

STIRLING BEFORE PYLONS

NEW REPORTS MAKE CASE FOR UNDERGROUNDING BEAULY DENNY

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BACKGROUND

When the Minister, Jim Mather, approved the controversial Beaully Denny powerline 12 months ago, a condition required Scottish Power to prepare a Visual Mitigation Scheme for Stirling, which he had to approve before the scheme could proceed. They had to consider undergrounding, re-routing, re-sizing and landscape planting as methods of mitigation. In the autumn Scottish Power consulted the public on their proposals at 4 public meetings, and they were unanimously rejected, as they only amounted to the painting some pylons and minimal shrub planting. Since then Stirling Council have unanimously indicated that those plans would not meet their expectations either. Scottish Power rejected undergrounding any sections of the route in their draft Mitigation Scheme.

EUROPEAN COMMISSION REPORT

Last week the European Commission issued a report indicating that undergrounding is a viable option for electricity transmission projects of extra high voltage such as Beaully Denny. They looked at all the feasibility and technical issues and concluded that undergrounding costs 5-10 that of an overhead line, far less than the applicants originally claimed for Beaully Denny where costs of 20 times were originally quoted by them. The report also showed that such solutions are reliable, with faults only occurring on average every 33 years.

The report was commissioned by the European Commissioner for Energy in December 2009 from ENTSO-E (the European Network of Transmission System Operators for Electricity) and Europacable, the trade body representing cable manufacturers in Europe. Significantly, both Scottish Power and SSE the developers for Beaully Denny are members of ENTSO-E, and all their members have endorsed the report.

Significantly, this report gives credibility to the case put by Europacable on behalf of Stirling Before Pylons at the Beaully Denny Public that sections of undergrounding are the solution to particularly sensitive sections of the proposed line. That may be because of high landscape quality, important historical settings or close proximity to housing.

STIRLING VISUAL IMPACT MITIGATION SCHEME

In October last year Europacable produced a report for Stirling Councils Beaully Denny Steering Group on Scottish Powers Visual Mitigation Scheme for Stirling. They reached the following conclusions :

- That the Technical Assessor at the Public Inquiry had concluded that undergrounding was a viable option and that partial undergrounding of short sections was practical. Undergrounding up to 10km of Beaully Denny would not affect the overall economics of the line. Yet neither SSE or Scottish Power have included any undergrounding, even in the most sensitive areas.

- That the applicants had failed to refer to other current undergrounding projects that are being developed in Europe in similar circumstances in the Netherlands, Germany, Austria and England.
- That their costings are not fully explained and may be misleading. They refer to the evidence of recent European experience of 3-10 times the cost
- In relation to reliability and failure the applicants over rely on a case in China that is not fully documented. They fail to refer to current European standards, which indicate 33years between failures and that current undergrounding technology is now a proven and reliable solution.

Europacable conclude that the 400kV XLPE cables are a 'state of the art' technology.

The current proposed route in Stirling runs through or adjacent to the following areas, all of which justify special treatment and undergrounding :

- The Ochils Area of Great Landscape Value, the only designated landscape along the whole route
- The Sheriffmuir Battlefield which is due to be Listed by Historic Scotland in 2011
- Adjacent to the iconic National Wallace Monument.
- Adjacent to the Listed Historic Garden and Designed Landscape of Stirling University
- Close to University Halls of residence and the largest number of residential properties along the whole route
- Through the ex-mining village Eastern Villages which are in the process of being regenerated.

Given all these factors it is Stirling Before Pylons and Stirling Councils view that sections of this route demand undergrounding, and that these reports show that this is feasible and realistic.

Peter Pearson, Secretary of Stirling Before Pylons said 'We think that both these reports are significant and that as a result the Minister should take undergrounding on board when he considers the forthcoming Stirling Visual Mitigation Scheme from Scottish Power. The Government rightly wants to be a leader in renewable energy, they should also want to be a leader in the transmission of that energy to where it will be used. It is disappointing that Scotland currently lags behind other European countries on this front. These reports provide the Minister to insist on meaningful mitigation measures '.

For further information please contact : Peter Pearson – Secretary, Stirling Before Pylons : 01786 833399 or Peter@baker-pearson.net

I can email you a copy of either report or the European Commission Report is on their website at :

http://ec.europa.eu/energy/infrastructure/studies/doc/2010_high_voltage_power_transmission_lines.pdf

