

A view to make the spirit soar



This particular view *may* now be saved. However, turn the other way, and you could yet see a line of giant pylons marching into the distance! Your help is needed - read on, and see how you can assist our campaign for an environmentally friendly solution to the problem of transmitting renewable energy from the north of Scotland to the south.

Our campaign started in the area around Ullapool, which four years ago was affected by a proposal to build a high voltage power line to take energy from possible new wind farms in the Western Isles to cities in the south. This grid connection, if built as an overhead line, would be supported on steel pylons 50 metres or more (164 feet+) high, and be clearly visible in the view above. The route proposed for the overhead power line ran from Ardmair, near Ullapool, to Beaully, passing through areas varying from idyllic coastal, to wild mountains, to rural farmland - all of which we believe should be protected from what is, in effect, a major industrial development.

After various public consultations it became clear that the developers, Scottish and Southern Energy, had listened to concern about the impact of an overhead line on the environment and communities of the Highlands, and they have now applied for permission to construct a subsea/underground cable between Lewis and Beaully, coming ashore on the mainland at Little Loch Broom (south of Ullapool). If, however, the underground option is rejected for any reason, then we are back to square one, with the overhead line described above. There is, however, a much better alternative, as described below.

It is important to acknowledge that, whilst infinitely better in landscape, health, and local economic terms, an underground cable is not without its environmental costs. Highlands Before Pylons believe that the best alternative to overhead lines, put simply, is for an undersea cable taking the electricity south to England, where the power is needed, and the grid infrastructure exists to accept it. We therefore continue to campaign for this option to

be considered. To understand this position, it should be explained that the Highlands locally, and Scotland as a whole, are net exporters of electricity. Any additional input from wind farms in the Western Isles will also need to be exported to the south. Thus the transmission connection to Beaully is just the first link in a very long chain of transmission lines that is being proposed to take electricity from the north of Scotland to the south. Beyond Beaully, the route continues with a proposed new 400kV transmission line running to Denny in the central belt of Scotland, and beyond that there are plans to reinforce the network further south through the borders.

The solution seems increasingly clear - the true future of renewable energy lies off-shore, with tidal, wave, and off-shore wind power, and considering this we believe that a system of undersea cables off both east and west coasts represents the best value for money in the long term. At a higher level, we promote fundamentally different alternatives based on energy savings, and more locally based electricity generation.

HBP has formed links with communities affected by the Beaully to Denny power line upgrade, now formalised as the Scotland before Pylons alliance, and at the other end of the line, with those on Lewis affected by the wind farm proposals. If it transpires that a route is chosen that runs through other areas of the Highlands, we will work with communities affected, should they wish to oppose the pylons proposals in their area. On an international scale, HBP has joined other anti-pylon groups to form a European Federation against High Voltage Power Lines.

This web site aims to provide what we believe is clear and unbiased information relating to the core issues, drawn from all sides of the debate. After you have read through the issues, we hope that you will feel inspired to write a letter to politicians, supporting our campaign.

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