

British landscapes under threat from new wave of pylons

Britain's most beautiful landscapes are under threat from a new wave of high-voltage pylons to be announced by the National Grid, conservationists warned yesterday.

Electricity pylons carrying 400,000 volts of power from National Grid sub station near Luton Photo: Richard Watt

By Richard Edwards

7:00AM BST 21 Jun 2010

The company is planning the biggest expansion of electrical infrastructure in half a century to meet a surge in demand for power and to link up with new wind farms and nuclear stations.

It will lay out plans this week for three lines in the West Country and East Anglia. Up to 60 miles of towering pylons and cables could cut through areas of outstanding beauty such as the Mendip Hills in Somerset and Dedham Vale in Suffolk.

Meanwhile work continues on schemes for another dozen new lines which could see the 164ft tall pylons snaking through Snowdonia national park in Wales, the Lincolnshire Wolds, Kent and Anglesey.

Conservationists fiercely oppose the scheme and want the National Grid to bury the new infrastructure using underground cables.

Paul Miner, from the Campaign to Protect Rural England, said: "Britain already has 22,000 high-voltage pylons and 4,375 miles of overhead lines, mostly running through pristine countryside.

"Now they are planning the biggest expansion in 50 years, including national parks."

Bill Bryson, the author and campaigner, has previously condemned the plans as "crazy", saying that "more pylons do not equal progress".

The National Grid will details its first three applications this week to the Infrastructure Planning Commission, the government body set up to oversee big planning issues.