

<b>12.8</b>	<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>REGISTRATION OF INTEREST TO PLEC - UNDERGROUNDING OF POWER LINES IN ECHUNGA</b>
	<b>DATE OF MEETING:</b>	<b>6 MARCH 2023</b>
	<b>FILE NUMBER:</b>	<b>DOC/23/23183</b>
	<b>ATTACHMENTS:</b>	<b>Attachment 1 – Letter from PLEC to Mayor (DOC/23/3129)</b>
	<b><u>Key Contact</u></b>	Maddie Walker, Manager Community Planning and Wellbeing
	<b><u>Manager/Sponsor</u></b>	Phil Burton, General Manager Infrastructure

**Community Plan 2020-2035:**

ES Objective 3.1 Ensure that trees and other vegetation including vegetated roofs and vertical gardens are an integral part of the urban landscape.

EP Objective 1.2 Develop the economic potential of town centres, activity nodes and main streets.

**Annual Business Plan:**

\$50k is provisioned for the planning and design of Echunga Main Street for FY22/23.

**Purpose:**

To recommend that Council submit a registration of interest for the Power Line Environment Committee (PLEC) scheme for the undergrounding of power lines for a portion of the Echunga Main Street.

**Summary – Key Issues:**

1. Council received notification that PLEC is seeking Registrations of Interest (ROI) from Councils for the undergrounding of power lines and to be on standby for FY24/25 (see attachment 1).
2. The Echunga Township Plan contemplates undergrounding of power lines along the Main Street as a long term action.
3. ROI's were due on 28 February 2023 and Council staff submitted an ROI for a portion of Echunga Main Street in the interim so that this Council report could be considered.

**Recommendation:**

That Council:

1. Endorse the submission of a Registration of Interest (ROI) to the Power Line Environment Committee (PLEC) undergrounding scheme for a portion of the Echunga Main Street in accordance with the endorsed township plan, and;
  2. Note that the ROI will place Council on standby only for a project in FY24/25 as the PLEC program is already at capacity for the next two financial years.
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**Background:**

1. A Power Line Environment Committee (PLEC) scheme is designed to assist Councils to improve the appearance of a specific locality for the benefit of the general community.
2. PLEC wrote to the Mayor on 11 January 2023 seeking a Registration of Interest (ROI) to be on standby for a project in FY24/25 (see attachment 1).
3. Registrations closed on 28 February 2023.
4. An ROI does not commit Council to future works and it can be withdrawn at any time.
5. The table below details the process and responsibilities for progressing an ROI through to an endorsed project:

Responsible	Process	Action
Council	Registration of Interest (ROI) or approach by proponent. Refer Clause 12(a) and (b) of the PLEC Charter (page 25) for eligible proponents.	Response to six-monthly call for Registrations of Interest. The Executive Officer is available to discuss proposals at any time.
PLEC	PLEC priority setting of proposal.	Response to proponent by Executive Officer. If positive, timing of project can be considered.
Executive Officer PLEC	Design and Estimate request	Executive Officer requests a network design and project estimates from SA Power Networks to meet project timelines.
SA Power Networks	Design Estimate of network alterations, civil work and customers' electrical reconnections	SA Power Networks obtains project estimates. The network estimate is the responsibility of SA Power Networks. SA Power Networks also provides the associated civil and electrical reconnection costs.
Management Team	Estimate review	The Management Team will review the project estimates prior to final submission to PLEC.
Council	Formal Submission	Executive Officer collates submissions and costs from Councils and project costs from SA Power Networks for presentation to PLEC.
PLEC	Recommendation	Recommendations of submissions forwarded to Minister for Energy (or appointed delegate) for each 6-month cycle.
Minister	Approval	SA Power Networks notified of construction program by Minister for Energy (or appointed delegate).
Project Team	Construction Project Management Delivery	SA Power Networks manages the project site for the duration of the project. Council is responsible for public relations and notification of impending works and possible disruptions.

6. PLEC makes recommendations to the Minister for Energy for eligible projects. Funding is subject to Ministerial approval and the total project costs are divided on a 2:1 basis in accordance with the PLEC Charter.

