Scottish and Southern Energy
Power Distribution

Date of Submission

July 2016

Network Innovation Allowance Progress Report

Notes on Completion: Please refer to the appropriate NIA Governance Document to assist in the completion of this form.

Network Licensees must publish the required Project Progress information on the Smarter Networks Portal by 31st July 2014 and each year thereafter. The Network Licensee(s) must publish Project Progress information for each NIA Project that has developed new learning in the preceding relevant year.

Project Progress

Project Title

Assessment of Remotely Operated Mulching Methods

Project Reference

NIA_SSEPD_0018

Project Licensee(s)

Scottish Hydro Electric Power Distribution, Southern Electric Power Distribution

Project Start Date

Nov 2015

Project Duration

12 Months

Nominated Project Contact(s)

David MacLeman

Scope

The purpose of this project is to investigate if using remotely operated forestry machinery can significantly reduce the cost and the potential for safety incidents during forestry mulching.

There is a project plan in place to cover the following steps;.

A task specific risk assessment will be created by our business representatives and engineering policy teams that will consider all the potential hazards or issues associated with the new machinery.

A new work programme specific to the task will be developed for the duration of the trial based upon the current programme carried out under traditional methods.

A review of the available plant and equipment across all working environments will be undertaken to identify the most appropriate equipment for the field trials. The equipment will then be purchased or hired depending on pricing and availability.

Staff to be involved in the project from an operational perspective will be selected based on their experience of the current method and experience in using heavy machinery. Training will be provided at this stage to ensure that persons in control of the plant will have the correct authorisations required.

A 6 month trial period will be undertaken using the machine and the operatives and their supervisors will provide feedback and continual assessment as to their benefits.

The results from the trial will be used to make a comparison between the current method and the innovative method and assess the viability of the innovative method from a consideration of financial and safety factors.

Objective(s)

- Define risk assessment for the use of plant
- Develop trial work programme

- Evaluate commercially available options based upon the programme
- Procure machine and carry out training
- Commence trial period of 6 months
- Compare methods and determine the viability of the innovative method

Success Criteria

The project will determine the viability of the use of remotely operated mulching methods

Performance Compared to the Original Project Aims, Objectives and Success Criteria

• Two Bushfighter machines were procured from D C Merrett & Co Ltd, fitted with the forestry mulching tool
• One is based at Petersfield in the SEPD region, the other at Inverness in the SHEPD region
• Training has been provided for experienced SEPD treecutting crews
• Field trials have begun with encouraging early indications of increased productivity by a factor of up to 8 in terms of person-days compared to established methods using chainsaws and a woodchipping machine. Work to date has been conducted safely and efficiently.

Required Modifications to the Planned Approach During the Course of the Project

None

Lessons Learnt for Future Projects

• The project is at an early stage and a detailed assessment against all criteria will be made at a later date
• The use of the machine is restricted in summer because of bird nesting (the same restriction applies to traditional cutting methods); the assessment will be made anyway, however some extrapolation will be needed to estimate the business value over the whole year
• Assessment criteria will include safety of operation; productivity improvement and cost savings; reliability and running costs; ease of use and transport; effectiveness of the machine in a variety of weather and ground conditions; effectiveness on sloping and uneven ground