

STIRLING BEFORE PYLONS

acting with

FRIENDS OF THE OCHILS

as a Relevant Person Group

for the purposes of the

STIRLING SESSION

of the Public Inquiry into
**Scottish & Southern Energy's proposals for the
Beauly to Denny 400 KV Steel Tower Double Circuit
Overhead Electricity Transmission Line**

PRECOGNITION

Mr Tommy Brookes
Chairperson : Plean Community Council

Objections to the Beauly to Denny Powerline

Objections to Pylon Line from Beauly to Denny

- 1 My name is Tommy Brookes, at present I am Chairperson of Plean Community Council. I have lived all my life in Plean and I am married with 3 grown up children.
- 2 My past experience is, that I was a Councillor on Stirling District Council and Stirling Council for 21 years, representing the Sauchenford Ward of Stirling Council Area, which covers the villages of Plean & Cowie, plus all of the surrounding area. The overall ward population is around 11,000 people.
- 3 While serving on Stirling Council, I was Chair of Planning and Environmental Services, for around 10 years and served on the Planning Committee for around 16 years. I therefore have a good deal of relevant experience in these sorts of matters.
- 4 I served as Provost of Stirling for 4 years during which time I carried out many duties all over the Stirling Council area. I had the pleasure to receive the Letters Patent from HM The Queen, on what was probably the most important day in Stirling's history, the day it became a City.
- 5 I have a natural pride in Stirling, its people, its tourism, its lifestyle and its success over the years. It has gone from being a quiet little farming town into a beautiful City, with some of the most significant historic and tourist attractions in Britain.
- 6 I am frankly astonished that the line of these pylons, is even being considered so close, to the National Wallace Monument and Stirling Castle, in the same way, as I would be shocked if it was suggested that the line would be run along Princes Street in Edinburgh past Edinburgh Castle.
- 7 While serving as a Councillor, I feel it gave me a unique experience, of understanding how the ordinary person views authority, and particularly local authorities. I have always had great sympathy for the underdog, and I detest injustice.
- 8 As someone who comes from a mining background, I am very proud of the history of our village. Plean is a former mining community, and we are close knit and protective of our community and our life style.
- 9 Whilst I have given a lot of personal thought to this proposed Power Line, I am speaking today, on behalf of the Community Council, its Members and the people of Plean, who have indeed been consulted by us so as to ensure that we are properly representing the views held by them.

- 10 **We would wish to record our concerns and objections to the power line, being brought anywhere near our village and the other villages in the Eastern part of Stirling.**
- 11 In the first place, this project was brought forward with absolutely **no consultation whatsoever**, as regards any of the Community Councils, in this area, east of Stirling, from the Wallace Monument, past the villages of Fallin, Cowie and Plean then eventually on to Denny.
- 12 We are the elected Community Organisation in each village, and it has been directed by Parliament tghat we should be consulted on matters such as this. We are expected, to be prepared to assist, to look at and overcome planning difficulties, by consultation within our communities.
- 13 We found out about the proposal, when we picked it up in a casual comment in one of the National Newspapers, but not from SSE / Scottish Power or its representatives.
- 14 We had heard some years before, that the power companies may have to replace the existing power line, but never was anything said about increased load on any existing lines. On becoming aware of this newspaper article we sought a meeting with Scottish Power's Community Consultation Manager. He agreed that they had not been in discussions with Community Groups, as most of the forward Planning, had and was being done by Scottish & Southern Electric. They, Scottish Power, said that they had only been involved for a few weeks at that stage.
- 15 He did, however, say that, at that time his company, had met with Stirling Council who had advised them, that any new line, could not follow the track of the old line entirely as this would take it through the area of Durieshill, which they considered, would be the site of the Proposed New Village, under the Council's Structure Plan. Although at that point Stirling Council, had not taken a decision, as to which site, out of 3 other proposed sites, would be the final choice. They did not want the new line to go through this proposed site, as this would reduce the value of the houses and make them impossible to sell.
- 16 As a result of this the new line was then re-directed, to bring it in line with all of the Eastern Villages. Again I would point out that no consultation had been undertaken with the local communities at this point. It was some months later, that Stirling Council actually took a decision, on the proposed housing site, and to adopt Durieshill as the preferred site. This decision is at present being challenged in the Court of Session, so nothing is certain at all.
- 17 As a result of our concerns we immediately called a Public Meeting in Plean, where we invited both of the power companies, as well as other Community Councils, plus Stirling Council Members and Officials. To be fair to Mr

Christie, Community Consultation Manager of Scottish Power, he offered to help organise this meeting and assured us, that he would ensure that representatives of Scottish & Southern, would be asked to come to the meeting, with answers to the obvious questions. These being on general safety, why this route had been selected, health concerns, any possible considerations of an alternative routes and to take this line away from housing.

