



# *Stirling Before Pylons*



## PRESS RELEASE

13 December 2008

**Major Swiss study reporting doubled risk of dying from Alzheimer's disease for those living close to high-voltage power lines will be reviewed by the Public Petitions Committee on Tuesday December 16<sup>th</sup> at 2pm in Committee Room 1 of the Scottish Parliament.**

- *Stirling Before Pylons* wants the Public Petitions Committee and the Scottish Government to actively address this new report alongside other recent studies revealing significant increases in serious ill health for those living close to high-voltage overhead transmission lines (HVOTLs), including the publicly funded study by Dr Gerald Draper in 2005 which reported that children living within 200m were nearly twice as likely to develop leukaemia.
- **PE812** was submitted by Caroline Paterson on behalf of *Stirling Before Pylons* in 2004 and is still under review. The latest response from the Scottish Government to the Committee (attachment K Scot Govt + response PE812) fails to address such recent scientific evidence and defers to bodies including the Health Protection Agency and the World Health Organisation, whose guidelines have remained unaltered since 2004.
- The major new Swiss study (Huss et al (attached)) reported in the Express newspaper (Nov 11 2008, <http://www.express.co.uk/posts/view/70485/Pylons-double-risk-of-dying-from-dementia->) shows a clear and quantifiable association between HVOTLs and increased risk of death from Alzheimer's. The association becomes stronger with closeness to power lines and duration of exposure. Living within 50 metres of a high-voltage power line for 15 years or more shows a **doubling of risk of Alzheimer's disease**.
- This Swiss study is not isolated, but consistent with the combined analyses of risk of Alzheimer's with occupational exposure to power-frequency magnetic fields (Garcia et al, 2008). Alzheimer's sufferers display significantly reduced melatonin levels, so this study adds credibility to the plausible biological mechanism based on magnetic fields inhibiting the production of melatonin, which leads to a range of serious health conditions.
- The evidence for risk of Alzheimer's from HVOTLs is now quantitatively comparable with that for **Childhood Leukaemia**; internationally recognised as an IARC class 2B carcinogen, with the UK's own Draper Report (2005) quantifying the risks.
- The Health Protection Agency's (HPA) letter of advice to the UK Health Minister Dawn Primarola (Oct 15<sup>th</sup> 2007) in advance of **new guidelines on power lines and public health expected before Christmas** states: *that precautionary measures should address solely the possible association with childhood leukaemia and not other more speculative health effects*". I would suggest that the Swiss Cohort Study's analysis of 4.7 million persons over a 5 year period is hardly speculative and deserves the full attention of Scottish Ministers.

- **The HPA letter does not support the corridor option** of separating new dwellings from HVOTLs “*even assuming a causal link between exposure to ELF EMFs and childhood leukaemia*”. Such a statement is shocking, particularly when HVOTLs may be responsible for as many as 60 new cases of childhood leukaemia pa in the UK. However, if the HPA’s statement is based on the Cost Benefit Analysis of numbers, then the association with Alzheimer’s defies any excuses for inaction, with over **700,000 Alzheimer’s sufferers in the UK**. To knowingly impose a high risk of such serious conditions on the most vulnerable is not what the public expect of a Health Protection Agency.
- It is especially important for the Scottish Government to acknowledge the adverse health effects of HVOTLs and urgently introduce precautionary measures to protect public health (such as rerouting or undergrounding) as they address applications for new HVOTLs such as *Scottish & Southern Energy & Scottish Powers’ Beaully to Denny 400kV proposal*.
- **Germany in its development of Renewable Energy** projects requiring major new HVOTLs, has recently legislated on the need to protect its citizens from associated health hazards. **No new HVOTLs can come within 200m of individual dwellings, or 400m of residential areas, with mitigation being provided by undergrounding**. This is in accordance with the latest epidemiological studies, including the UK’s Draper Report – yet the UK has failed to issue any precautionary measures based on such publicly funded research. Germany follows Sweden, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Italy etc in introducing precautions, and Austria is set to adopt similar recommendations soon.
- **Cross-party support** for PE812 continues. Constituency MSP Keith Brown (SNP) is unable to attend on Tuesday, but issued the following statement: *"I fully support the concern shown by local pylon campaigners when they are being faced with government-funded evidence of potential health dangers. There are published and peer-reviewed expert reports of statistical correlations on leukaemia and now Alzheimer's that are worrying because they do defy other explanations. I am not surprised therefore that Germany, a major industrialised nation, has taken nationwide precautionary steps about new pylon developments near residential areas. Public safety should be paramount."* Richard Simpson MSP (Lab), who drew analogies with the risks from smoking when he gave evidence to the Beaully to Denny Public Inquiry will be speaking in support of PE812, as will either Murdo Fraser or Elizabeth Smith (Con).
- “I hope that the Public Petitions Committee will address the numerous scientific reports and reviews that *Stirling Before Pylons* has been putting before the Committee since 2004, so that any response made by the Scottish Government is **up-to-date and evidence-based**. Only then can the **15,000 objectors on health grounds to the Beaully to Denny 400kV proposal** be reassured that the public’s health is being seriously addressed. At present the evidence shows that the most vulnerable in our society will be knowingly put at serious risk if HVOTLs continue to be constructed in close proximity to homes, as with the Beaully to Denny application, the Public Inquiry Report for which will shortly go before the Minister”.

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on behalf of [www.StirlingBeforePylons.org](http://www.StirlingBeforePylons.org)

A small group of supporters, including myself, will be attending the review of PE812 on Tuesday Dec 16<sup>th</sup> at 2pm. I shall be available outside the main public entrance to the Parliament from 1.00pm and after the review of PE812 (c.2.30pm). We have a few spaces in our group booking for Committee Room 1 if you wish to attend the review.