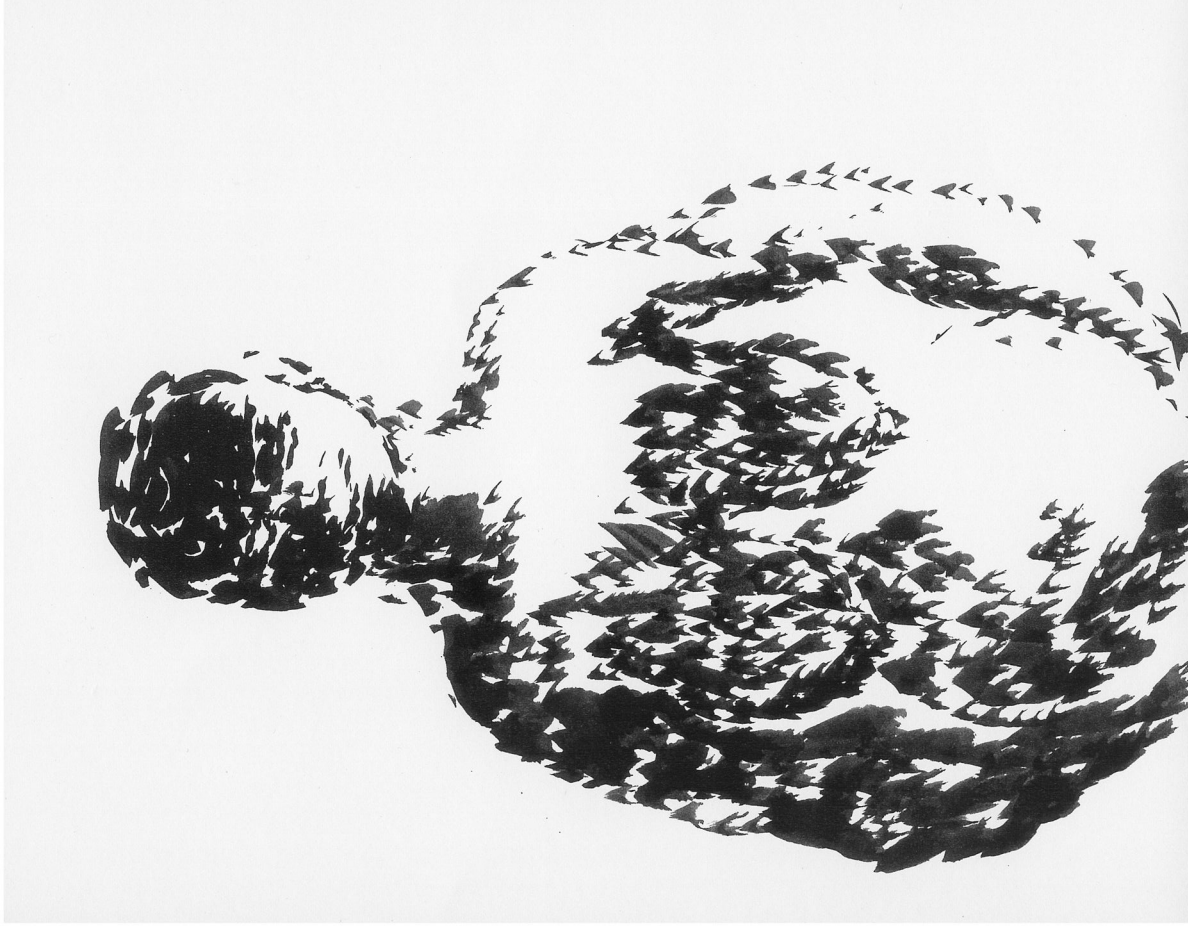


Above: Pylon and 400kV double circuit overhead transmission line seen from Dunford Bridge.
 Below: 'Undergrounding'/surface troughing (left of the red line) of a 400kV double circuit in the
 towpath of Regents Canal, London. Photographs 2006

*Is there any reason why 'undergrounding'/surface troughing
 combined with the new XLPE cable technology should not be used
 at Dunford Bridge along the old railway track bed, or in similar
 circumstances?*



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'Bees in a garden make a speciality of honey and so does honey.'
 Pamela Day. Drawing 5, 7/5/2004

Page 16 – PLACE Initiatives / Pylons

PLACE / CPRE leaflet which was circulated with the July '07 issue of "Peakland Guardian" replaced the Pamela Day drawing (Page 13) with the image and text below.

A NEW VISION FOR THE UPPER DON VALLEY



CAMPAIGN ALERT - HOW YOU CAN HELP!

