

SUBMISSION FROM HIGHLANDS BEFORE PYLONS

Highlands Before Pylons is anxious to bring the following considerations before the committee as you scrutinise the NPF2 draft proposals for transmission infrastructure. We would be happy to provide further technical information in support of our case.

Our campaign to prevent the construction of a line of 50 metre high pylons between Ullapool and Beaully has been a partial success. SHETL has lodged a proposal for planning permission for an underground cable from Dundonnell to Beaully. This of course could be overruled by Ofgem on grounds of cost to the consumer.

During our campaign we researched and vigorously argued for a sub sea alternative, specifically a sub sea cable from Stornoway to Hunterston or even further south.

We also joined the Beaully Denny debate pointing out that reinforcement of the current grid combined with subsea cables down both the east and west coasts could cater for the transmission needs of Highland for the foreseeable future.

Since the Beaully Denny proposal was subject to inquiry, when we attended the Inverness consultation on NPF2 we were told we could not discuss it and that NPF2 was not based on an assumption that Beaully Denny will be approved.

However the objective evidence is that NPF proposals for transmission are based on all of SSE previous plans. We pointed out to Mr Jim Mackinnon that an arrow on the maps 18 and 20 pointed to a subsea link with the mainland of Wester Ross. There was no arrow for a putative subsea link with Hunterston, a route favoured by AMEC at the time as part of the Lewiswind project. He promised to consider this omission but the Plan has gone forward with no suggestion of a west coast subsea link.

In the meantime plans are advancing rapidly for subsea grids not just round the coast of Scotland (excluding the North West) but to serve Europe. We would earnestly ask the committee to question the logic of this apparent determined commitment to an overland transmission interconnector to Beaully, with an as yet unspoken commitment to the Beaully Denny upgrade without which the published plans do not make sense, when subsea cable links could carry energy from the Western and Northern Isles direct to its southern markets.

We have lobbied long and hard on this subject in the hope that at some point it must be possible given the far-reaching scope of NPF2 for a fresh look at SSE's now elderly proposals and for some genuine forward planning for transmission in our area. We'd be very happy to talk to members of the committee about our view of the best way forward for Northern Scotland's transmission needs.