

Dear Sir

Thank you for allowing comment on the Western Isles Transmission Project Consultation.

We were very disappointed to hear that you have taken the provisional decision to reject the proposed 600MW link in favour of a smaller 450MW connection.

Tolsta is in the enviable position of already having a wind turbine. Income from this has generated over half a million pounds of benefit to our local community over the last five years. It has also enabled employment in the village where otherwise there would have been little opportunity. All the groups in the village have benefitted from our renewable project ie primary school, youth club, church groups, historical society. It also enabled us to be in a position to purchase the local shop which would have closed had this not been the case.

The vision has always been to develop a further two turbines and perhaps a hydro scheme to take advantage of our areas natural resources. We are in the process of commissioning a study for this project which we hope would be in the region of 10MW. Projects in the area which are already in early stages of planning are under significant financial risk in proceeding when there are no guarantees to being able to progress to a grid connection. A smaller link would be quickly used up by larger projects and is a huge disadvantage to small community groups.

Groups in the Western Isles should be given the opportunity to use the natural resources to the full by developing renewable projects to benefit their communities, creating employment and providing an income to cover issues such as fuel poverty, housing and skills development.

We believe there is enough demand to warrant a 600MW link so it would make greater sense to proceed with that now rather than having to look at creating a second link in the future. That would surely be at a much higher financial cost.

We would urge you to reconsider your initial decision and approve the larger 600MW link so as to ensure our local communities are not disadvantaged from progressing projects. Community energy could transform our island communities, but the 450MW link does not give community groups the opportunity to realise this. The benefits community energy brings to our communities are vast and Tolsta Community Development Ltd would argue that the Government should design a separate community energy support scheme to acknowledge this, and encourage communities to overcome the current risks faced in being able to progress projects.

Regards

Murdo Maciver

Secretary

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