The picture above shows how the Upper Don Valley, east of Dunford Bridge, might look if National Grid's (NG) towering electricity pylons were removed. Recently NG has notified the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) of its intention to refurbish parts of this high voltage line. Contrary to its statutory duties, NG has failed in any meaningful way to consult with either the local community or amenity groups on its plans. We believe this is a serious omission and a missed opportunity.

NG's plans, to renew cabling through the Dunford - Woodhead railway tunnels, offer an important chance for extra undergrounding to reduce the impact of its overhead transmission lines on a sensitive landscape. The latter would be in line with NG's statutory duties to conserve and enhance the National Park environment, particularly during refurbishments. In this leaflet we show how the use of 'surface troughing' - an established undergrounding solution - could bring substantial amenity and landscape benefits.

The Planning Committee of the PDNPA will be considering NG's proposals on July 13th and we shall be placing our new vision before them too. If you believe that NG should fulfil its statutory consultative and National Park duties, please write to Mr Bob Bryan, Head of Development Control, PDNPA, Aldern House, Baslow Road, Bakewell, DE45 1AE or fax him on 01629 816310 or e-mail to bob.bryan@peakdistrict.gov.uk You can also write to Mr Narendra Bajarria, Chair of the Planning Committee (same address and fax) or at narendra.bajarria@peakdistrict.gov.uk

PLEASE HELP US TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE - EVERY EXTRA LETTER OR E-MAIL WILL COUNT!

PLACE artists group

This undergrounding project was conceived by PLACE, a group of artists / initiators concerned about landscape quality and the impact of infrastructures. PLACE researches and documents environmental best practice which could be used more widely and has been in correspondence with NG regarding its use of 'surface troughing' and other techniques for some years. Publicity is needed to let people know about these less intrusive solutions. Examples can be used as leverage on companies and government.



THESE TWO NG TRANSMISSION SYSTEMS CARRY THE SAME POWER



Above: Pylon and 400kV double circuit overhead transmission line seen from Dunford Bridge.
Below: 'Undergrounding'/surface troughing (left of the red line) of a 400kV double circuit in the towpath of Regents Canal, London. Photographs 2006

Is there any reason why 'undergrounding'/surface troughing should not be used at Dunford Bridge along the old railway track bed, or in similar circumstances?



PLACE
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PLACE and Friends of the Peak District / CPRE South Yorkshire believe that achieving a new landscape vision for the Upper Don Valley could begin by extending the undergrounding (possibly by 'surface troughing') of the Thorpe Marsh - Stalybridge 400kV overhead transmission line east from the Woodhead tunnels along the old railway.

A similar vision is being prepared for Longdendale.

NG intends to begin work replacing and transferring cables in the Woodhead tunnels autumn 2007/winter 2008. NG has already proposed alterations to the cable sealing end and pylons at Dunford Bridge.

There is now a unique opportunity at Dunford for further undergrounding ('surface troughs' no more than a few metres wide could be used - see photo on rear cover of Regents Canal towpath) adjacent to the TransPennine Trail. An initial modest project would release the community of Dunford Bridge, the local landscape, the National Park and the important access onto the Trail from the dominating presence of the pylons.



Dunford Bridge from the embankment of Winscar Reservoir showing the existing pylons



The red line indicates possible 'undergrounding'/surface troughing routes east from the Woodhead tunnels. Note the digitally manipulated image shows the removal of approximately 8km of the existing overhead line from the Upper Don Valley

Best Practice



photo: Andrew Darke

NG 400kV cables run under these moors in a disused railway tunnel between Longdendale and the Upper Don Valley. Grid Ref. SE135 013

"Text and Image Collage" PLACE 2007



photomontage: Andrew Darke

On the reverse of panel 4:

Images: the pair of photographs titled "Industrialization" (from the project "The History Lesson" 1982), in "REMODELLING PHOTO HISTORY 1981 TO 1982: A Collaboration Between Two Photographers Terry Dennett and Jo Spence"

Published in:
"PUTTING MYSELF IN THE PICTURE" JO SPENCE
Camden Press Ltd. London 1986

Reproduced with the permission of Terry Dennett,
Curator of the Jo Spence Memorial Archive.

This card is published as part of PLACE advocacy for increased 'undergrounding' of the National Grid, particularly in and around National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

THE PYLONS

The secret of these hills was stone, and cottages
Of that stone made,
And crumbling roads
That turned on sudden hidden villages

Now over these small hills, they have built the concrete
That trails black wire;
Pylons, those pillars
Bare like nude giant girls that have no secret.

The valley with its gilt and evening look
And the green chestnut
Of customary root
Are mocked dry like the parched bed of a brook.

