

STIRLING COUNCIL

MINUTES OF SPECIAL MEETING OF THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE held in the COUNCIL CHAMBERS, VIEWFORTH, STIRLING on MONDAY 17 OCTOBER 2005 at 10.30 am.

Present:-

Councillor Gillie THOMSON (in the Chair)

Councillor Tom Coll (Substitute)	Councillor Pat KELLY
Councillor Tony FFINCH	Councillor Charlie McKEAN
Councillor Pat GREENHILL (Substitute)	Councillor John PATERSON
Councillor Anne HARDING	Councillor Gerry POWER
Councillor John HOLLIDAY	

In Attendance:-

Ms Corrinne Gallagher, Press Officer, Corporate Services
Mr Arthur Nicholls, Director of Environment Services
Mr Mick Stewart, Head of Planning & Regulation, Environment Services
Mr Keith Yates, Chief Executive
Miss Ann Dromgoole, Committee Officer, Corporate Services (Clerk)

Also Present:-

Councillor Paul Nelson
45 Members of the Public.

Apologies – Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tom Hazel, David Lonsdale and C.K. McChord.

EV130 BEAULY TO DENNY 400KV OVERHEAD LINE UPGRADE PROPOSALS

Prior to commencement of the business the Chair reminded those present that it was not Council policy to permit meetings to be recorded. He also advised that prior to making a decision on the Application Stirling Council proposed to speak with representatives of the other Local Authorities affected by the Overhead Line Upgrade proposals.

The Committee was requested to hear representations from both the Applicants and the Objectors in the interests of the fullest public dissemination of information and concern relating to the above proposals.

The Chair outlined the format of the Hearing. The Chair advised that (a) no decision would be taken at this meeting on the Upgrade Proposals; and (b) the Committee would receive Presentations under the procedures for allowing Interested Parties to be heard.

The order of Speakers would be (a) Council Officer; (b) representatives from the Developers (Scottish and Southern Energy and Scottish Power); and (c)

the Objectors. Thereafter Members of the Committee, Developers, and Objectors would have the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on the issues.

The Chair introduced Dr Keith MacLean, (Head of Sustainable Development); Scottish and Southern Energy, representing the Developers. Dr McLean was accompanied by Peter Lodge, and Julian Reeves, Scottish & Southern Energy; Ross Baxter, Scottish Power; and Mark Turnbull and David Bell (Advisers). Ms Nicki Baker, Mr Kenny Logan, Mr Ian Paterson, and Mr Peter Pearson, represented the Objectors, and also speak on behalf of Stirling Before Pylons.

The Head of Planning and Regulation Environment Services provided background history on the Application.

He advised that initial contact with the Developers had taken place during December 2003/January 2004. The Council had facilitated a Public meeting held on 1 April 2004 leading to an update report to the Environment Committee on 29 April 2004. Previous reports presented to the Environment Committee on 29 April and 26 August 2004 respectively had set out the evolution of the proposal and the consultation process. These reports were appended as Appendices to a submitted Summary report by the Director of Environment Services.

Formal Notification of Intent had been submitted to Stirling Council following submission to the Scottish Executive on 30 September 2005.

The Summary report by the Director of Environment Services provided an update on the current situation relating to the proposal by Scottish and Southern Energy and Scottish Power to upgrade the above Power Line.

The report advised that the relevant notifications under the Electricity Acts had been submitted to the Council on 3 October 2005. In the light of the degree of public interest in the proposal, it had been agreed that Members receive Presentations from representatives of both the Applicants and the Objectors, and that the Presentations at this meeting form part of an information gathering exercise.

The report further explained that as the notifications had now been formally submitted, the Council's role would be to determine whether or not to object to the proposals. It was anticipated that a further report on the matter would be presented to Stirling Council at a meeting scheduled for 15 December 2005.

