

DumGal Against Pylons

Meeting with Scottish Campaign for National Parks – Thursday 12 November

Present: Ross Anderson, Chair SCNP, John Thomson, Secretary SCNP, Alan Jones, Chair DGAP, William Crawford, Vice Chair DGAP, Penny Coles, Secretary DGAP.

Key areas of discussion

The discussion between members of Dumgal against pylons (DGAP) and the Scottish Campaign for National Parks (SCNP) focussed on how the designation of Galloway and the National Scenic Areas along the coast as Scotland's third National Park might be accelerated as, once in place, Scottish Power Energy Networks (SPEN) will need to adopt a much more sympathetic approach to replacing and reinforcing the existing infrastructure. There was common ground between the organisations in protecting and preserving the special landscape qualities of Dumfries and Galloway. The experience of National Parks around the world shows that tourism is enhanced by the designation and it promotes much needed income into the rural economy. We could see benefits for Dumfries as well, as it is the gateway to the region and the increase in visitor numbers would help boost the local economy across the region. Alex Fergusson MSP and Richard Arkless MP have both expressed support for a National Park in Dumfries and Galloway.

There was discussion around the £500m that Ofgem is providing to retrospectively bury underground some power lines and pylons in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Many areas were lobbying for a share of this money and probably £50m will be spent in Scotland around in the Loch Lomond National Park. There was consensus that it is important to get it right first time for Dumfries and Galloway; this would also be cheaper for consumers.

The SPEN Needs Case was seen as crucial to understanding the present and future need for the SPEN D&G project. We believe that rapid shift in the type and location of electricity generation means that the needs case needs re-examining. The Scottish Government based their National Planning Framework 3 on a predicted need presented by SPEN and it may need to be adjusted and modified in National Planning Framework 4.

Actions arising from Meeting

1. AJ to circulate article on the £500m that Ofgem have made available in England and Wales to mitigate overhead lines with undergrounding (Complete – see attached).
2. PC to explore basis of the NPF3 in relation to SPEN's Reinforcement Project.
3. PC to make FOI request for information from Ofgem in relation to SPEN's request for funding to carry out an investigation into D&G's Reinforcement Project.
4. AJ to involve David Mundell in examining Ofgem's regulatory role in relation to procedural injustice.

5. AJ to raise the issue of procedural injustice with Helen McDade of Planning Democracy.
6. RA/JT in initiate contact with Richard Arkless and Joan McAlpine to seek and confirm their support in taking the National Park formation forward in D&G.
7. WC to identify Community Councils who would be sympathetic to the formation of a Galloway National Park.
8. WC to invite John Mayhew from SCNP to talk at Thornhill in February.
9. AJ publicise SCNP meeting with a view to a) informing supporters that NP status would require a more considered proposal from SPEN and b) identify supporters who might wish to become involved in a local SCNP group.
10. AJ explore opportunity for SCNP to give a presentation to the Lower Nithsdale CC Federation meeting.
11. PC to investigate whether other Federations will be formed in the west of the region following Community Council elections.
12. RA/JT to seek to appoint a leader for a local SCNP group.
13. PC to contact Ewan Green, Head of Economic Regeneration of D&G Council, with a view to holding a discussion on the negative implications on tourism if SPEN's project goes ahead as planned.

15 Sept 2015

News

Giant blots on the landscape to be buried at £11m a time

Ben Webster Environment Editor

Scores of electricity pylons will be removed from beauty spots at a cost of almost £11 million each despite plans being drawn up for more than 120 new ones in and around the Lake District.

The cost to National Grid of taking down pylons and putting high-voltage lines underground has soared since last November, when the company published a list of areas that could benefit from its 1500-million "visual impact provision" project.

At that time, the same figure, which will be paid for by households and businesses through electricity bills, was said to be enough to remove 65 pylons.

'It is ridiculous to be pursuing a policy to bury cables in one park while blighting the landscape in another'

and bury the cables in trenches, at £7 million each. National Grid now expects to remove only 45 pylons between 2018 and 2021.

The four areas where pylons will be taken away are within the New Forest national park, the Peak District, Snowdonia and the Dorset area of outstanding natural beauty near Winterbourne Abbas.

Conservation groups have begun a campaign against National Grid's plans to place up to 72 pylons inside the Lake District national park to connect a proposed new nuclear power station at Moorside near Sellafield. Friends of the Lake District said that up to 54 more pylons would be added near the park's western border and would be visible from large areas within it.

Douglas Chalmers, the director of the group, said: "It is ridiculous to be pursuing a policy to bury cables in one national park while blighting the outstanding landscape in another by erecting pylons 50 metres tall."

"National Grid tell us that it will cost too much to mitigate for the damage to

the National Park by placing cables underground. If we were talking about solid rock and steep inclines they might have a case, but this land includes arable fields and improved grassland, which make undergrounding easier and recovery much faster."

A National Grid spokeswoman said it was still considering the design of the high-voltage lines through the Lake District and it was possible that some sections could be buried. The pylons would mainly follow the route of existing smaller pylons, about 29 metres tall. The new Lake District pylons could be of a T-shaped design that National Grid began testing this year and says is less intrusive.

National Grid estimates that installing new lines with pylons costs between £2.5 million and £3 million per kilometre; burying them costs £3 million to £32 million per kilometre. Negotiations with landowners are required.

The company said that the increase in the estimated cost of removing pylons was down to the decision to give priority to "the most sensitive locations where costs are higher".

The shortlisted sites that were not chosen are the Beacon Beacons and areas of outstanding natural beauty in High Weald, North Wessex Downs and the Tamar Valley. The final four were selected by an advisory group, which included representatives of the National Trust, Historic England and Campaign to Protect Rural England.

National Grid said that it would "remain under consideration for future work", though there was no agreed budget for it.

People living near two pylons straddling the Tamar Valley between Devon and Cornwall will be disappointed as their visual impact has been described as very damaging.

Chris Baines, who led the group, said: "Reducing the visual impact of pylons and power lines in our most precious landscapes is highly desirable, but it is also very expensive and technically complex so we have had to make some difficult decisions."

National Grid said that removing 45 pylons would add 22p a year to bills.



Call for the knit squad

A centenarian from the Scottish Borders is thought to

have become the world's oldest street artist after joining a team of "guerilla knitters".

Grace Brett, 104, is a member of a

secret band of "bombers", bedecked landmarks with knitted "I thou town looke" said Mrs Br



Dogs at risk from hidden killer in city pa