

DumGal Against Pylons appoints President

DumGal Against Pylons, the south west Scotland campaign group, welcomes Dame Barbara Kelly, CBE, DL, LLD, as their President. Dame Barbara, who was made a Dame of the British Empire in 2007 for public service in Scotland, is a strong advocate for social justice, fairness and choice and has a wealth of experience in rural and environmental affairs. An active member in her family's Dumfriesshire farming business, she is deeply committed to the well-being of rural Scotland and has held a number of senior appointments including main board member of Scottish Natural Heritage, founding member of Rural Forum and the Southern Uplands Partnership and is currently chairman of Dumfries and Galloway Arts Festival, The Robertson Trust, the Peter Pan Moat Brae Trust and Convenor of the Crichton Foundation.

Commenting on her latest role, Dame Barbara said that she regards Scottish Power Energy Networks (SPENs) current proposals for a new electricity transmission scheme as a major issue affecting the whole future of the region.

"I am deeply concerned that this is not just about the impact of a new transmission line, major intrusion though it will be. What is at stake is the whole future of the region. We urgently need a debate about the underlying issues and the options to which they give rise. Does our future lie in the passive acceptance of a role assigned to us by exterior powers which have always tended to regard the region as an unimportant backwater, the ideal receptacle for developments that nobody else wants, or more in the hands of its inhabitants deciding for themselves in the light of an understanding of what others want and need, and the combination of services they wish to provide to the wider community? It is vital that a robust and open minded debate takes place to ensure that any new system is sensitively constructed, all options considered and that the outstanding natural beauty and local economy of Dumfries and Galloway is not irretrievably damaged."

DumGal Against Pylons responded to SPEN's initial proposal with an alternative plan which, it believes, meets the need to transmit renewable energy generated in the region to England and Wales, without the same degree of damage SPENs proposal will cause. The alternative includes utilising a sub-sea cable to transmit the majority of the generated energy out of the region from Newton Stewart westward and retaining an uprated 132kV network following much of the existing route but with some modest deviation and/or undergrounding eastward to Harker in Cumbria.

Alan Jones, chair of DumGal Against Pylons, said "we are delighted to have Dame Barbara Kelly working with us. Her experience in so many initiatives affecting the natural environment will be a huge asset to our work and she will help us achieve the very best outcome for the region".