

Environmental and Social Data Sheet

Overview

Project Name: ARQIVA BROADCAST & COMMUNICATION INFRASTRUCTURE
Project Number: 20130490
Country: United Kingdom
Project Description: The project concerns selected components of the promoter's investment programme for the 2013 to 2018 period, in particular a smart metering platform for the electricity utilities, Wi-Fi telecoms infrastructure provided to telecom operators and property owners, two new HD multiplexes for TV channels, a new Digital Radio platform and capital expenditure for renewal of existing assets. The smart metering platform will cover Scotland and the North of England whereas the other installations will be located all over the UK.

EIA required: No

Project included in Carbon Footprint Exercise¹: No

Summary of Environmental and Social Assessment, including key issues and overall conclusion and recommendation

Telecommunication projects are not specifically mentioned in any annexes of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive 2011/92/EU. As part of the telecom sites' authorization process for some major sites the promoter has had to obtain a Screening Opinion under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations but full EIA have never been required by the UK authorities.

The promoter identifies any impact on the environment from existing and new operations. This is achieved by site surveys, the planning application process, and ongoing risk assessment. Visual impacts from radio towers are mitigated by appropriate construction and operation measures. The promoter complies with the EU Council Recommendation (1999/519/EC) on the limitation of exposure of the general public to electromagnetic fields (0 Hz - 300 GHz).

The promoter corporate responsibility includes environment and sustainability issues. To implement it and advise the organisation, a dedicated structure which is directly staffed with 13 people and is supported by the line businesses experts deals with radio frequencies, safety, health, environment and energy management issues.

The promoter has a certified (ISO 14001) integrated Environmental Management System (EMS) as well as other ISO certifications. The EMS allows the promoter to identify and control environmental impacts of its activity including those from new projects.

The project is therefore considered acceptable from the environmental point of view for the Bank's financing, with minor negative residual impacts.

Environmental and Social Assessment

Environmental Assessment

¹ Only projects that meet the scope of the Pilot Exercise, as defined in the EIB draft Carbon Footprint Methodologies, are included, provided estimated emissions exceed the methodology thresholds: above 100,000 tons CO₂e/year absolute (gross) or 20,000 tons CO₂e/year relative (net) – both increases and savings.

Most of the promoter networks and activities use wireless transmission. As a provider of shared infrastructure it supports the UK's policy that encourages the use of existing towers or sites by the telecom industry. The project will not bring significant new visual impacts. For instance the new Smart Meter transmission equipment will, where possible, be mounted on the promoter's large number of existing towers and the Wi-Fi hot-spots will also utilise Arqiva's existing sites where possible and use equipment that is small in size which does not have a significant visual impact.

Electromagnetic field radiation is subject to limits imposed by EU recommendation based on the ICNIRP thresholds. Its potential health risk continues to be studied at an international level. In 2011 the WHO/International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has classified electromagnetic radiation as possibly carcinogenic to humans (group 2B) which underlines the relevance of the subject. The promoter public relations policy addresses radiation concerns with the citizens and the landlords of its transmission sites.

The promoter to expand and develop its network sites has to comply with planning legislation and procedures. Different planning systems operate across the four main UK regions where the promoter is present, although their key elements are similar. All systems require planning permission for operational development and for material changes of use of the existing installations. Such permissions can be granted either by General Development Orders (GDO) which applies to a large part of promoter installations or after an application for specific planning permissions to the planning authority (with appeal procedures if refused).

For the building of new sites there is often an inter-play between legislative regimes. On some major sites the promoter has to obtain a Screening Opinion under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) regulations and provide supporting material such as Landscape Visual Impact Assessments, along with Ecological and Arboriculture surveys, reports and mitigation measures. Additional permissions will be necessary for ancient monuments and nature protection areas. However, and even for the major projects carried out recently under the large UK's TV digitalisation programme, the promoter has not been required to produce a full EIA. This framework is expected to be maintained for the bulk of the project implementation taking into account that its characteristics are in line with previous installations. The promoter expects that the forthcoming review of the EIA Directive 2011/92/EU will have minimal effect on its business conditions.

The promoter operations in current FY 2013/14 is expected to have about 160 k tons of CO₂ emissions, a level stable since 2012/13 decreasing from the peak of about 200 k tons in 2010 and as the result of the completion of the digital TV switchover in the UK in Q3 2012. It is estimated by EIB that the project will increase CO₂ emissions by about 10 k tonnes (7% of baseline) including specific additions from new projects and savings from continuous improvements on design and equipment of existing systems. The increments brought by the project will thus be below the thresholds for inclusion in EIB Carbon Footprint Exercise. The promoter participates in the UK's Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) Energy Efficiency Scheme and its footprint is externally audited.