The Notification Details of the Environmental Statement prepared by Scottish Power and Scottish and Southern Energy had been made available in the Members' Lounge viz:-

- Volume 1 Main Text
- Volume 2 Environmental Statement (Figures)
- Volume 3 (Appendices)
- Volume 4 Sub Station Reports
- Volume 5 – Technical Annexes

There was also tabled:-

(a) Letter dated 4 October 2005 providing a Joint Response agreed by 10 Community Councils (Bannockburn, Bridge of Allan, Cambuskenneth, Causewayhead, Cowie, Dunblane, Logie, Mercat Cross and Central, Plean and Polmaise) at a meeting on 1 September 2005 expressing grave concerns about the proposals and supporting the campaign mounted by Stirling Before Pylons and supported by the Eastern Villages Alliance;

(b) Letter dated 13 October 2005 from Plean Community Council presenting this Community Council's views and recommending that the Application be the subject of a Public Inquiry.

The objections to the proposal submitted jointly from the 10 Community Councils referred to above were as follows: -

Health – Serious health implications for those living near to the line – are currently being investigated by the Scottish Parliament's Petition's Committee. Many of those living near the proposed Line are Council house tenants for whom Stirling Council has extra responsibility.

Loss of Amenity – Wellbeing and security for local people – The Communities of Kinbuck, Sheriffmuir, Logie, Fallin, Cowie, Throsk, Plean and Denny comprise the most populated areas of the whole route. The University and Logie Kirk will be badly affected. The huge towers and wires will affect thousands.

Landscape – The impact on a designated area of "Great Landscape Value" in the Ochils. The route will cut a swathe down the Ochils visible across the Forth Valley from the motorway and railway.

Historic – The impact on views to and from the Wallace Monument and Stirling Castle, two of Scotland's most historic Monuments can only be described as catastrophic.

Tourism – The local economy will be impacted by both the above, affecting local businesses.

Recreation - Well in excess of 36,000 people, local and tourists, visit Dumyat Hill annually and their enjoyment will be severely affected.

Alternative Routes – The alternative routes have not been properly explored by the Power Companies. The proposed route passes through a highly populated area containing Scotland's iconic Wallace Monument. This would be regretted for generations.

Undergrounding Options – These options have not been properly examined and there are examples of this being done elsewhere in Britain and abroad.

Justification – Expert Bodies have questioned the need for the Line and the Royal Society of Edinburgh's Inquiry into "The Future Requirement of Energy for Scotland" will not conclude until mid-2006 at the earliest.

The Joint Response requested Stirling Council to formally object to the proposal.

With reference to the submission dated 13 October 2005 Plean Community Council had recommended that the Application be taken to a Public Inquiry for the following reasons:-

Health:– The serious health implications for those living close to the proposed Line the effects of which were currently being investigated by the Scottish Parliament via their Petition Committee. Attention was drawn to the fact that there were many houses in close proximity to the proposed line many of which were the direct responsibility of Stirling Council. Throughout the world various investigations were taking place that were proving worthy of consideration.

Landscape, Tourism and History:- The Pylons were planned to be much higher and bigger in structure which will become a major eyesore on our landscape everywhere, but in particular in the areas of the Wallace Monument, Stirling University and the Ochil Hills – beauty spots which can be seen from motorways and railway alike, but even more so for those visiting the National Wallace Monument.

The Community Council believed that this will have a serious long-term effect on the Tourist business in the Stirling area and would be a departure from the past efforts of Stirling Council to protect our historic land.

Alternative Routes:- The Community Council was extremely concerned that no proper alternative options had ever been fully investigated or explored by Scottish and Southern Energy. The Community Council had asked that the Power Company should investigate the possibility of a more westerly route which would take it past and well away from all major housing and villages. So far the Community Council had been told that the Line cannot come across the Carse area as “Wild Hyacinths grow there and also Geese land.”

Under-Grounding Options:– There had never been any real investigations into this proposed source other than it would be more expensive for the Power Company.

Justification: – Experts had justified the need for this Line and there were alternative undersea options, which would not create any of these problems, but the Power Companies were refusing to even consider these proposals at the moment.

The Committee received Presentations on behalf of the Developers and the Objectors details of which are contained within Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to this Minute.

Following the Presentations Members of the Committee and Speakers were invited to ask questions during which the following issues were raised: -

Councillor Kelly expressed concern that no consideration had been given to health or what the effect that the Pylons would have on tourism to the area. The Committee was advised that the Appendix on the Environment, which formed part of the Application, showed compliance rather than a vehicle to question a policy on health.

