

Minister for Business, Energy and Tourism
Fergus Ewing MSP

T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@scotland.gsi.gov.uk



Mr John Drabble
Bogrie
Dunscore
DUMFRIES
DG2 0UT



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Dear Mr Drabble,

Thank you for your email of the 15th of August, which I believe you also sent to a number of other Scottish Ministers. As energy falls within my ministerial portfolio I will also be responding on their behalf. I fully understand your concerns about the impact of such a large infrastructure project on the landscape.

As you know, I forwarded your email directly to senior representatives of Scottish Power Energy Networks (SPEN), and I was encouraged to see that they have spoken with you and replied separately. I hope this has been helpful in addressing the issues you raised.

SPEN have yet to submit a 'needs case' to the regulator Ofgem, but it is for them to make a decision on whether transmission upgrades like the Dumfries and Galloway proposals will enable construction of the correct infrastructure at the right time. They will also establish if electricity generators are sufficiently committed to the projects that would connect to the upgrade. We expect them to take a robust approach in assessing whether Scottish Power's plans are justified, economical and in the interests of consumers.

SPEN will undertake a further two stages of consultation and expect to make an application to Scottish Ministers for the erection of overhead lines in 2019. A Stakeholder Liaison Group, chaired by the Scottish Government, has already been formed to provide a forum for considering the planning, environmental, cultural and natural heritage issues, that will arise from the proposal. I hope this provides reassurance that that a final decision will only be made in line with all legal and planning obligations following a robust consultative process taking account of representations from the local community.

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