



BRIEFING TO MSPs 19th SEPTEMBER 2007

This paper highlights the main concerns for Objectors to the Beauly to Denny Grid proposed new 400,000Volt overhead transmission line.

What is Scotland Before Pylons?

Scotland Before Pylons is an umbrella group **representing and supporting local groups** along the 120 miles of the proposed new Beauly to Denny overhead transmission line.

The Applicants are Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Ltd (SHETL) and Scottish Power Transmission (SPT)

18,000 people objected in November 2005 to SHETL and SPTs' proposal, in addition to Highland Council, Perth and Kinross, Stirling and Clackmannshire Councils and the Cairngorm National Park Authority, so triggering a Public Inquiry into the application. 60% of the proposed route is NOT on the existing route.

Scotland Before Pylons

- **Supports the transmission of electricity from the Highlands to the South**
- **Objects to the MEANS of that transmission by overhead line with mega pylons and large intrusive cables across some of Scotland's finest and most sensitive landscape and heritage**
- **Believes Scotland's vitally important national and local heritage should be protected from the negative visual, environmental and economic impact that the proposed 65 metres high pylons will inflict down the spine of the Scottish Highlands and Central Scotland.**

The Applicants

- **The estimated costs of £320 million will be met by consumers over a 20 year period** – not SHETL and SPT, although the companies' shareholders will realise commercial advantage
- If ever a project required a **Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**, this is it. Because it is deemed a private project the Scottish Government has ruled that a SEA is not required. **An SEA would review all alternative routes, and means of transmission** Without this vital information a balanced judgement on the efficacy of the proposal can not be made.
- SHETL only summarily considered and **rejected alternative means of transmission** in choosing an overhead line
- SHETL claims **costs dictate that overhead lines are the only viable option** irrespective of the known damage to the environment, landscape and possible risks to health.

Is the upgrade necessary NOW?

- Possibly **NOT**. Many of Scotland's renewable energy targets should be met from **renewable generation nearer to centres of demand** – eg Stirling, Ayrshire the Borders. All the energy does not have to be generated in the distant Highlands
- There is **adequate capacity on the existing Beauldy Denny line** to accommodate **ALL** current applications from renewable mainland based generation.
- The **East Coast Beauldy to Kintore to Tealing grid line can be upgraded** to 400,000 volts on the existing pylons to take some of the load

Are there alternative means of transmission?

- **Certainly YES, BUT neither the UK or Scottish Governments have yet published a national strategy for the transmission of electricity across the country.** In the 21st century with so much emphasis on the environment, it can not be in Scotland's interests, that this proposed line should be permitted before an electricity transmission policy is established by the Scottish Government. **This is a planning issue not an energy issue – and therefore is within the Jurisdiction of Holyrood.**
- **A review of transmission options led by Ofgem and BERR, of the framework for connecting renewable generation to the grid, is due for publication in May 2008,** with an interim in December 2007 See <http://www.berr.gov.uk/energy/sources/renewables/policy/transmissionaccess/page40567.html>
- The Scottish Government has reviewed and confirmed that **under sea transmission proposals** linking the Highlands to England and to other countries, **are technically feasible**
- The **European Commission strongly advises** member states to under ground electricity transmission lines where feasible. **Total or partial under grounding of the proposed overhead line are technically possible.**

Costs of alternatives

- **The costs of undergrounding are higher and depending on the terrain can be 4 to 7 times the cost of overhead lines, not 19 to 25 as originally indicated by SHETL.**
- **Subsea options are likely to be commercially viable** but not to SHETL who is not able to provide a submersible link.
- **All capital costs of transmission grid lines are met by consumers** across the United Kingdom and represent less than 3% of the annual consumer bill.
- **All published costs of the upgrade IGNORE the costs to Scotland's landscape environment and people.**

Health Concerns

- **More and more evidence is emerging** on the potentially very serious health implications of living near high voltage power lines. Some powerful evidence has been published in the last few months and has not yet been heard by the Inquiry.
- **For Example:- Lowenthal et al (2007)** reported that children raised for the first five years in homes exposed to EMF within 300 metres of a high voltage power line have a five fold (a 500%) increased risk of developing some kinds of cancers sometime in later life.
- **This project as proposed, would not comply with precautionary guidelines in a number of other countries.**
- Nor would it comply with recent recommendations from the **Westminster Cross-Party report which recommends a minimum avoidance distance of 60m extending to 200 metres.**
- Nor would it comply with the conclusions of **The Bioinitiative Report. Published 31st Aug 2007. "A Rationale for a Biologically based Public Exposure Standard for Electromagnetic Fields (ELF & RF)"** See <http://www.bioinitiative.org>
- One of the report's conclusions states that:- **"While new ELF limits are being developed and implemented, a reasonable approach would be a 0.1 microtesla planning limit for habitable space adjacent to all new or upgraded power lines"** (Equivalent to 200 metres)

Adverse effect on Landscape and Tourism

- SHETL argue that the removal of the existing line will be beneficial given that the proposed line will require fewer pylons. The **new pylons are up to twice the height and seven times the volume** of the existing structures. New access roads will be built for both construction and maintenance. If approved the proposal will be a major eyesore. It will be crippling to local businesses especially tourism, so essential in many economically fragile small communities. **Vitaly it would be living proof that Scotland is prepared to squander its landscape heritage for uncertain relatively short term advantage. MSPs cannot allow that to happen.**

- George Reid, when MSP and Presiding Officer of the Scottish Parliament, considering the proximity of the line to the Wallace Monument said ' I cannot think of any other country which would permit such a blight so close to a landmark which symbolises the right of the people to be a nation'

Community Benefits

- There will be **considerable disruption to local communities** during construction, and for decades to come if the overhead line is permitted. SHETL is proposing **NO contributions to communities** which will be adversely affected by their proposal. Community benefits are commonly offered with intrusive developments, and is required policy by Highland Council.

The Public Inquiry

- **The Inquiry has been divided into 5 sessions.** The **Strategic session** held in Perth from 6 February to mid May, followed by **four local sessions** in Inverness, Newtonmore, Perth and Stirling. It is expected to conclude by 21st December 2007.
- **The Inquiry is an uneven contest. It is not easy, or even practical, for objectors,** especially those representing community interests, **to take time off work. Local groups cannot fund the expert advice** required to match the legal and technical experts fielded by the Applicants.
- **Many local groups could only attend limited days of the Strategy session.** An eleven month Inquiry is a huge commitment for volunteer objectors to keep pace with an Inquiry where **no notes are recorded or published,** as directed by the Reporters on grounds of cost, nor was an internet stream permitted as it was considered too intrusive. **Is this form of Inquiry really the most efficient and fair way to consider planning applications that affect all of Scotland? Scotland Before Pylons believes it is NOT.**
- Future generations in Scotland are fortunate that local groups in 2007 are trying to ensure that local views and concerns are represented to the Reporters. **The Scottish Parliament must ensure that these views are given fair weighting when the decision on the application is made by Scottish Ministers**

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