

- **Elaine Murray (Dumfriesshire) (Lab):**

The minister mentioned grid upgrade, and he may be aware that Scottish Power Energy Networks proposed a pylon network in the style of the Beaulieu to Denny line across Dumfries and Galloway. As far as I have been made aware, local people consider—to a person—that that would benefit large multinational power generation companies, rather than the local economy.

Will the minister assure my constituents that the Scottish Government, when considering any planning application for a new transmission line in the region, will give top priority to consideration of factors such as the landscape, environment and tourism and that, where possible, it will encourage underground and undersea cabling?

- **Fergus Ewing:**

I can say only that, in determining any application under section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989, I have to act in accordance with the procedure that is set out, consider each application on its merits, and consider them safely. It would be wrong of me to ascribe weight or importance to some criteria over others. Elaine Murray has, as a constituency MSP, raised the issue with me, and I can assure her that I will look at it very carefully.

To conclude, we cannot have more energy schemes—renewable or otherwise—unless grid connections are in place. We now see the possibility of wave and tidal energy precisely because of the robust approach that we have taken and because of the support for onshore wind. That would not happen if we did not have the Beaulieu to Denny line, and nor would the Beatrice project. This is all one of a piece; we cannot pick and mix. Grid upgrades are part of the process that is necessary to ensure that Scotland realises her renewables potential.