

The CEUS project enters its final stage, following the installation of the underground cable that will replace the overhead line

Red Eléctrica manages to move forward the work to complete the civil engineering aspect and be able to schedule the electrical operations for connecting the new underground line before the season with the highest demand, in the summer time, provided the safety of the area is guaranteed at all times.

It is expected that CEUS, an initiative from the INTA, the CDTI and the Government of Andalusia, will be commissioned before the upcoming summer, if the conditions of the electrical system are suitable.

Huelva, 24 April 2024

Red Eléctrica, Redeia's subsidiary company in charge of the transmission and operation of the Spanish electricity system, has managed to bring forward the work to underground the 220kv-electricity line Rocío-Torrearenillas as it passes over the operations runway associated with the Centre of Excellence for Unmanned Systems (*Centro de Ensayos, Entrenamiento y Montaje de Aviones No Tripulados* or CEUS), a project promoted by the Ministry of Defence, through the INTA, the CDTI and the Government of Andalusia, in the municipality of Moguer (Huelva).

However, its commissioning will be subject to the conditions of the electricity system and to the safety of the supply in the area being guaranteed at all times.

The CEUS project is part of the CEDEA (El Arenosillo Test Centre), located a few kilometres away, and they will both become the best European Centre for Excellence for Unmanned Systems (Drones) and an international benchmark for experimenting with unmanned systems. It is designed for testing this kind of aircraft and prototype, both civil and military, in the public and private sphere. It is currently considered to be one of the most relevant strategic investments in the province of Huelva.

Undergrounding is the result of the close collaboration between Red Eléctrica and the different administrations involved, as well as the public company TRAGSA. In particular, Red Eléctrica and the Department for Universities, Research and Innovation of the Government of Andalusia signed an agreement in November 2023, which was a decisive milestone for the work.

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Aware of the urgency to underground the line so the CEUS project could be operational, Red Eléctrica, prior to execution of the agreement, carried out a preliminary technical and economical feasibility study of the measures, the technical specifications for the civil engineering work on the underground channel, drafting of the project and its administrative processing and the procurement of materials for the new infrastructure, particularly the underground cable, at a time of great pressure for the supply chain.

Once the agreement was signed and all the permits were obtained, the activities on land were started. Their positive progress has made it possible to reach the current stage, where the cable layout work prior to electrical connection is being finished.

As a result, undergrounding is entering its final phase, significantly reducing the deadlines initially planned. This has made it possible to discharge the line (disconnect it from the Spanish electricity system to work on it) before the summer, when there is a significant increase in demand on the Huelva coast. During tagout, the work to connect the overhead line to the underground line below the runway will be carried out and electrical tests will be carried out on the new infrastructure. And lastly, older structures will be disassembled.

In this new scenario, provided there are no incidents in the operation of the grid or other unexpected events hindering the work, the undergrounding of the Rocío-Torrearenillas electricity line will be completed before the summer.

This project is a clear example of successful institutional collaboration. From the INTA and the CDTI, they highlight "the importance of their initiative to make this project a reality" and they recognise "the excellent joint work with the main promoters: the Department for Universities, Research and Innovation of the Government of Andalusia, the Moguer City Council, the public company TRAGSA, and, in its final stage, Red Eléctrica, since without their decisive actions, its use would not be possible".

Part of this collaboration consists of the assignment of the land where the El Arenosillo Test Centre (CEDEA) is located, by the Government of Andalusia to the INTA, and Red Electrica's decisive actions to enable flying over the runway.

The Department for Universities, Research and Innovation has congratulated the company "for bringing forward the work compared to the deadlines initially set" and has highlighted that "the Government of Andalusia is firmly and clearly committed to this large infrastructure that supports the development of unmanned air platforms, since CEUS is a project of strategic international scope for Andalusia as a whole, as it will host a unique scientific and technical centre in Europe because of its characteristics".

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They also explain that “this project provides an answer to the demands of the business network in Huelva and the Andalusian aerospace industry as a whole, for which this initiative is a precious opportunity for the future”. They therefore state “they have been working without delay to meet our commitment, which translates into full coverage of the undergrounding of the high voltage line that crosses the area affected by the future centre, execution of which, essential for its operation, is being handled by Red Eléctrica”.

At Red Eléctrica, they have highlighted “the importance of collaboration among the various administrations and the company, evidencing, once again, our clear vocation to public service and our commitment with the economic and social development of the province of Huelva, of Andalusia and the country as a whole”.