

STIRLING BEFORE PYLONS

- *opposing the Beauly to Denny power line in the Stirling area*



Briefing no. 1

The proposals for the power line in the Stirling area

Proposed route

On 25 July 2005, Scottish & Southern Energy (SSE), on behalf of SHETL and Scottish Power Transmission, published the route that they are proposing for the high-voltage (400kV) power line that they wish to construct, from Beauly (near Inverness) to Denny (near Falkirk).

The proposed line comes into the Stirling area 4.5 km west of Greenloaning, at Cambushinnie. It goes in a south-easterly direction, to cross the A9 at White Stone, then on towards the Sheriffmuir forest. Here it goes through the heart of the site of the famous Battle of Sheriffmuir, fought in 1715 (wrongly sited on Ordnance Survey maps, and actually within the forest), and on to meet the existing 132 kV power line about 600 metres north-west of the Sheriffmuir Inn.

It then turns to the south, and maintains a course a short distance to the west of the existing line. This takes it past the Loup of Wharry, a popular beauty spot and picnic spot, and on through the most heavily-visited part of the Ochil Hills Area of Great Landscape Value – the area round Dumyat and the Cocksburn Reservoir – to a point near Pendreich Wood.

The line then turns to the south-east, and forges down the centre of the community woodlands at Yellowcraig Wood, close to the University's Alexander Hall of Residence, and just to the back of Logie Kirk, the historic old cemetery, and the two cemeteries in constant use next to the Kirk, skirting the edge of the Witches Craig Caravan Park, to the A91.

Here, it squeezes between some houses, and turns south, skirting close to farms and more houses, and crossing the Forth, to a point just a couple of hundred metres from the western edge of Fallin. It then goes round to the south of Fallin, turns south-easterly then east to avoid the site designated by Stirling Council for their New Village, and keeping about equidistant of Cowie and Throsk.

Finally, it turns south then south-west, skirting round Plean and Plean House, to meet the route of existing power lines into the Denny sub-station.

Pylons and works

The proposed high-voltage power line would have pylons ranging in height from 47 to 65 metres. On the existing lower-voltage line, whose route the new line would follow to some extent, pylons are typically 25 metres high.

The highest pylons would be needed at points where the route changes direction. Their height, at 65 metres or 215 feet, would be almost as high as the Wallace Monument (220 feet), and some two and a half times the height of existing pylons.

The construction of the pylons, and the stringing of the wires, would require major additional works. Heavy duty access tracks, capable of carrying 100 tonne cranes and other heavy construction vehicles, would be needed to give access to the site of every pylon. This would include a continuous stretch of some 9km across Sheriffmuir and down through Yellowcraig Wood. The tracks would require quarries to supply the stone with which they would be surfaced. There would be construction sites round each pylon, which would be as large as some 77 metres square on both sides of some. Compounds would be required at intervals along the route, for the use of site personnel, and the storage of materials, vehicles and fuel. Helicopter landing sites would also be required every 5 km of the line.

The construction works are at this stage estimated to require some 4 years to carry out, with up to 24 months active work at specific sites, not measured on a continuous basis. Work would be permitted 7 days a week, up to 12 hours a day.

How detailed are the plans?

SSE make it plain that the plans they have submitted are just initial “best guesses” as to what will be required. Detailed planning has not taken place. Rather, SSE are seeking wide-ranging permissions to construct the power line, making detailed decisions as they go along. In this respect, their application is more similar to an outline planning application than a fully detailed one.

In particular, it should be noted that SSE are specifying corridors (typically, 200 to 300 metres wide) within which they would construct access tracks and locate pylons. The actual locations would be determined only after permissions had been granted.

Where can we find the details?

In early October 2005 SSE finally submitted their formal application to construct the power line to Scottish Ministers. This was accompanied by an Environmental Statement, setting out the details in 6 volumes – with more pages than the St James Bible and “War and Peace” combined.

Five volumes of the Environmental Statement (ES) were lodged in selected public libraries and a few other locations. The sixth is a Confidential Annex, the contents of which are not known to us. We have been informed that this Annex contains additional information about why SSE have chosen a route to the east of Stirling, rather than an alternative to the west; information about putting parts of the line underground, and information on the cost and environmental impact specific to the route’s proximity to the Wallace Monument. It may also contain information about the nesting sites of protected species of birds.

Members of the public may buy a printed version of the ES, at a cost of £300. Alternatively, the information can be supplied on 8 computer-readable CDs, at a cost of £50, though the reader will find this version is more difficult to find their way through.

SSE also submitted to Ministers a number of additional maps, showing their best

guess as to where they will end up locating each individual pylon. This information does not form part of their formal submission, as they have not done enough work to be confident that these locations are practical. Copies of these maps have also been deposited in libraries.

What now?

Members of the public have until 12 December 2005 to submit written responses to SSE's proposals to the Scottish Executive. Statutory bodies have longer.

Responses sent in before the official start of the consultation period (14th October) will not be considered, unless resubmitted.

The address for comments is:

Energy Consents Unit
Scottish Executive
Meridian Court
5 Cadogan Street
Glasgow
G2 6AB

Date written: 31 October 2005

Other Stirling Before Pylons briefings available or in course of preparation:

- 2. Health impacts**
- 3. Impacts on the Ochil Hills AGLV**
- 4. Planning Issues**

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