Councillor Holliday referred to the variations concerning comments on Health and Safety issues and sought clarification on what, in terms of health; was considered an acceptable safe distance from which to live from Power Lines i.e. 350 – 400 metres. It was indicated that the remit of SAGE was to consider what precautionary measures might be applicable for distance. At present there was no reason for any minimum distance to be set. Three Government Departments were looking at the issue. However what was required was a Central Body to pull together all of the information which the Developers would then abide by.

In response to a question by Councillor Coll concerning Line repairs the Committee was advised that the new Line would be of a more robust design to accommodate adverse weather conditions; overhead connections can be repaired quicker than underground ones.

It was considered to be useful to all concerned if the Developers could provide information on their future additional proposals for the next 20; 30; and 40 years.

Information was also requested from the Developers on the possible provision of 5 additional Power Lines. The Committee was advised that these Lines would run north/east and not affect the Stirling Council area.

Responding to a question that Central Scotland requires the power which the Lines would carry and that provision of the Line would obviate the need for further upgrades in the Stirling area it was confirmed that information on the vast majority of the additional Upgrade Development was available.

In response to a question on whether the reason for the Line was to provide inter-connection to England the Committee was advised that this was not the case. Only 1 Plan existed for upgrading to England. The Line upgrade was to get imports back into Scotland because the demand for electricity will outstrip supply and the purpose of the Upgrade was to make up this shortfall.

It was acknowledged that the proposed Route will impact on Stirling area and confirmation was sought on whether the Developers had looked at Alternative Routes for the Line. Reference was made to the Sections contained within the Environmental Impact Assessment. Councillor John Paterson indicated that he was unaware of any consultation having taken place with Stirling Tourist Board concerning the proposed route of the Power Line.

Regarding a question on the need for Access Tracks during the Construction Phase of the Application the Committee was advised that a permanent road would be needed to access each tower. There was a difference between a route/track. If the Planning Authority did not wish permanent tracks then this could be included within any Consent so granted.

In response to a question from Councillor Greenhill on exactly what grounds the Council could object to the Application, and if any special grounds existed which the Council could consider, the Head of Planning and Regulation advised that basically objections were restricted to material considerations pertaining to Planning Applications. Information had been requested from the Health Board regarding health however the impact on the feeling of wellbeing (psychological) was hard to quantify. It is a difficult issue.

Councillor Greenhill also enquired if the Line was designed to accommodate the provision of Windfarms in the north and was the whole Line necessary? and sought advice on what grounds the Council could object to the Application. She also referred to the fact that the Submission had acknowledged that the area known as Yellow Craig Wood would be seriously affected by the proposal and requested that prior to consideration of the Application a visual representation be provided of what Yellow Craig Wood will look like.

In response to a question concerning two existing Pylons Lines in London (Nos 132 and 275) being moved underground it was confirmed that the undergrounding was part of the Olympic Project and as such the estimated cost of £200M for undergrounding the 6 Kilometre Line would not fall on electricity users.

Concerning undergrounding and the use of land following undergrounding work it was confirmed that the land could only be used on a limited basis i.e. for shallow planting since ploughing was prohibited. Additionally only a limited tree growth was permitted since tree roots could damage the line.

The Chair confirmed that the report to the Council on 15 December 2005 would fully reflect the concerns raised and therefor exclude any Recommendations. It would be for the Elected Members to vote on the Application. He hoped that this vote would not be subject to the imposition of Party Whips.

Regarding liaison with other Authorities affected by the Application the view was expressed that any discussions should include information sharing amongst Authorities. Thereafter a decision could be taken on a joint request for a Public Inquiry to hear the Application or for the Authorities to proceed independently. It was noted that to date no joint consultation had taken place. The hope was expressed that the other Authorities involved were indeed undertaking consultation.

Decision

The Chair thanked those present for their attendance; confirmed that the intention was for the Application to be considered by the Stirling Council at its meeting on 15 December 2005 and that prior to this date the Council would liaise with neighbouring Authorities affected to see if there were issues of a common nature. Thereafter the Council will decide to object or otherwise to the Application.