18 The attitude of the 2 representatives who attended this meeting, from Scottish & Southern, could only be described as most deplorable, since they would not directly answer any questions that challenged their proposals. For example:

- Q : Can you tell us the possible health risk for those staying close to these Pylons?
- A : No health risk at all, it's just people trying to undermine our project.

- Q : Why has there been no attempt to speak to the Community Representatives?
- A : We have been very busy, our Senior Management will deal with this matter when we are ready.

- Q : Why will you not give consideration to the line being sited to the West of Stirling, as that would take it away from areas of high population ?
- A : We will not consider this route, as geese land on the Carse of Stirling, there are also wild flowers growing there. Anyway this is the route the Company wants to take and not to the west.

19 It became obvious at that time Scottish & Southern were not interested in consulting or discussing with anyone. It was generally felt that we had no alternative, **but to challenge them on all of our concerns**. I would not describe their so-called consultation process as being at all inclusive; people feel worried, and left out, and therefore very concerned.

20 Because of this the Community decided to support Stirling Before Pylons, other Community Councils and Groups, who were opposing this pylon line coming close to the villages. The feeling of the residents in the villages is still as high as it ever was against the proposal.

21 Our Community Council fully understand the need to improve power supplies and that there will be times when everyone will not agree on how this should be achieved. We also understand, however, that the people who are going to find their lives affected, are entitled to have an opinion and that this opinion is entitled to be heard and respected. People's lives should mean more than company profits, and plans should not be decided in advance. We welcome this inquiry, which we hope is going to take our views into account.

- 22 We have major concerns regarding the line coming anywhere near the east of Stirling. The first and most obvious one is the closeness of the proposed line to housing in the villages. Most of these houses are Local Authority rented accommodation, where the residents cannot just move away. Rented accommodation is not readily available to people, who in many cases, already have enough difficulties in their lives.
- 23 There is natural concern about the visual impact, of the pylons. There is even more concern, of the possible emissions and radiation from these lines. This is already concerning people, as to the impact on their families health, when having to live close to them.
- 24 A further concern is that in the nearby village of Cowie, there is the largest timber manufacturing plant, of its type in Europe. During my term as Councillor I was involved in persuading the Company to spend over £28million, improving the filtration system. Even though these improvements were carried out and whilst this company, do their very best to eliminate any dust, fibres still escape into the atmosphere. This timber fibre is deemed harmless to the human body by itself. However, if this comes into contact with any form of radiation, from the power lines, then it could be a problem. The heat from the factory will make them travel back up into the atmosphere and there is a potential danger area in a 5 to 6 miles radius from the factory, depending on the wind conditions. No research has been carried out on this and we consider it an essential requirement.
- 25 These are some of our natural concerns, because we live close to the proposed route. We, also, have great concerns as to the impact these pylons would visually have on some of our Historic Sites such as the National Wallace Monument and Stirling Castle. We have tried to encourage people to come to Scotland and see our sights, these in conjunction with the Ochil Hills are at present something we can be proud of. We doubt very much if that will be the case with these pylons beside them. Likewise we believe it would be a very dangerous and unacceptable route to take at Stirling University near the Halls of Residence.
- 26 We believe that this line must be underground where ever possible. It would be much easier and would provide a safer route by taking it to follow a route to the west of Stirling. This would minimise the numbers who could be in close contact with the line and would remove the concerns regards Health and also the visual impact.
- 27 We believe in a country as small as Scotland, which depends greatly on tourism and visitor spending for its success, that there is a strong argument, that no matter what the immediate cost implications, that this line should be undergrounded throughout the Stirling Area. Imagine the environmental and visual damage this line of pylons will do over its lifetime.

- 28 It is difficult to understand the thinking of some of these companies and their constant disregard for human life and living conditions. This is balanced in their view, by showing large profits for shareholders, many of whom do not even stay in Britain and certainly very few indeed of whom live anywhere near the proposed line or in the Eastern Villages.
- 29 We can only hope that at some point in the near future, the Scottish Ministers will take time to assess when we should stop allowing a few people and their greedy self centred attitudes, based purely on the need to make money, to be stopped from exploiting their fellow humans, on the pretence that they are only doing it to protect the environment.
- 30 These companies would have great difficulty in proving an argument, based on how much support, they have given or intend giving to any of the areas, they want to put the line near to. But, then that might take away some of their profits and their shareholders would not see that as supporting their investments.
- 31 For all the reasons outlined in my evidence on behalf of Plean Community Council, I call on the Reporters to recommend rejection of this application.

Tommy Brookes
Plean
19 October 2007