7. Further information on PLEC and the project criteria and process can be found here:

<https://www.escosa.sa.gov.au/industry/electricity/plec/plec-resources>

8. In addition to the ROI, Council must submit a firm undertaking to the streetscaping as an integral part of the undergrounding project where required.
9. Council's plans for streetscaping the PLEC project area must be provided during the scoping of the project to assist in the network design and location of lighting columns and similar. PLEC will not usually recommend undergrounding power lines in the absence of such plans.
10. All streetscaping costs are the responsibility of Council.

**Discussion:**

11. In October 2022, Council advised PLEC that it had no immediate projects for consideration but that Echunga was a future possibility.
12. Council staff had previously identified a short list of potential PLEC projects. The ones which remain incomplete are:
  - a. Cameron Road, Mount Barker – Gawler Street to Druids Avenue
  - b. Balance of Main Road, Nairne (first stage completed FY2014/15)
  - c. Balhannah Road to Church Street, Hahndorf
  - d. Pine Avenue, Hahndorf - Mount Barker Road to the Freeway overpass
  - e. Auricht Road, Hahndorf - Mount Barker Road to 1st intersection.
13. Council has a number of endorsed township plans that include an action to upgrade main streets, including the investigation into power line undergrounding.
14. Most township main streets have received some form of power line undergrounding with the exception of Echunga.
15. There is a long term action in the endorsed Echunga Township Plan seeking undergrounding of power lines for the Echunga Main Street:

*Advocate for a Power Line Environment Committee (PLEC) program to underground the overhead power lines on the southern side of the main street, allowing for an improved streetscape and street tree design.*

16. The Echunga community has advocated strongly for undergrounding power lines in the main street and this is evident in the latest LTFP consultation.

- 17. The **estimated preliminary cost to Council** to underground a portion of the main street in Echunga (some 620m from the CFS to past the Hagen Arms) is \$700k to \$900k. Council’s contribution is one third of the actual amount incurred by SAPN who deliver the project. This amount includes a contingency of \$100k which is reasonable for excavation works in untested soils.
- 18. A smaller portion of the street only may require undergrounding so the cost could be lower pending the outcome of detailed design and consultation.
- 19. Council will also be required to fund and construct an upgrade to the streetscape following the PLEC works. No design has been done on the upgrade to date however, this investment could be in the order of \$0.5m to \$1.0m based on similar upgrade projects. These works may attract other grant funding to offset Council’s overall contribution.
- 20. Council have a budget of \$50k in the current financial year to commence the streetscape (main street) upgrade planning and design for the Echunga Main Street. Full costs and benefits will be further understood following completion of the Echunga Main Street design and once PLEC design and cost estimates are received post the ROI. A further report will be provided to Council at this time to decide on how to proceed.
- 21. Council staff have submitted an ROI for a portion of the Echunga Main Street in anticipation of Council endorsing the recommendation in this report. If the recommendation is not supported then Council staff will write to PLEC seeking that the ROI is immediately withdrawn.

**Community Engagement:**

<p>Informing only</p>	<p>Local community engagement on the draft concept design of the main street upgrade will be undertaken and will include a level of engagement on the need and extent of any PLEC work. Staff have established a Stakeholder Reference Group consisting of business owners and Community representatives from Echunga. This group will assist Council staff in the development of the draft concept design prior to Council undertaking broader community engagement later in the year.</p>
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**Policy:**

N/A

**Long Term Financial Plan:**

There is capacity within the draft 2023-2033 Council Consolidated LTFP to fund (subject to final scope and costing) Council's contribution to a PLEC upgrade should Council wish to proceed with the undergrounding.

Given that the LTFPs will be refreshed annually, should the ROI be successful and subject to Council decision making, this project will be incorporated into the next iteration of the LTFP.

The PLEC contribution is an operating expense, not capital.

**Budget:**

The submission of the ROI requires no budget adjustment at this stage.

**Statutory/Legal:**

There are no statutory or legal obligations for Council resulting from the ROI.

**Staff Resource Requirements:**

There will be no additional impacts to staff resourcing resulting from the recommendation.

**Environmental:**

The ROI is consistent with Council's Environment Strategy 2018 – 2023 as it enables additional street trees to be planted on the southern side of the street without the interference of overhead cables.

