

Shetland Transmission Project: Consultation on Final Needs Case and Delivery Model

I wish to submit a response to the above consultation and also lodge an objection to the provisional approval of a proposed 600MW transmission link between Shetland and the Scottish mainland. I do not believe that this project would deliver good value for money for electricity consumers and my reasons are as follows.

- The estimated cost of an interconnector cable has more than doubled over the past few years and the current estimate is around £710million. No one knows what the final cost could be but it would certainly be considerably more than the present projected figure and the burden of payment would ultimately fall on consumers.
- Apart from the cost of the cable, all the cost of the associated infrastructure required to link up any proposed windfarms to the cable would be passed on to consumers. Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) made that plain in their initial plans for the Viking Energy (VE) windfarm and that should also be taken into consideration.
- At the moment, electricity consumers have to pay a surcharge on their energy bills, which goes towards subsidising energy companies to build windfarms. As a result, there has been a proliferation of windfarm development without any thought or regard for the environment or the actual needs of consumers. "It's all about money", is what I was told by a representative of one potential windfarm developer.
- It would be more cost effective for energy companies to generate power near to their main customer base rather than transmit electricity over long distances from remote areas. The further electricity has to be transmitted, the more expensive it is and the less efficient the supply due to power loss along the lines of transmission.
- There is already an over provision of electricity generated from windfarms as supply exceeds demand. Last year, £125million was paid out in the UK in constraint payments to windfarm operators. Of that, £115million was paid to windfarm operators in Scotland to switch off turbines with SSE receiving the biggest share for shutting down turbines at their Bhlaraidh wind farm in Inverness-shire. Not only are electricity consumers paying for windfarms to be built, they are also paying for windfarms to be shut down. It makes no sense at all, either environmentally or economically and benefits no one.
- VE is keen to make a case for an interconnector cable based mainly on assumptions rather than hard facts. The cost of building a windfarm on Shetland would be around twice the cost of building one elsewhere in the UK, mainly due to transportation costs, making wind generated electricity even more expensive. There is no guarantee that the expensive electricity produced would be purchased by energy suppliers if cheaper electricity could be obtained from other sources.
- The claim by VE that they would be reducing carbon emissions is dubious to say the least, considering the fact that windfarms on Shetland would be built mainly on blanket bog, a habitat that is

universally recognised as a carbon sink which should be left undisturbed.

- Wind generated power is very unreliable and even in Shetland the wind can be extremely variable, ranging from no wind at all to severe gales and sometimes all in the space of a few days. As a result, a base load of power from other sources would have to be maintained at all times to even out the peaks and troughs of electricity produced from wind turbines. This would also add to the cost of supplying electricity to consumers.

In conclusion, the cost of electricity is already high and due to increase again within the next month or so as Ofgem recently lifted the cap on charges. Wind turbines are the most expensive means of generating power and, added to that the distance and cost of transmission from remote areas, the least cost effective way of supplying power to consumers. A transmission link between Shetland and the Scottish mainland would not bring any economic benefits to consumers in the UK and I would urge Ofgem to reject this proposal.

Yours truly