



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

**Joan McAlpine MSP**  
**South of Scotland Region**

Fergus Ewing MSP  
Minister for Business, Energy and Tourism  
Room T4.07  
The Scottish Parliament  
Edinburgh  
EH99 1SP

Our ref: JM/LB

22 September 2015

Dear Fergus

I am writing on behalf of concerned constituents affected by the proposed upgrading of the electricity transmission network, known as the "Dumfries and Galloway Strategic Reinforcement".

Last week I met with representatives of "Dumgal Against Pylons", a local protest group which prepared a joint letter signed by forty Community Councils objecting to the plans in their current form. The group recognises the need to upgrade the present transmission system but holds that the proposed solution needs to be sympathetic to the special needs and nature of the region. It is clear that engagement with this group at an early stage would benefit all parties.

During our meeting, I was shown a letter from yourself to a constituent which revealed that the Scottish Government is chairing a Stakeholder Liaison Group for the project. I had not been aware of this before, nor were my constituents. I would very much appreciate more details about it to assist me in my role as South of Scotland MSP – including the minutes of meetings.

I note that the liaison group appears to be made up of statutory consultees in the planning process including SNH and Dumfries and Galloway Council. As Community Councils are normally statutory consultees, can you please advise how and when the Stakeholder Liaison Group might be expanded to accommodate representation from the affected Community Councils? I appreciate there are logistical challenges here and not all 40 CC's can be separately represented. However some solution which included them would, I believe, send out a very positive message about local democracy and would strengthen the process.

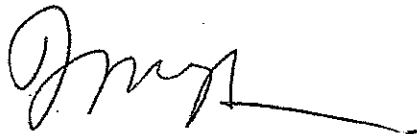
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Finally, your office in response to one concerned resident appeared to indicate an overhead solution is a foregone conclusion, as it said you expect a planning application for overhead lines to come to you around 2019. My constituents are arguing for alternatives to overhead lines, including undergrounding – and as your letter also states, Ofgem has an important role to play before the project reaches the stage of applying to ministers. I have written separately to Ofgem about my constituents' concerns, asking that they make funds available to mitigate the impact of the line, should it go ahead.

Therefore I would appreciate your reassurance that the reference to an overhead line application in 2019 in your letter did not in any way anticipate how the project might progress or ministers' positions ahead of any planning applications.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joan McAlpine', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

**Joan McAlpine MSP**

cc. Richard Arkless, SNP MP for Dumfries and Galloway  
cc. Aileen McLeod, SNP MSP for South of Scotland