

Super-pylons warning in electricity upgrade plan

MORAY has been urged to wake up to the threat of super-pylons.

Environmental campaigner Bob Graham this week warned that Moray will suffer from a likely electricity upgrade from Beaully to Kintore to service the growing number of wind farm developments.

The pylons will be twice the height of the existing ones and an eyesore across the countryside, he claimed.

Controversial proposals by Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) for a replacement 400,000-volt power line between Beaully, west of Inverness, and Denny, near Falkirk, have whipped up a storm of protest.

Following an extensive consultation period, an application has been lodged with Scottish Ministers for the new line.

The proposal has already been approved by Ofgem, the gas and electricity industry regulator.

A similar proposal for Beaully to Kintore has yet to gain Ofgem approval, and SSE has yet to submit planning applications for the upgrade.

However, Mr Graham, of Inchberry, believes it may be fast-tracked if opposition to the Denny line delays its progress.

Mr Graham, an outspoken opponent of wind farms in Moray and across

Scotland, was recently appointed chairman of the new Highlands Against Wind farms group.

"People have got to wake up to the realities of the situation," he said.

"If they want wind farms, they are going to have to accept these giant pylons."

Mr Graham, founder of the Stop Wind farms In Moray group (SWIM), insisted Scotland did not need a power line upgrade, as it is already a large exporter of electricity.

"This upgrade is purely to support all the wind farm applications that have been submitted in Scotland," he said.

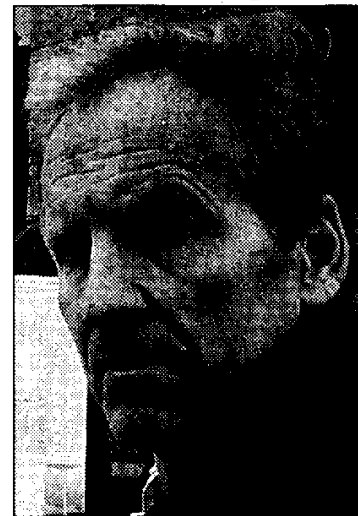
The anti-wind farm campaigners are now trying to align themselves with the pylon opponents to mount a joint campaign.

"This wholesale destruction of our heritage will not be tolerated, and we are joining forces with anti-tylon groups across Scotland," said Mr Graham.

He refuted claims by Scottish and Southern Energy that the upgrade is necessary to combat climate change and keep the country's lights on.

"Wind power is the only renewable energy source that will produce commercial quantities of electricity, and that will be the case for years to come," he said.

"However, its inter-



Environmental campaigner Bob Graham: "People have got to wake up to the realities of the situation. If they want wind farms they are going to have to accept these giant pylons."

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■ **By CHRIS SAUNDERSON**

mittency is such that it cannot possibly 'keep the lights on'.

"Base load is what keeps the lights on, and wind power cannot contribute to this in any way."

The Highlands group is planning a roadshow to highlight what it sees as the realities of wind power and the planned grid upgrades.

The Scottish Executive has set a target of 18% of electricity generated to come from renewable sources by 2010, rising to 40% by 2020.

Transmission infrastructure is one of the issues important to achieving these targets, according to the Forum for Renewable Energy Development in Scotland (FREDS).

"Substantial upgrades will be required to Scot-

land's electricity transmission system, depending on the level of renewable development to be accommodated," it stated in a recent report.

Construction timetables for a number of planned upgrades range from one to three years from the granting of planning permission.

"It is essential, therefore, to ensure that these developments move through the planning process to determination as efficiently as possible to avoid unnecessary delays in the progress towards achieving Scotland's renewables target," the FREDS report added.

The Beaully to Denny proposal is for a 220km-long transmission line, the same as the existing line. That will include 600

pylons – around 200 fewer than at present. However, they will be considerably larger than the existing pylons.

The height of the new pylons will range from 42 to 65 metres (137 to 211ft), while the height of the pylons on the existing line ranges from 25-41m (81-133ft).

The project is likely to cost in the region of £320 million and take three years to complete.

Moray planning chief Bob Stewart this week said the pylon issue was one that planners and councillors had to consider very carefully.

Mr Stewart said the problem facing Moray was that wind farm developments approved in Highland, Aberdeenshire and elsewhere in Scotland would impact locally in terms of the pylon proposal

Ramblers seek end to threat to wild land

THE RAMBLERS Association Scotland has urged people to call a halt to the proposed power line construction programme across Scotland by objecting to the Beaully to Denny project.

President Cameron McNeish said: "With this will come the abandonment of many of the wind farm projects, with their 100 metre turbines, which threaten our finest wild lands.

"The place for giant wind turbines is well offshore, connected to the centres of energy demand in southern Britain through subsea cables down the east and west coasts.

"Squandering our wild land with giant pylons is ridiculous when it is an undersea grid that is needed to meet future wind, wave and tidal energy needs.

"Government Ministers need to rethink renewable energy developments on land. Their primary purpose should be to reduce demand on the National Grid, helping to cut both carbon emissions and electricity bills."

He added: "Small turbines and solar panels are far more use to Scotland than giant pylons."

for Beaully to Kintore.

The new super pylons would come through Moray and its scenically important area, and Mr Stewart said that was of concern to him.

He said each individual wind farm application had implications stretching far beyond the boundaries of whichever local authority is determining it, and that is something councillors have to bear in mind.

A spokesman for Scottish and Southern Energy said the FREDS report outlined a number of scenarios

related to the issue of renewable energy.

"The Beaully to Denny line, which would replace an existing line, has been submitted for planning permission after 21 months of public consultation," he said.

"We haven't unveiled any proposals for other parts of the country, but clearly some other form of upgrades will be necessary if, as expected, there is significant ongoing investment in renewable energy transmission."