

SP Energy Networks awards contract to Edinburgh-based drone firm

SP Energy Networks is making the switch to modern drone technology to inspect its network, which will offer benefits to the environment and drive down costs.

The electricity network provider had previously relied solely on helicopters to visually assess the towers on its transmission network.

However, following a successful trial period last year, a fleet of drones is now carrying out condition-based assessments across the SP Transmission network, which covers Central and Southern Scotland.

The drones are helping to reduce the company's carbon footprint, contributing to SP Energy Networks' drive towards Net Zero emissions targets.

Leading drone-based inspection firm Cyberhawk has been awarded the contract to carry out these inspections, utilising its iHawk software to collect data against 85 different points on the towers. This allows SP Transmission to assess any network risk and inform future investment, enhancing network resilience, integrity and security – ultimately keeping the lights on.

Pearse Murray, Transmission Director for SP Energy Networks,

said: “It’s a massive undertaking to complete the regular inspection of the many towers on our transmission network but the drone technology represents a significant step forward for a number of reasons.

“Firstly, it’s hugely beneficial for the environment and the imagery we obtain is of a high standard due to the flexibility of the drones in assessing tower conditions, meaning we can make even more informed decisions.

“Following the successful trial, we also realised that the drones dramatically minimise the impacts on landowners and make it much easier to arrange access to land when we require it.”

Cyberhawk has secured a contract until the end of 2022 for the condition-based inspection work through a competitive tender process.

Chris Fleming, Cyberhawk CEO, said: “By partnering with Cyberhawk, SP Energy Networks has chosen a more environmentally conscious solution for inspecting its electrical network and structures, supporting its commitment to significant emissions reductions, while returning more accurate results through our state-of-the-art drone inspection technology and iHawk software.

“This has also assisted SP Energy Networks in maintaining critical inspection services throughout the coronavirus pandemic, helping to keep the lights on for millions of customers in the UK and ensuring safe operations across its network.”

Due to the success of the partnership with Cyberhawk, SP Transmission is also expanding its own fleet of drones to assist with network risk assessment and planning.

SP Energy Networks is part of the ScottishPower group, a Principal Partner for the United Nations Climate Change

Conference (COP26) to be held in Glasgow later this year. It is developing an energy model that will play a significant role in reaching the UK's world-leading climate change targets and is investing a total of £10bn in the clean energy generation and networks infrastructure needed to help the UK decarbonise and reach Net Zero emissions.

SP Energy Networks owns and manages overhead and underground powerlines in Central and Southern Scotland as well as Merseyside, Cheshire, North Wales and North Shropshire.

For more information on SP Energy Networks, please visit: www.spenergynetworks.co.uk

