Yorkshire-based high voltage power specialist Smith Brothers has added the energisation of two prominent solar farms to its fast-growing success story.

Having been assigned the design and build contract for Wreay Farm in Carlisle by renewables developer Anesco, the team of electrical engineering experts was also enlisted as the independent connections provider by solar giant Ethical Power for Netley Farm, near Southampton.

With work on the Wreay Farm energisation beginning in December last year, the engineers were tasked with laying cabling to connect the site to the DNO, as well as building two 33kV substations – one brick structure for Electricity North West Ltd, and one Glass Reinforced Plastic customer enclosure.

But what started as a straightforward connection project soon became more complex, as the team had to contend with landowner requests which led to new cabling routes. The original 1.8km dig for six cables to be laid grew to 2.6km, incurring a number of road closures, council negotiations and licensing difficulties.

Yet despite these external challenges, the engineers still completed the work on time.

“Accommodating landowner requests resulted in the overall project growing by 25%,” comments Dan Wagner, Smith Brothers’ senior project manager for the Wreay Farm assignment.

“But even though the job didn’t quite go to plan, the team’s dedication and perseverance meant we still managed to hit the overall programme energisation deadline.”

By far the smoother project for the high voltage specialists, the Netley Farm energisation for Ethical Power similarly involved the build of a 33kV distribution network operator substation – this time to be adopted by SSE.

As well as the substation building and fit-out at the former landfill site, the engineers were assigned to install a 3-panel Siemens NX Plus switchboard and battery unit, and lay the required 200m of cabling.

“Seeing through projects from start to finish, like these ones at the Netley and Wreay farms, is what we specialise in,” says Smith Brothers’ project manager Ryan Smith. “By providing the design, build and commission work in one turnkey package, we completed the job far more efficiently and effectively than if a different team had been brought in at each specific stage.”

Now that both sites are fully operational, the solar farms are expected to generate 5 megawatts of power each.

Ryan continues: “It’s great to see that solar and other renewables are becoming a real mainstay in our portfolio, at the same time as our operations within other areas such as STOR and battery services are also expanding. This strengthening of our presence across sectors just goes to show the versatility and expertise of our team.”

The electrical engineering firm works on an array of high voltage electrical assignments up to 132kV for the commercial, industrial and renewables sectors nationwide, and was recently announced as the design and build partner for the prestigious Hallburn Wind Farm.

For more from this company, visit their website www.smithbrothersltd.co.uk