(Reference – Paragraphs EV36 and EV66 of 29 April and 26 August 2004 respectively; and EV112 of 25 August 2005; Report by Director of Environment Services of 5 October 2005 (submitted); Letter dated 4 October 2005 on a Joint Community Council response to the Power Line Proposals and Letter dated 13 October 2005 from Plean Community Council (tabled).

The Chair declared the Meeting closed at 12.45 p.m.

APPENDIX 1

PRESENTATIONS TO THE SPECIAL ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 17 OCTOBER 2005 ON BEAULY TO DENNY 400KV OVERHEAD LINE UPGRADE PROPOSALS

The Applicant

Dr Keith McLean gave a Presentation on behalf of the Developers, Scottish and Southern Energy and Scottish Power a copy of which is Appended as Appendix 2 to this Minute.

The Presentation summarised the GB Transmission Structure, which was operated by the National Grid. Two Companies owned the Scottish Networks. All Networks businesses were regulated as Monopolies and operated as Licence Agents of the Government. There were significant restrictions imposed as to what these types of Companies could do compared to a normal commercial operation. The Companies had to ensure the need to provide electricity capacity for users. Investment was not an optional activity.

Consent was required to enable Transmission Development. One-third of a Billion £s would be spent on the project. Transmission Companies invested and received a fixed percentage return. All charges had to be recovered via consumers.

A Summary of the Timeline of the Consents process was outlined. The more discussion that took place on projects and objections, the longer it took to complete the work.

In respect of the Key Issues identified it was indicated that many changes had been made to the routing of the Line to reflect, where possible, the changes requested. Where it had not been possible for the Power Companies to adopt the suggestions made, the Companies had had to justify their reasons for not doing so.

The requirement for the Development was as set out in the Government's Energy White Paper Targets (2020) (15 – 25 MtC reduction). The Companies were acting as Licence Agents of the Government – the Government had set energy efficiency levels re climate change and the need to decrease carbon emissions.

The need for Renewable Energy was driving future changes. The new Beauly to Denny Transmission formed a part of this change with a move away from large central generation to multiplicity of small-distributed generators. The Line will provide one-third capacity of future requirements.

The background Information provided on Energy Issues highlighted the reduced security of fuel supplies. The U.K. would become a net importer of oil and gas. In the future Scotland would become an importer of Gas and also an importer of Oil.

The current Trajectory was that production of electricity in Scotland would decrease. There was a gap between production and consumption.

The National Grid operated the Grid. The National Grid wished generation where Customers were located and where there is spare transmission capacity. There was a disincentive to invest in traditional means of power production and to wrongly locate new generation.

The reasons for Transmission Upgrade were emphasised. The aim was to provide power where it was needed i.e. the Central Belt.

Referring to Undergrounding it was indicated that the Companies were not averse to putting Lines underground. However as voltage increased in the Lines the cost/environment impact of undergrounding increased. At 400kV undergrounding would only be considered where an overhead alternative was not feasible.

Of 100,000 kV Lines across Europe less than 1% of these were underground – additionally undergrounding moved the visual problem at either end of the Line. Reference was made to a published Independent Report by Jacobs Baktie with a Summary of Conclusions. Lots of information was available on Undergrounding and it was important to look at all of it.

Reference was made to the Environmental Statement referred to in Chapter 32 of the Documents. This was a summary of what the Developers believed to be the current situation.

Electric and Magnetic Fields – Views differed on this and the Health Protection Agency had looked at all inputs. The Developers had shown compliance with the summary of collected evidence.

The Developers were complying with Government Guidelines. If new Guidelines were developed then the Developers will ensure that their Transmission Lines comply with these.

It was acknowledged that communities would not volunteer for Power Lines. The most significant visual impact would be the Pylons. Visual impact had been a key factor in re-routing and micro-routing.

The new proposals identified 10 properties running close to the Line as opposed to 100 properties identified in the old Line Proposals. The Companies were working to reduce (i) the proximity of the Line to these homes and (ii) the visual impact.

The Developers had looked at the aspirations of Stirling and where possible had mitigated the environmental impact. There was a need to Transmission upgrades to support Renewable Energy Development. As much consultation as possible had been undertaken. It was acknowledged that not everyone's views could be catered for. It was a difficult balancing act ultimately the Council, as Planning Authority, had to make a decision, the responsibility lay with Stirling Council and others to judge the proposals.

