



Notes of a meeting with Wigtownshire Chamber of Commerce 20 January 2016

Present:

Wigtown Chamber of Commerce

Wolf Richthofen

Gordon Andrews

DGAP

Alan Jones

Penny Coles

It was good to see The Belted Galloway up and running after being flooded and serving such tasty food and coffee. Congratulations to all involved in the massive clean up.

Wolf outlined some of the research information available from the Wigtownshire Chamber of Commerce and the expertise and contacts they have to conduct new research. Alan introduced his idea of independent research into the effect on tourism of pylons. The Chamber was happy to support this idea and could undertake some of the research. We will discuss in our meeting with the University of Glasgow.

Alan went through Dumgal against Pylons' alternative proposal, recognising the need for a new transmission network. The OHL on pylons is the cheapest but most intrusive form and we want SPEN to investigate other options.

We discussed other alternative routes to transmit the electricity generated by the number of wind farms. These need further investigation. The constructed wind farms link into Stranraer, Girvan and Glenluce sub stations at present. A Glenluce sub station upgrade may be better than a new sub station at Newton Stewart. An idea was to extend Glenluce substation and to use an underground cable to Luce Bay. A converter station close to the Water of Luce would allow a sub sea cable through Luce Bay to either run beside the Western HVDC cable or connect onto it. This needs further technical, environmental and financial research.

The construction of the proposed OHL on pylons would not necessarily result in more local jobs. The work on current OHLs and wind farms has involved teams from outwith the area with only small short term jobs locally.

All were concerned at the potential impact on the landscape of pylons and consequentially on our tourism economy. The Chamber has been working hard to increase visitor numbers in the area and liaising with D&G Council to locate more festivals and events in the west of the region.

Wolf had many excellent ideas we will take forward such as a radio phone in question and answer session on local radio. His colleague in the Dumfries Chamber of Commerce may be able to help.

It is believed that flash flooding could be increased due to the haul roads and concrete bases plus the removal of forest. The area has already suffered from the removal of diseased larches and the construction of wind farms removing peat and tree cover.

Gordon is going to use his Visitor Centre and café to help inform locals about the proposal. We all agreed that this was a sensitive issue to raise with visitors as we do not wish to put them off any repeat visits. Care will be needed in formulating the questions.

Castle Douglas was seen as a venue accessible to many for a public meeting during the second consultation period.

It was good to meet and exchange ideas and we agreed to maintain contact.