

Shetland Transmission Link Consultation (2)

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 approving this project would be in the best interests of electricity consumers and my reasons are as follows.

- The cost of an inter-connector cable will most certainly be greater than predicted, as estimates have more than doubled since the idea was first put forward. This cost will inevitably be passed on to consumers in the form of higher electricity bills. Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) have already put up their prices due to “the cost of providing electricity” to their customers.
- On top of that, the cost of the associated infrastructure necessary to link up any proposed windfarms to a cable would also be passed on to consumers. SSE made this clear when the initial plans for the Viking Energy (VE) windfarm were published and that should also be taken into consideration.
- SSE and VE have been trying to make a case for a cable by suggesting that it would provide a reliable source of power for Shetland if we were connected to the National Grid. However, cable failures are not uncommon and the Western Link is a case in point. The suggestion that diesel generators could be kept on standby as an emergency back up power source is absolutely ludicrous.
- Wind generated power is not reliable as the wind can be extremely variable, causing turbines to shut down either due to no wind on calm days or too much wind during severe gales. This can happen at any time of the year.
- It is 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 via cables and power lines. 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 produced from windfarms as supply is exceeding demand. Recently around £100 million pounds was paid to energy companies to shut down their windfarms and avoid overloading the grid. Consumers are paying for windfarms to be built via a surcharge on electricity bills and are also paying for them to be shut down when supply outstrips demand. This arrangement benefits power companies at the expense of their customers.
- So far, SSE and Shetland Islands Council (SIC) have only considered the VE windfarm and an associated inter-connector cable and have ignored other alternatives. This has been to the detriment of consumers in Shetland as we are already paying higher than average costs for electricity. Fuel poverty is a growing problem and would only get worse if the proposed VE project and inter-connector cable went ahead.
- The recent proposal to build a gas-fired power station in Shetland to replace the current diesel power station is the most cost effective suggestion that has been put forward to date. It would only be a fraction of the estimated costs of VE and an inter-connector cable and would provide Shetland with a local, reliable source of electricity.
- VE have been promoting their project as a means of producing “green energy”. However, building massive turbines on blanket peat bog is far from green and would cause irreparable environmental damage to a fragile ecosystem. Gas is cleaner than diesel and would contribute to carbon reduction without destroying the environment in the process.

- SSE have been pressing on with preparatory work as if they have already been given the necessary permission to do so and with an apparent assumption that Ofgem will approve the inter-connector cable. It gives the impression that the SSE proposal is the only solution to Shetland's energy needs when this is simply not the case.

Since starting on my response, it would appear that SSE are now talking about using private investment money for VE as they failed to secure a government subsidy in the last CfD auction. This is either a cynical response to submissions that have been made to Ofgem so far or it is a thinly veiled attempt to put pressure on Ofgem to approve the cable. Whatever the reason, I would urge you to give due consideration to the gas-fired power station as an alternative solution to Shetland's energy needs. It would provide a cheaper, more reliable power source, be more cost effective and give far better value for money to consumers.

Yours sincerely,