The Objectors

Mr Pearson speaking on behalf of the Objectors provided a background to the opposition to the proposals and expressed the hope that this Submission would be the start of an ongoing dialogue on the issues. There was a need for a Line but the Line would only meet one-third of electricity requirements. Expert advice was that in the future 4 – 5 Lines would need to be upgraded.

In terms of the expense for Undergrounding the cost had been quoted as £12M per mile in 2004. This sum had been revised to £6M and information now available suggested that this could be reduced further.

Mr Pearson referred to his professional background and indicated that there was a requirement for the planning /development process of the Application to be addressed. Scottish and Southern Energy was a Private, not a Public Company, and there were issues around this. The Company had not taken due recognition of the public's response to the proposals. The Company had made it as difficult as possible for consultation to take place and the Presentation given was a partial one, done by a Private Company.

He indicated that a Statutory Environmental Assessment should be carried out and a Government QC appointed to look into this. Stirling Council should also investigate the need for 3 – 5 more Lines.

Reference was made to the Consultation Document dated January 2004 by Gillespies. In relation to the Report's conclusions that the eastern route (on balance) was favoured over the western route no account had been taken of the new Villages. Mr Pearson asked for a full investigation of the western route to be carried out.

The Committee was advised that the Objectors had had only 10 days in which to look at the Documents and despite the fact that the Objectors had paid over £300 to access the information had not had sight of two pieces of crucial information i.e.

The Addendum identifying the location of the Pylons;

The Confidential Annex to the above decision; alternative east/western routes; issues re Wallace Monument and undergrounding.

The Developers were asked to make the above information available since without the Pylon Location a Visual Impact Assessment could not be carried out. It was difficult to see how a conclusion regarding the Wallace Monument could be reached. The Council was also asked to request this information.

Referring to the fact that some Occupiers of property affected by the proposals had private water supplies he indicated that it was difficult to assess the environmental impact of the Pylons on said water supplies without knowing the location of the Pylons.

An Outline Application had been submitted by the Developers; not a Detailed one. Without a full Application it was impossible to identify the Pylons or gauge the environmental impact. If the Council did not object to the Application then it would go ahead.

Mr Pearson highlighted the requirement for a second round of public consultation meetings and requested that should the Power Companies not undertake this consultation then the Council do it.

The Objectors had support from all Political Parties on the grounds of health issues. Local MSPs had also asked for a Public Inquiry. 2000 Letters of Objection to the proposals had been submitted. There were so many objections to the Line that the Council could not afford to ignore them.

Ms Baker indicated that her role in the Presentation by the Objections was to outline issues regarding tourism, the economy, recreation and landscape and how these may all be seriously affected in the Stirling area if the Power Line goes ahead as proposed.

Photographs of the area, which illustrated the points made accompanied this Presentation viz:-

The Ochil Hills, and in particular their very steep, south-facing slopes at the western end of the range, are a hugely important element of iconic views of and from Stirling Castle and the Wallace Monument. The Ochils contrast in a striking and very attractive way with the flat Carse land. The Carse is clearly man-made – it is a very inhabited landscape, with quite a lot of industrial features. The particular attributes that make the Hills so contrasting and so special are that they are beautiful, natural, “wild” and to all extents and purposes, unspoilt.

The aspect that the southern slopes of the Hills present, whether rocky or wooded, seen from a distance or in more intimate views from historic sites and places of deep importance to the people of Stirling, contributes an unmeasurable but significant part of the ambience of Stirling.

The ambience is a crucial ingredient in Stirling’s success in attracting tourists – worth some £250M to the local economy – and businesses to the area. The Council’s own website cites “beautiful scenery” as one of the key attractions the City has to offer to inward investors. It would seem potentially highly undesirable for the City’s economy if the Council were to allow a key element of its beautiful scenery to be badly damaged, as it would be if Scottish and Southern Energy’s proposals were allowed to go ahead.

