



Press release

Nexans completes Elia's underground high voltage link on the Belgian coast.

A real challenge in terms of cables installation

Paris, June 8, 2006 - Nexans, the worldwide leader in the cable industry, has completed a 16.5 million euros project for Elia, the Belgian electricity transport network manager, to create a new 33 km underground 150 kV link between the Coxyde and Slijkens substations on the Belgian coast. One of the major project challenges was in laying the cables under the Bruges-Ostend-Ghent canal, this was achieved by using an existing access tunnel owned by Aquafin, the water-treatment and sewerage utility.

The new high voltage link forms an integral part of Elia's large-scale extension of the power network in the coastal region. As well as reinforcing the network to respond to increasing demand for electricity it will also facilitate the grid connection of the Thornton Bank offshore windfarm.

99 km of 150 kV cables and 87 joints!

For the underground link between Coxyde and Slijkens, three 150 kV cables manufactured by Nexans' Charleroi factory were buried at a depth of 1.25 m over a distance of 33 km. One of the three cables was equipped with integrated fibre optic technology in order to monitor temperature and power usage when the link is operating. A drainage cable was also laid to drain circulating currents to the nearest earthed bonding point, this provides a measure of protection against short-circuits for example, as well as preventing electro-chemical corrosion of local structures such as steel ducts.

The 99 km of high voltage cables was laid in 1,100 m sections. This required the construction of 87 joints in 29 jointing bays. Special joints were produced by dedicated production units of Nexans in Belgium and Switzerland; they use the very latest generation Direct Cross-Bonding technology which is a cost-effective technique that prevents the loss of electric current in the screens across the joint. To ensure the precision, quality and reliability of the joints, they were carried out by Nexans' highly skilled and experienced specialized jointing teams.

A cable installation challenge

While working on this project, Nexans had to consider the high ground water level that is a characteristic of the coastal region, the possible presence of munitions from the

First World War and the need to coordinate the work with other 36 kV Elia installations in the region.

However, the greatest challenge was in laying the high voltage link under the Bruges-Ostend-Ghent canal. Nexans was able to use an existing tunnel under the canal belonging to Aquafin. Three 150 kV cables were installed in this tunnel using the 'snaking' technique in 25 m deep vertical shafts and horizontally along an unbroken length of 115 m without joints. The cables were fastened to the tunnel wall using an innovative suspension system that does not require any drilling (a first for this type of cabling in Belgium) and were covered with a fire retardant protective coating.

Schedule

Work on the project started in March 2005 and lasted for a year. Elia will start using the new high voltage network from May 2006. The dielectric tests at twice the nominal voltage (ie 174 kV) were carried out successfully on the whole link and on the three phases of the 150 kV cables. This was carried out with a 440 kV high voltage test installation in order to test the link in three parts. A special test installation was designed by Nexans' Belgian team to reduce the cost of the tests, while also ensuring full conformity with Elia's strict technical and safety requirements.

KEN consortium

In order to undertake the project, Nexans formed a consortium called 'Kust Energie Net' (KEN) with Fabricom GTI and Visser & Smit Hanab. The project was undertaken according to the ISO 14001 directives, ensuring strict waste management and respect for environmental concerns in the coastal region.

About Nexans

Nexans is the worldwide leader in the cable industry. The Group brings an extensive range of advanced copper and optical fibre cable solutions to the infrastructure, industry and building markets. Nexans cables and cabling systems can be found in every area of people's lives, from telecommunications and energy networks, to aeronautics, aerospace, automobile, railways, building, petrochemical, medical applications, etc. With an industrial presence in 29 countries and commercial activities throughout the world, Nexans employs 20,000 people and had sales in 2005 of 5.4 billion euros. Nexans is listed on the Paris stock exchange. More information available on www.nexans.com

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