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Galloway Without Pylons
C/o Paul Swift Esq.
By email

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Dear Sirs

KTR – in support of undergrounding

As one of the private landowners who stands to be directly affected by the proposed route of the KTR, I am writing to express my support for your campaign. As things stand, the proposed pylon route will cross my land to the west of the village of Mossdale before heading south across Slogarie Hill and into Laurieston Forest.

The impacts are both economic and environmental. The line will be highly visible from the Raiders Road, Mossdale and many local businesses which rely on tourism, like holiday houses and activity centres, and for such a remote area the effect could be disproportionate. The current route sees the pylons skylined along the ridge that runs south from the Bennan Hill to Ross Hill – this is a change from the original plan (in which they were below the horizon) and I can only presume it is due to SPEN's desire to have as much of the route on Forestry Commission land as possible, in order to minimise cost and opposition.

From an environmental perspective, the proposed route will pass close to and cross the Blackwater of Dee, with all the environmental risks which that entails (particularly given SPEN's track record with silting and river crossings further up the Ken Valley) – the river has already suffered immeasurably because of power generation and this latest scheme just adds insult to injury. The route also goes along the eastern boundary of the Airie and Laughenghie Hills SSSI, which is so designated on account of its habitat for rare bird species, some of which have bred successfully in the area for over 40 years precisely because they are undisturbed. This was due to a land management agreement between the landowners and statutory bodies which prevented commercial development (farming,

forestry, sporting activities) and is now in jeopardy. It will be impossible for anyone to guarantee that birdlife will not be driven away by the construction works and I have been surprised by the apparent insouciance of the RSPB in particular thus far in the consultation process.

SPEN say they have chosen this route because the current 132kv line passes too close to the Ramsar site on Loch Ken and therefore the inference is that the white fronted geese which winter there are the priority, but this should not be about favouring one bird species or overground route over another – the bottom line is that the Glenkens ecosystem is worthy of protection and, if SPEN want to demonstrate their real commitment to sustainable energy, then they should be recommending undergrounding and not objecting to it. This should be embraced as a flagship project which demonstrates how the main utility infrastructure provider in Scotland can get it right for once.

After all, they (or their wider group) are major beneficiaries of the renewable energy revolution – using some very rough calculations of annual generation, the Galloway Hydro Scheme alone generates c£18m per annum in consumer funded subsidies for Scottish Power Generation (i.e. Iberdrola) under the Renewables Obligation Scotland (ROS), even though the hydro scheme has been in operation for over 75 years and is therefore established technology, and I believe that this places an obligation on SPEN to make the associated infrastructure, from which SPG benefits, more sustainable. By the same token, new wind farms looking to connect should also be asked to contribute to the additional cost of undergrounding – they still stand to make plenty of money from the project despite subsidy reductions and are the main reason why the new transmission capacity is required in the first place. We have to spend all day looking at the rows of turbines on the hilltops – please don't make us look at a row of 30m pylons as well.

Yours faithfully

James Ingall