It is not only the 65 metre high Pylons that SSE want to have marching down the slope of the Ochils, just where they contribute most to the views (and 65m is just about the height of the Wallace Monument). They would also require a swathe 80m wide to be cut through the beautiful Yellowcraigs Wood – privately owned, but dedicated, enhanced and managed as Community Woodland – right in the most visible part of the view.

In order to carry out the works, SSE want to put in a new “Access Track” right across Sheriffmuir, and down that some slope. This Access Track would be quite a substantial road: 4 metres wide, plus passing places; capable of carrying 100 tonne cranes and other heavy vehicles. Because it is such a steep slope, the road, or track, will have to zigzag across the slope and will create an even worse scar on the view.

The wee hill that stands at this end of the Ochils (Dumyat) (possibly the best small Hill in Scotland) is a very special Hill, mentioned in all sorts of Guide Books. The Hill is highly accessible, provides wonderful panoramic views from the top and 2M people lie within an hour’s drive of it. The main point of access is from the Sheriffmuir side, and from there you can walk to the top and back in an hour and a quarter.

Unlike the big Hills further north, Dumyat is very easily accessed and you don’t have to be that fit to get up it. It is by far the most visited part of the Ochils range, with 36,000 visitors a year using it for outdoors recreation, people from all ages and social groups, from all across the Central belt, other parts of Great Britain and even a significant number of foreign tourists. It is a wonderful and really important resource for this area, and for many miles around.

But because it is only wee, the intrusion of the proposed Pylons and the associated construction works would be far worse here than further up the Line, in the bigger and larger scale landscapes.

There is also the Cockburn Reservoir, mainly accessed from the Bridge of Allan side, and another great source in constant use by walkers and fishermen. The new Line and construction works would also greatly affect users of the Reservoir.

Even more people use the tiny road that winds across Sheriffmuir as a scenic drive. If huge Pylons are erected along this road, along with 9km of heavy duty "access track", quarries for road stone, and construction sites round each Pylon, the charm of what has been described as "one of the prettiest roads in the district and the surrounding area" would be ruined.

It looks as though the construction work would go on for up to 4 years. During that time, the area would be largely lost to recreation and tourism, and the more distant views of the Hills would be severely blighted. Even after mitigating works, significant visual damage would last for generations.

Of course the charm of this area is already somewhat compromised by the existing 50 year old, 132 kV power line – but these had at least weathered in over the years and some of the Pylons were small enough to be "lost" against the backdrop of Hills and Wood. The new Pylons are a staggering 2.5 times the size of the old ones and will all stand out very starkly against the sky and be very intrusive.

The Committee was reminded that for decades the whole area had been designated an Area of Great Landscape Value. It merits the greatest care in its preservation and enhancement. In England, a Power Company had recently been allowed by Ofgem to spend Millions of £s getting rid of overhead 132kV Power Lines where they cross the equivalent Areas of outstanding Natural Beauty, and putting them underground. This was a stark contrast with the SSE's proposals.

The Committee was also reminded of its duty to stand against the proposals, protect the environment and landscape of the area, the recreational opportunities they offer to Constituents and the hundred and thousands of other people, and their contribution to the economic health of the Stirling economy.

Mr Paterson in his Presentation raised issues concerning the health impact of the proposed Beaully to Denny Line viz:-

There is now overwhelming evidence that electric and magnetic fields (EMFs) such as those found near high voltage Power Lines are a significant risk factor for a wide range of serious illnesses.

More is known about EMF health impacts than is known about passive smoking.

In June 2005 the Draper Report, an UK Government funded Study conducted by the Oxford Childhood Research Group was published.

It studied 30 thousand children with cancer over a 33-year period and investigated whether proximity to home address at birth to the nearest high voltage Power Line was associated with increased risk of childhood cancer.

The results showed that children who lived within 200 metres of high voltage Power Lines were nearly twice as likely to have childhood leukaemia than those who lived greater than 600 metres from the Lines. A slightly increased risk of leukaemia was observed for those children living between 200m and 600m from the Lines. No excess risk was found for other childhood cancers.

The following conclusions were drawn by the Authors:-

There is an association between childhood leukaemia and proximity to home address at birth, to high voltage Power Lines.

The most obvious explanation for the association with distance from a Line is that it is indeed a consequence of exposure to magnetic fields.