But far above and far as sight endures
Like whips of anger
With lightning's danger
There runs the quick perspective of the future.

This dwarfs our emerald country by its trek
So tall with prophecy:
Dreaming of cities
Where often clouds shall lean their swan-white neck.

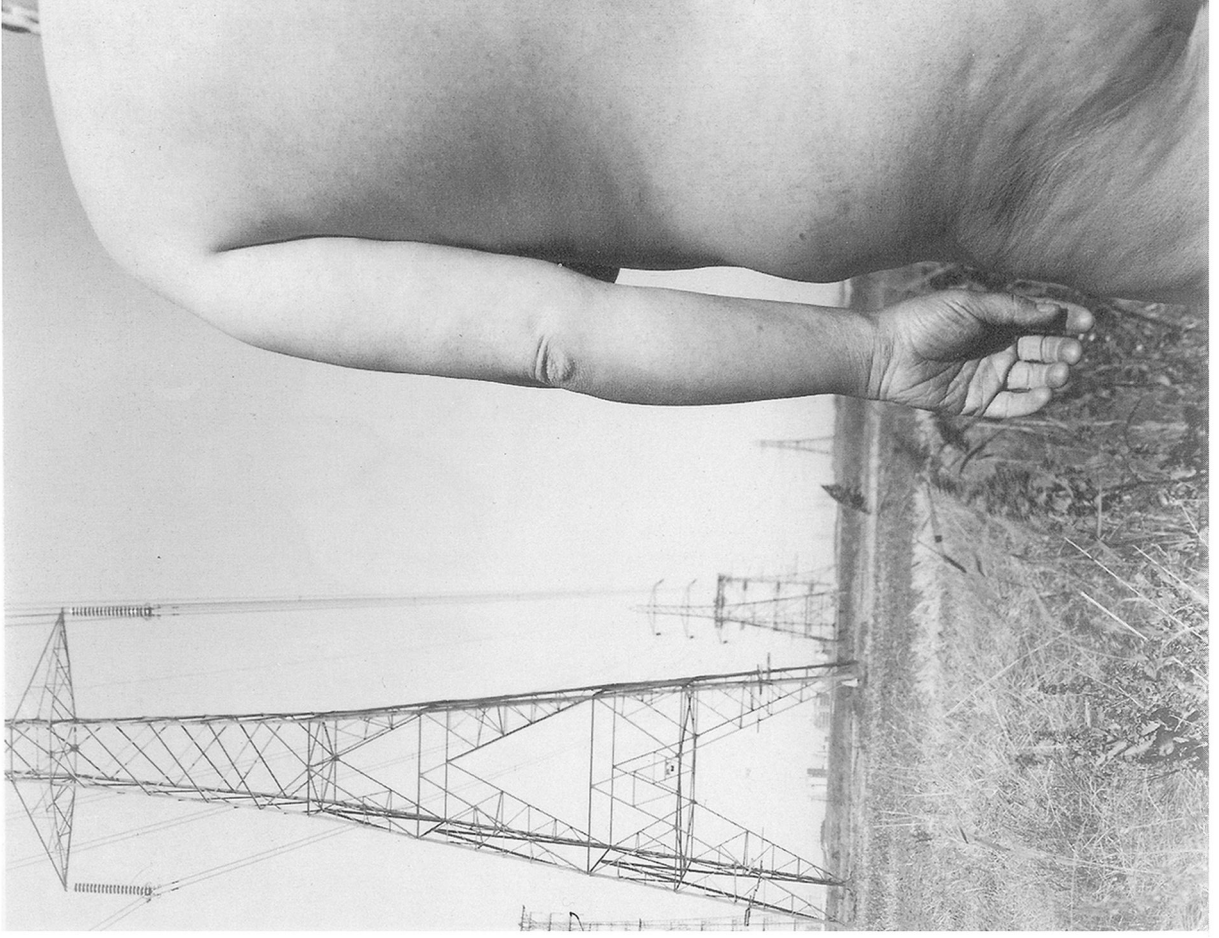
Stephen Spender

*Undated poem published in
"Collected Poems 1928-1953." Faber and Faber*



Now over those small hills
they built the concrete
that trails black wire
Pylons those pillars
Bare like nude, giant girls
that have no secret

But far above and far
as sight endures
Like whips of anger
With lightning's danger
There runs the quick
perspective of the future.



Stephen Spender's poem "The Pylons" rewritten by National Grid for its current undated public information booklet "Overhead or Underground? National Grid's approach." The unacknowledged revision of Spender's poem is printed on page two as "The Pylon, Stephen Spender (1933)."