



Stirling Before Pylons



Press release – for immediate dispatch

Scottish Power fails to offer meaningful mitigation for Stirling

In January 2010 Jim Mather approved the Beauly to Denny 400kV power line with three exceptions, two of which are individual properties, but the third is the 14km length of the line through Stirling.

Scottish Power has now published its Stirling Visual Impact Mitigation Scheme, which will now be presented to the affected communities prior to a final version being submitted to the Minister at the end of the year.

Scottish Power's failure to recommend any undergrounding is farcical. No amount of tree and hedge-planting can hide a line of 50m high pylons, or protect against the very real dangers posed by electric and magnetic fields radiating off the line.

Stirling Before Pylons has campaigned tirelessly since 2004 to have the line buried through farmland to the west of the City. If the power companies had addressed this issue responsibly from the start, the line would now be fully operational - and at a fraction of the cost resulting from 6 years of wrangling, including Scotland's longest public inquiry. The German Enlag legislation now requires undergrounding to be seriously addressed and frequently implemented in areas where lines come through populated areas, as a means of speeding up the development of their transmission grid for Renewable Energy.

One of the key tenets of the Scottish Government was the involvement of the Scottish people. Thousands of people have already contributed to two formal consultation processes on Beauly to Denny, which resulted in 22,000 objections and only 45 letters of support at the formal application stage in 2005. The Scottish Government needs to start listening to its people.

The statutory advisors to the government on landscape, Scottish Natural Heritage, supported by Stirling Council, proposed an underground route to the west of the City (through an existing gas and oil pipeline corridor), in an attempt to protect the stunning Ochil Hills backdrop to the Wallace Monument and Stirling City itself. *Stirling Before Pylons* has always supported this option, which would remove the line from the Sheriffmuir battlefield (expected to be proposed for listing next year), the lower slopes of Dumyat (popular local hill with over 40,000 visitors pa), the Ochil's scarp with its beautiful wooded slopes which forms the backdrop to the iconic Wallace Monument, and critically, the people who live on the Carse below, including thousands of University students, scattered farms and villages and the ex-mining

settlements of the Eastern Villages, whose lives would all be significantly blighted by approval of an overhead high voltage line.

The critical aspect of public health forms the subject of PE812 which is now the longest running petition to the Scottish Parliament, but with the Scottish Government resolute in not addressing the last five years of scientific evidence for adverse health effects, it now looks more likely that these concerns will be addressed follow tragic but predicted consequences through the courts rather than through our democratic processes – despite the Europe Commission and many EU countries now advocating meaningful precautions.

Undergrounding the Stirling section would provide a win/win situation. The all important landscape and health issues would be resolved, and the power line would be able to proceed (delays would not be substantial as construction is scheduled to begin in the North and minimal planning permission is required for the underground section). The increased cost of undergrounding (still massively exaggerated by the power companies) would be approved by Ofgem (as already intimated to our local politicians) and the bill footed, largely unnoticed, by consumers through out the UK (it is literally pennies- as transmission costs account for less than 3% of our electricity bills).

If the government turns down such a proposal then questions need asked as to whether it is the multi-nationals ruling this country or the peoples' voted representatives.

Caroline Paterson: "A Scottish Power employee once told me he thought Beaully to Denny would be the last high-voltage overhead power line they would get-away-with". Let's hope that the Scottish Government will not sell Stirling so cheaply and will make a stand against Iberdrola's insulting proposals and demand something better for the people of Scotland. Otherwise this episode will appear to have been an elaborate exercise, initiated by the Minister Jim Mather in an attempt to buy time and diffuse public concern."

To augment Scottish Power's voluntary consultation exercise (though there is no public accountability for such contributions), *Stirling Before Pylons* is planning a public march through the City of Stirling to be led by Stirling's former Rugby international star Kenny Logan:

"Scottish Power's failure to recommend undergrounding the Stirling section needs rebuffed by the Minister, since any other mitigation is meaningless in terms of protecting this stunning landscape and the health of local residents. Hopefully he will not forget that 22,000 people objected to the Beaully to Denny proposal, whilst only 45 were in support".

Contact:

Caroline Paterson, www.stirlingbeforepylons.org
01786 463567, mb 07739945329