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Galloway Without Pylons
By email

Our ref: 2018/0029367
20th September 2018

Dear Mr McGregor,

Thank you for your letter concerning SPEN's proposed 132kv reinforcement project from Kendoon to Tongland. I'm responding on behalf of Mr Matheson as one of the lead officials involved with scoping exercise for this project as well as the associated community liaison group.

I cannot comment on the points you have raised on National Park status in Dumfries and Galloway other than to state the latest position set out in Parliament by the Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform, that there are no current plans to establish new National Parks in Scotland.

On the project, there is currently no Electricity Act application before Ministers for consideration. It is for SPEN as applicant to submit their development proposals to Scottish Ministers within the terms set out in their transmission licence. If and when SPEN submit an application, it will require to be accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report, which must be based on the scoping opinion issued by Scottish Ministers in October 2017. The EIA report will require to describe the likely significant effects of the proposed development on the environment, and must contain a description of any measures envisaged to avoid, prevent, reduce or offset likely significant adverse effects of the proposal.

I note the points you raise about adverse effects of the proposal. In reaching a reasoned conclusion on the significant effects of any proposal, Scottish Ministers will consult the public, community councils, statutory bodies including SNH and the local authority, and public bodies having an interest in the proposal. Scottish Ministers will not reach a conclusion on the significant effects until the EIA report has been examined and all consultation responses and public representations have been taken into account. At the end of the process, Scottish Ministers will make a determination either to grant consent for or refuse the proposals put forward under the Electricity Act. Although you note in your letter a number of potential environmental impacts based on pre application documentation, it would

not be appropriate to comment on these prior to any final application being considered along with all consultation responses.

In preparing for the forthcoming EIA report, the Energy Consents Unit has undertaken unprecedented pre-application community engagement, by way of the establishment and chairing of a Community Liaison Group. This has facilitated early engagement between the affected communities, the prospective applicant and the Scottish Government on local issues and concerns relating to the project. This has led to Scottish Ministers informing the prospective applicant, following concerns raised by communities, that the forthcoming EIA report should include information on alternative measures, including undergrounding, which have been considered to avoid, prevent, reduce, and if possible to offset the likely significant adverse landscape and visual effects, where these have been identified through consultation feedback from affected communities.

If and when the final development proposal is submitted to Scottish Ministers, all members of the public as well as community councils will be able to submit their views, which will be given careful consideration.

Kind Regards

Alan Brogan
Energy Consents Unit