Collaboration on nature conservation: BirdLife’s collaboration projects

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The BirdLife Europe and Central Asia Partnership
BirdLife Partners contributing to BESTGRID pilot projects
BESTGID pilot projects: BirdLife collaborations

BirdLife partners are involved in all four BESTGRID pilot projects.

- 50Hertz: NABU – Eric Neuling (see previous presentation).
- Tennet: NABU Lower Saxony – Elke Meier.
- National Grid: The RSPB – Helen Crow.
NABU Lower Saxony’s collaboration with TenneT

- Risks and opportunities for habitats and species in mountainous regions.
- More connectivity and habitat diversity, to benefit rare plants, reptiles, bats and insects.
- July 2014 visit to ELIA/RTE Life+ project.
- Roundtables Sep and Oct. Report late Nov in German and English.
- Land ownership issues – public v. private.
- Challenge for NGOs – scale and complexity of TSO operations and staff roles.
- Challenge for TSOs – time pressure and technical focus – nature not ‘built in’?
Natagora’s collaboration with ELIA

- Mapping of designated areas and habitats.
- Identification and description of flora, fauna and habitats, bird survey.
- Presented to stakeholders May 2014,
- Pilot project dropped June 2014.
- Route mostly urban or agricultural. Mostly underground or replacement overhead.
- Little real collaboration.
The RSPB’s collaboration with National Grid [1]

- RSPB Casework Team
- Reviewing experience engaging with 6 UK grid projects.
- Archive research and interviews with ‘Casework Officers’:
  - Moray Firth – NE Scotland
  - Hinkley – Somerset in W. England
  - Beauly-Denny – N to S Scotland
  - NSN Link – UK to Norway
  - Bramford to Twinstead – E. England
  - Richborough – SE England (NEMO)
The RSPB’s collaboration with National Grid [2]

- Value of strategic grid planning.
- Coordination vs competition among developers e.g. offshore wind.
- Collaboration with env. authorities matters.
- Engagement at site search stage
- Realistic alternatives
The RSPB’s collaboration with National Grid [3]

- Quality of consultants, survey methods and data quality varies.
- Timescale and capacity issues for RSPB.
- Continuity of engagement varies
- Big public stakeholder meetings increasingly popular, but have drawbacks: minutes?
Mapping collision and/or electrocution risk for birds and advising on mitigation.

- Bulgaria – Svetoslav Spasov (BSPB)
- Cyprus – Clairie Papazoglu (BL Cyprus)
- Portugal – Julieta Costa (SPEA)
- Slovenia – Tomas Mihelic (DOPPS)
- Estonia – Veljo Volke (BL Estonia)
- Belgium – Jean-Yves Paquet (Natagara)
Emerging themes [1] opportunities and successes

- Project work often highly successful.
- Builds constructive working relationships.
- Saving birds is good business and good PR.
- Collaborative, open learning approach and sharing expertise.
- Risk mapping enables strategic retrofit mitigation for greater (cost) effectiveness.
- New power lines and risk mapping = opportunity for strategic grid planning and mitigation in new projects.
- Opportunity to share lessons and good practice.
Emerging themes [2]

Challenges

- Closed approach, distrust and non-cooperation persist in some parts of EU.
- ‘Casework’ too resource intensive, and retrofitting mitigation too expensive.
- Big companies, time pressure and desire for technical fixes – challenging context for conservation NGOs.
- Need for strong environmental authorities and strong environmental expertise in industry.
- How to ensure continuity in engagement and learn from experiences?
Draft recommendations for grid companies

- Map risks and target mitigation: conservation NGOs can help.
- Build nature into plans: much more can be achieved, and at lower cost.
- Make full use of SEA and EIA, with meaningful alternatives.
- Ensure continuity of engagement: ‘stakeholder management’ when projects are put on hold.
- Empower internal environmental teams.
- Quality control EIA processes.
- Stakeholder events need to be documented.
Key lessons for NGOs

- Grid companies respond well to proposals for practical, evidence based collaboration.
- Project work opens doors to better communication and trust.
- ‘Casework’ is (or will be) overwhelming: engage early and ‘upstream’.
- Need to share experiences and replicate good practice.
- Think global, act local! Where else is action needed? Is this line important for clean energy and climate risk reduction?
BirdLife partners delivering BESTGRID workshops
Next steps for BirdLife

- Handbook on grids and nature.
- Workshop for environmental NGOs (Brussels)
- Workshop for BirdLife partners (UK)
- Capacity building workshops in:
  - Slovenia
  - Lithuania
  - Romania
Thank you. Questions?

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