**Social:**

The ROI supports improved public spaces along the main street that provide amenity and interest for visitors and residents.

**Risk Assessment:**

There is minimal risk associated with submitting an ROI. It does not commit Council and can be withdrawn at any time. There is a risk that the community expectations for delivery of undergrounding power lines will be raised through this ROI. The estimated cost could also be higher given the lack of design work completed to date and the assumption that price escalation will continue across the next 2-3 years.

**Asset Management:**

There is no impact to asset management resulting from the ROI. Power line assets are owned by SAPN.

**Conclusion:**

A registration of interest has been submitted to PLEC for the undergrounding of power lines for a portion of the Echunga Main Street consistent with the endorsed township plan and feedback received from the latest round of draft LTFP consultation. Further planning, design and consultation is now needed to firm up costs and benefits ahead of future annual business plan and budget consideration.

## Previous Decisions By/Information Reports to Council

Meeting Date	2 March 2020	CM Reference	DOC/20/16832
Title	UNDERGROUNDING POWER LINES (PLEC) IN LITTLEHAMPTON		
Purpose	To inform Council that the Littlehampton PLEC project is at risk of exceeding its budget by approximately \$260,000 due to unexpected circumstances, and to recommend a change of scope to avoid / offset these cost overruns.		

Meeting Date	4 March 2019	CM Reference	DOC/19/19540
Title	SUCCESSFUL APPLICATION TO THE POWER LINE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (PLEC) FOR UNDERGROUNDING OF POWER LINES IN LITTLEHAMPTON		
Purpose	To inform Council of the successful application to the Power Line Environment Committee (PLEC) for further funding for the undergrounding of power lines within the Mount Barker district that being a portion of North Terrace, Littlehampton.		

Meeting Date	2 October 2018	CM Reference	DOC/19/103772
Title	FORMAL SUBMISSION TO POWER LINE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (PLEC) FOR UNDERGROUNDING OF POWER LINES IN LITTLEHAMPTON		
Purpose	To inform Council of the application to the Power Line Environment Committee (PLEC) for further funding for the undergrounding of power lines within the Mount Barker district that being a portion of North Terrace, Littlehampton		

Meeting Date	6 February 2018	CM Reference	DOC/17/6932
Title	REGISTRATION OF INTEREST TO POWER LINE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE (PLEC) FOR UNDERGROUNDING OF POWER LINES		
Purpose	To seek endorsement for a registration of interest to the Power Line Environment Committee (PLEC) for further funding for the undergrounding of power lines within the Mount Barker district being a portion of North Terrace, Littlehampton		



Our Ref: 2023D001719

Mayor David Leach  
Mount Barker District Council  
PO Box 54  
Mount Barker SA 5251

Dear Mayor David Leach

**POWER LINE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE - REGISTRATION OF INTEREST FOR PROJECT PROPOSALS**

I am pleased to advise the Power Line Environment Committee (PLEC) will continue to offer funding opportunities to individual Councils throughout South Australia to undertake projects to underground power lines.

The PLEC programme for the financial periods 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 is at capacity. Whilst the funding is competitive, we have several significant projects currently underway and we have a rolling programme to seek applications from Councils for PLEC funding.

Registration of interest (ROI) for projects to be on a standby or wait list is now open for consideration in the financial year 2024-2025. The close off date for ROI of projects in this first round of call out will close on 28 February 2023.

If the Mount Barker District Council has power lines and a streetscape that meets the criteria, and Council is considering an undergrounding project, we would be very happy to discuss your project proposal with you.

You don't need firm, fully prepared plans at this early stage.

I have attached a copy of the PLEC funding application form for your consideration. If you have any queries or would like to make a submission for funding, please contact the PLEC Secretariat at [DEM.PLEC@sa.gov.au](mailto:DEM.PLEC@sa.gov.au) or telephone the Executive Officer PLEC, Ms Loan Vu on (08) 8226 5667.

Further information about PLEC can also be found at the following website:  
<http://www.energymining.sa.gov.au/plec>

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kim Steinle'.

Kim Steinle  
**CHAIR**  
**POWER LINE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**



11 January 2023