

Press Release for immediate release

Former Stirling MSP Sylvia Jackson gives evidence to the Beaully to Denny public inquiry

On Thursday Dec 6th Dr Sylvia Jackson gave evidence on behalf of the hundreds of constituents who objected to the Beaully to Denny proposals during her time in office.

Dr Jackson's attempted to refer to critical new reports highlighting the dangers of living close to high voltage power lines and was stopped by the reporters, chairing the Inquiry meeting.

After the Inquiry session last Thursday Sylvia Jackson said: " These new reports are vitally important and the implications of their recommendations must be discussed in the context of this local inquiry. The Beaully to Denny powerlines proposals does not comply with them".

Dr Jackson added:

"For example the Westminster Cross-Party Inquiry Report's (July 2007) key recommendation is for a moratorium on the building of new high voltage overhead transmission lines (HVOTL) within 60m of existing homes and schools, with a request that the government "consider the case for extending this distance to 200m for the highest voltage lines". The proposed Beaully to Denny line is of the highest voltage (400kV), yet there would be approximately 40 homes within 200m of the proposed line in Stirling alone. In the Stirling section there would be over 2000 people within 600m of the route, the distance up to which an increased risk of childhood leukaemia is reported in the Draper Report (BMJ June 2005). Also, the international BioInitiative Report (Aug 2007), which I was likewise not allowed to refer to calls for an immediate interim planning limit which would equate to a precautionary distance of around.200m"

"Although I feel these reports should be discussed in the context of the local inquiry I was pleased by the reassurance given to me by the Chair of the meeting that the health issue would be considered, and that the recent reports I referred to had all been accepted as documents for the inquiry for discussion. However it is a shame that the Inquiry process does not allow individual objectors, like myself to discuss these as part of the local session in Stirling or indeed respond in anyway."

At the local session here in Stirling Dr Jackson was at pains to point out that the adverse health effects from electric magnetic fields (EMFs) is a rapidly developing science, with technological advances also being made in mitigating measures such as undergrounding.

On this point Sylvia said: "Health has to be taken seriously. We are now at the point where recommendations from a recent Cross Party Group at Westminster is calling for a change to legislation so that the health issues are addressed as a matter of course when proposals such as the Beaully to Denny powerline are being considered."

Dr Jackson reinforced the points already made by Tommy Brookes about the impact of a 400 kV line near the Norboard factory in Cowie in the Eastern villages.

Sylvia Jackson said: ‘There have been a number of studies which although recognising that modifications made to the plant presently make the dust particles no health risk, the presence of a transmission line nearby could cause ionisation of the dust particles. This would not only be harmful to humans but such particles can be spread many miles down wind. This obviously has repercussions for the Stirling area generally.

StirlingBeforePylons is extremely grateful to Dr Sylvia Jackson for giving evidence to the inquiry. Spokeswoman Caroline Paterson said “Sylvia Jackson was an actively supportive MSP during her time in office, and we are extremely grateful that she followed through this commitment to give evidence at the public inquiry – this shows great personal integrity”.

Background and Other Points Raised During Dr Jackson’s Evidence

Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Ltd and Scottish Powers’ proposed 400kV line would pass through Stirling prompting approximately 5000 local objections.

Dr Jackson also raised concerns about the consultation process, with a number of communities looking for further meetings about the issue. For example, Kinbuck and Ashfield wanted answers about why the powerline could not take other suggested routes put forward by the community.

Dr Jackson stated that there was serious local concern regarding landscape issues and visual amenity. Tourism is very important for the area and no-one wants to see the beautiful scenery around Stirling destroyed.

However, adverse health effects had been the prime concern raised by constituents. Dr Jackson closely followed these health concerns during her time in office, supporting *StirlingBeforePylon’s* petition (PE812) on this subject, in addition to being an active member of the Holyrood Cross-Party Group investigating the subject. She was also involved in parliamentary meetings investigating technical advances in undergrounding and precautionary guidelines already adopted in several countries, including the Netherlands, Switzerland, Italian regions, Sweden, some US states etc....

Throughout the local Stirling session the reporters have halted any discussion of the scientific evidence for health concerns, claiming that the subject was dealt with at length at the Strategic Public Inquiry in February. In reality a total of 3 days (in Scotland’s longest running public inquiry from Feb – Dec 2007) was spent on this topic, which is hardly commensurate with the public’s concern, with over 14,000 objections raising it as a prime concern.

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