

28/04/2019

James Norman,
Head of New Transmission Investment,
Ofgem,
3rd Floor Commonwealth House,
23 Albion Street,
Glasgow G1 1LH

Dear Mr Norman,

I refer to the Consultation on a potential transmission link to Shetland.

My response is based on my concerns about the implications of this for local residents and as to whether or not such a link will provide value for money to energy consumers nationwide.

if this is finally approved, will be the focus of a great deal of construction activity related to this. The inter-connector cable will come ashore here and a massive converter station is scheduled to be constructed in the upper reaches of the Weisdale valley. On the hills above the valley will be sited the massive Viking windfarm (103 turbines), its turbines dominating the surrounding landscape. Some of the turbines are planned to be about 1km from homes and most within 2 km. The Weisdale valley is a regular destination for tourist buses and the scenic valley is much appreciated by tourists and locals alike. All this could change if the inter-connector comes.

I am very concerned by what is proposed for this area.

I note that an initial needs assessment has been bypassed for this; I feel this should have done before it got to this stage. The suspicion is that it is being fast-tracked to enable Viking Energy to put in a bid in the upcoming CfD auction.

I have grave doubts that the economics of a link like this can provide value for money to energy consumers. Undoubtedly building wind farms on remote islands has to be the most expensive onshore wind to develop and, combined with the long transmission links required, can never provide value for money. The political decision to allow remote island wind to bid in the CfD auction has led to a keen interest from more developers as they seek to cash in on any available subsidy. This money has to come from consumers, in other words developers in Shetland are trying to take advantage of consumers nationwide. I am also aware that the current transmission system in Scotland, where most of the power generated in Shetland would be destined, at times struggles to cope with power from renewables. The need for constraint payments has been well publicised, again funded by consumers.

I am also worried that an inter-connector link to Shetland will reduce energy security here if it is planned to use it as a replacement energy source for the islands instead of Lerwick power station.

The need for power from Shetland to use the Caithness-Moray inter-connector is a further complication. Will there be 600MW of space available on this 1.2GW inter-connector to accommodate Shetland power? No doubt power from Orkney would have to use this inter-connector as well.

In my opinion a self contained energy solution for Shetland without the need for inter-connectors would represent the best value for money for consumers nationwide and best value in terms of energy security for Shetland consumers.

I would be obliged if you take my views into consideration as you make a final decision on the transmission link.