

Registration No 20051915

Uncertainty post DCO approval

I remain concerned that if the DCO is approved, the subsequent undertakings by the manifold contractors and other actors will generate profound stress and uncertainty and that, despite the various protocols and schedules, there will be many points of conflict and misunderstanding given the complexity of delivery.

I have experience already of this during the additional investigative work undertaken between August and October involving trenches and boreholes along the cable corridor.

On land where I manage a small game shoot, I was assured in June 2024 that there would be no further work which would disturb my enterprise. In July 2025 I was informed of this extra investigative work. In a two-hour meeting with the surveyors it was agreed that the planned trench, which would be within less than 50 metres of a pond on which I had released young ducks, would be re-located some 120 metres to the east, to avoid disturbing the birds. I was grateful for the co-operation and understanding of the survey team.

However, on the scheduled day for the trench work (September 15<sup>th</sup> 2025), the JCB digger and three workmen in high visibility jackets proceeded to dig in the original location and not the re-located site well away from the pond. The result of this was that my young ducks were alarmed and took flight.

So, despite the earlier meeting and the presence of managerial oversight on the day, the undesirable outcome which I had sought to prevent, happened!

This small example of poor communication, mismanagement and destructive delivery does not bode well for the future if the DCO gains approval. The DCO may, on paper, offer endless safeguards and protocols for all stakeholders to follow but this is in essence a framework of aspiration for a reality which will never exist; when the diggers begin, the true reality will emerge: it will be harsh on people and places as the enormity of the project becomes a living nightmare.

The outline communications plan which was discussed at the hearing on October 8<sup>th</sup> is clearly in its infancy and I doubt that the various approaches to liaison and consultation with the many affected people and organisations will be robust and sustainable unless there is high level management commitment to it. Ultimately the responsibility will be broad based and subject to the debilitating effect of a project of considerable duration and complexity: early enthusiasm will wane. If the DCO gains consent, the implementation of its permissions and authority will be a sword of Damocles hovering over every inch of the cable corridor with each affected party seeking to ensure due process and good practice is followed from day to day, week to week and year to year. If things are not going to plan who, in truth, will be accountable?

Alan J Child

