

Cable Innovation Solves River Riddle

Western Power Distribution

An innovative way of laying electricity cables under the River Welland in Spalding is being used by Western Power Distribution (WPD), the region's electricity distribution company, as part of a £7million investment.

WPD is committed to investing in its network to further improve supply reliability and customer service levels.

This latest initiative involves installing two 130metre lengths of ducting a metre below the river bed for the cables to run through. At their deepest, they will be around six metres below road level.

The 160mm diameter ducts will be installed using a vehicle with a giant drill bit attached to its front which will bore a trenchless excavation under the river. This element of the work – known as directional drilling – is being undertaken by specialist contractors and is expected to take four to five days to complete.

WPD Team Manager Dave Price said: "With no space to run ducting under the bridge for the cables, burying them under the river was our only option. Once installed, they will connect up to an additional 7.5km of new cables which have been laid between two electricity substations – one in Clay Lake, the other on Park Road in Spalding."

The initiative, which started in June 2014, also involves the upgrading of equipment in two nearby substations and forms part of WPD's commitment to provide a consistently high level of service to its customers. It will also further safeguard supply reliability to around 19,000 customers in Spalding on its completion in March 2015.

Another benefit of the investment will be the ability to accommodate any increases in demand on the power network from additional development in the area – like the Wygate Park housing development.

Directional drilling fact file:

Directional drilling enables the installation of cables without the disruption of excavating open cut trenches.

It is an ideal solution for the laying of cables under permanent structures like railway lines, motorways, rivers and canals and where digging from above ground is out of the question.

The machines are capable of installing pipes and cables up to 800mm in diameter and up to 300metres in length.

Note for newsdesks:

- Western Power Distribution (WPD) is the distribution network operator for the Midlands, South West England and South Wales, and is responsible for delivering electricity to approximately 7.8 million customers in the UK.
- WPD is not an electricity supply company and does not bill customers in the UK. Its responsibility is to distribute electricity from the point of generation to homes and businesses.

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