



Portion of cable needs to be reburied

To required six-foot depth

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Power generated by the Block Island Wind Farm and flowed through National Grid's sea2shore cable may be interrupted between now and sometime in May due to a portion of the cable having to be re-installed.

Recent surveying of the cable revealed that some of it is not buried at the proper depth of six feet below the surface of the ocean floor.

In some areas, **concrete pads** have been placed over sections of cable to protect it, but that has **not been deemed feasible** for the area **just offshore of Fred Benson Town Beach**. **Starting 200 feet from shore, an 80-foot section of cable is currently three feet below the seabed**. The cable itself is about 20 miles long.

During the reburying process, the cable will need to be "de-energized."

Block Island Power Company Transition Team member and Second Warden Norris Pike informed his fellow Transition Team members, at their meeting on Tuesday, Jan. 10, that National Grid hoped to do the necessary work during February and March, but that an "assent" to do the work is needed from the Coastal Resources Management Council. Given the timeframe, Pike said: "I think it's going to be May" when the work is completed.

Town Facilities Manager Sam Bird said that as of last Wednesday, Jan. 4, when he last spoke with National Grid, no application had yet been submitted to the CRMC.

Pike said that the problem may have been exacerbated by the movement of sand between “the winter beach and the summer beach” when sand washes in and out of the area.

In response to an inquiry, National Grid’s Media Relations Spokesperson David Graves told The Block Island Times: “During construction we ran into rock formations that prevented us from burying the cable to the minimum required depth. This does not present a safety issue to the public or for the cable, but it does need to be addressed. We are currently working with the appropriate agencies on an agreed-upon solution and will start supplemental cable protection efforts in the near future.” Graves declined to answer questions regarding the expected timeframe of the project.

While the cable is being reburied, most likely with the services of a jet plow, it will need to be de-energized. That means that BIPCo will need to provide energy to Deepwater Wind while the work is being performed in order to keep the wind farm running. It also means that energy being generated by the wind farm will not be transmitted to the mainland.

As the work will be performed offshore, there will be no need for a cofferdam on the beach, as there was last year.

Due to the fire at BIPCo last July, three out five diesel generators were incapacitated. The company had to rent two additional generators in order to supply the island with sufficient power throughout the busy summer season. One of the two rental generators was taken offline at the end of September, and the second one was taken offline at the end of November.

Pike said that if the reburial was not complete by the end of May, generators would again be needed to be brought in to supply the island with sufficient power until such time as the cable becomes operational again.

In other news, the Transition Team voted to engage the law firm of Partridge, Snow and Hahn to provide the initial tax advice on the tax implications of transitioning BIPCo to either an electrical cooperative or a municipal utility district.

At this point, the Team is leaning towards the municipal model (based on the quasi-municipal Pascoag Utility District), but the final decision won't be made until the results of Partridge, Snow and Hahn study can be examined.

One of the benefits of the municipal model is that there is already one in the state, whereas there are no electrical cooperatives. The members of the Transition Team felt that the state legislature might be more comfortable approving the necessary enabling legislation for that reason.

After the meeting adjourned, Transition Team member Nancy Dodge, who also serves as the President of the Board of Directors for BIPCo, informally surveyed those present as to if and when they had been served in the lawsuit filed against them by minority BIPCo stockholder Sara McGinnes and her husband, Cliff McGinnes. While most had been served last week, she noted that she had not actually yet been served herself. "Ironically, it's Tom Durden doing the serving," said Dodge. Durden is a linesman for BIPCo.

The Transition Team will next meet on Friday, Jan. 20, at 11:30 a.m. Members encourage the general public to attend. A presentation will be made by Energy New England, which the Transition Team is in the process of hiring for assistance in procuring power purchase contracts from energy suppliers on the mainland.