

# Pylon threat to Scots Dark Sky Park

By Paula Murray

WIND farm campaigners from the Highlands have joined the fight against the new "power highway" to cut through south-west Scotland.

Lyndsey Ward, a leading member of several protest groups, warned the peace and tranquillity of Dumfries and Galloway will be "gone forever" if the construction goes ahead.

ScottishPower wants to install 165ft pylons over a 110-mile route across the Galloway Glens and through Britain's first designated Dark Sky Park.

But the blueprint is opposed by 50 community councils representing some 65,000 people, leading conservation charity The John Muir Trust, the Scottish Campaign for National Parks and various parliamentarians at West-

minster and Holyrood. Now Ms Ward has contacted group DumGal Against Pylons to share her experiences of the Beaully-Denny power line - built close to her home in Beaully by Scottish Power and Scottish Hydro Electric.

She wrote to chairman Alan Jones and said: "The Beaully to Denny line can only be described as a crime against the environment. It is truly appalling, devastating, dominating and has destroyed huge swathes of the Highlands with massive pylons and thick, glistening transmission lines criss-crossing the skyline.

"Once attractive train journeys from Inverness are now spent trying not to

look out of the window. The Wester Balblair Substation in Beaully has to be seen to be believed; impossible to view in its entirety except from the air.

"An SSE representative told me it was a 'hub' now and we know more Beaully-Denny size pylon lines will be coming into it. It is a mess and heart-breaking to see."

She added: "We live four miles from this monstrous 'hub' and on still days or with the wind from the east we can hear the buzzing quite clearly.

"It is so appalling, a noise abatement notice was served on SSE by Highland Council. The problem has

been going on for about three years and the situation can only get worse."

Ms Ward said a couple living near

the power line were driven to such distraction they bought a touring caravan to "go somewhere quiet to sleep". She continued: "Glasses of water in bedrooms ripple.

"Fishermen on the River Beaully that has the heavy noisy transmission lines strung above it complain of the noise; some say they'll never return.

"People living under the lines say it is like having a microwave on in your bedroom at night. The peace and tranquillity has gone forever."

The group is seeking alternatives to the pylon line, which will run from Harker near Carlisle to Auchencrosh in Ayrshire, where the subsea link to Northern Ireland comes ashore.

A spokeswoman said: "Dumfries

and Galloway is a very beautiful, tucked away corner of the country and with a growing tourist economy.

"It is vital it is not regarded as an unimportant backwater for intrusive infrastructure. A robust and open-minded debate is essential in order to achieve the very best outcome for the whole future of the region."

ScottishPower extended the consultation period and is considering more than 1,600 responses before deciding which corridors and siting areas will be taken forward to the next stage.

A report into the first round of consultation is expected by the end of the month.

If the project goes ahead, it is expected to be operational in 2023.

