

Extracts from John Muir Trust Response to National Grid North West Coast Connection consultation 28th November 2014

You can read the full document here:

https://www.johnmuirtrust.org/assets/000/000/333/141127_jmt_response_to_nw_coast_connections_2nd_consultation_original.pdf?1434015550

2.5 Evidence at the Beaully Denny 400kV 220km transmission line Public Local Inquiry, and subsequent developments, demonstrated inadequate industry and Ofgem cost-benefit analysis of a major overhead line and over-estimates of costs of subsea cable alternatives.

4.1 Total Systems costs and environmental and social impacts need holistic Consideration and lessons must be learned from another part of the UK – Scotland - where the only recent similar development has been/is being built.

5.1 When considering the viability of alternative methods of transmission, it should be noted that UK transmission companies and Ofgem have inadequately analysed cost-benefit evidence on at least one previous occasion – the 400kV Beaully Denny transmission line with disastrous consequences for the Scottish Highland landscape and at considerable cost to the public purse.

5.7 A further relevant aspect is that it was a condition for mitigation that the major construction “tracks”, which are the width of a single carriageway road, would be removed i.e. they were temporary. However, the land owners have been encouraged to ask for retrospective planning permission and most of these applications have been approved. The roads are there as a permanent scar and many people view them as having a more negative visual impact than the actual pylons and conductor wires.

5.8 This is what has happened with the Beaully Denny line -

- Costs approximately doubled so it is not much cheaper than a subsea option
- Far more significant landscape and visual impacts have occurred than was acknowledged by the developers
- Seven years after the Inquiry, mitigation still has to be agreed in the Stirling area where the detail of how the setting of the Wallace Monument would be protected was not worked out or required at Inquiry or for a decision by Scottish Ministers.
- Most of the construction roads are now permanent
- The line is not fully built, after approval in January 2010 whereas a subsea cable could have been put in more quickly

6.4 Ironically, perhaps the Scottish transmission companies could apply for some of that mitigation funding to underground the Beaully Denny line, now it is constructed in

the Cairngorms National Park! If that sounds ridiculous, it just demonstrates the stupidity of pushing through a very damaging scheme because “it is the cheapest option” when that mistake cannot be undone and will be in our landscapes for up to 80 years. It is essential, and entirely consistent with the Ofgem and NG’s duties to the environment to pick the correct option, considering all social, economic and environmental factors.