There is no obvious source of bias in the choice of cases or controls.

Population mixing (which has been associated with childhood leukaemia) and socio-economic status were ruled out as possible confounders.

Previous pooled international Studies showed a similar doubling of childhood leukaemia for children living in proximity to Power Lines.

The Authors also said the relation might be due to chance or confounding. This is true, in the same way that if someone smoked heavily for 20 years and then developed lung cancer, it may be due to chance and nothing to do with the cigarettes.

It is now beyond all reasonable doubt that living close to high voltage Power Lines is a significant risk factor for childhood leukaemia on a par with the increased risk of lung cancer associated with passive smoking.

More focussed studies, in Germany, looking at night time exposure to EMFs showed a five-fold increase in childhood leukaemia.

One of my colleagues has spoken with Dr. Gerald Draper and he told her that he would not live near high voltage Power Lines nor would he have his family doing so.

Mr Paterson had spoken with of the other Authors of the Study, Dr. John Swanson who is an employee of National Grid Transco. He was keen to play down the significance of the results but is on record as saying that consideration should be given to the routing of the new of new HV Power Lines near dwellings. He also told me "no one in their right mind would want to live near them".

A large number of people have lost their minds doing just that.

At least twelve Epidemiological Studies show increased risk of depression and suicide from magnetic fields. Six of these concerned residential exposure to high voltage Power Lines.

A study in Finland looked at depression in 12,000 same sex twins. This found that the risk of severe depression was nearly five times greater, for those living within 100 metres of an HV Power Line, than in those living more than 500 metres away.

Professor Denis Henshaw of Bristol University estimates that as many as 9000 cases of mild depression and 60 suicides may be attributable to exposure to power line EMFs annually in the UK.

The Californian Health Department EMF Report of 2002 produced substantial evidence of increased risk of adult brain cancer, adult leukaemia, miscarriage and a type of motor neurone disease associated with magnetic field exposures.

All of the above wide range of adverse health outcomes could be explained by the disruption of the night time production of the brain hormone melatonin. Melatonin is a powerful antioxidant and free radical scavenger known to act as a natural anti-cancer agent. Reduced levels of melatonin are associated with depression and are also likely to have a bearing on miscarriage. There is now a Body of Studies showing that long term exposure to very low level magnetic fields are capable of significant disruption of nocturnal melatonin.

There is also evidence for a number of other casual mechanisms.

In the Environmental Statement the Power Companies state their policy in planning the project was to follow Government Guidelines. However, these Guidelines, which refer to public exposure to magnetic fields are meaningless and provide no protection whatever to the public. They are 250 times higher than the level at which a doubled risk of childhood leukaemia is internationally acknowledged. It was in recognition of this discrepancy that in March 2004, the NRPB advised Ministers to take the issue of precaution seriously. Accordingly the Public Health Minister, Melanie Johnson MP, has set up a Group: The Stakeholder Advisory Group for EMF (SAGE). The remit of the Group is "to explore precautionary approaches to limit exposure to electric and magnetic fields lower than the levels in the NRPB Guidelines". The issue of sighting Power Lines near houses is one of the issues receiving urgent attention. New Guidelines are likely to be produced early next year.

Professor Henshaw, a Member of SAGE, in a recent letter to The Scottish Parliament's Petitions Committee, said, "I urge the Scottish Parliament to consider immediate strict precaution against the sighting of Power Lines near houses or the converse. I would remind the Parliament that we are well behind some other countries in this regard." In 1996 Sweden introduced an exposure limit 500 times lower than the UK's current Guidelines, as did three Italian Regions in 2000. Switzerland introduced a limit 250 times lower than ours in 1999.

At SSEs recent AGM Dr. McLean confirmed health had not been a consideration in the routing of the Line. Indeed the Line is now closer to dwellings to the east of Stirling than in the original proposal. 65% of the Line may have been revised, but not in the interests of Stirling residents.

The Power Companies have chosen to ignore the now overwhelming evidence of wide ranging health impacts.

They have ignored thousands of letters which cited health impacts as the major concern.

They have ignored the very strong Cross Party support that we have had from our MSPs who have called for a moratorium on the construction of new HV Power Lines near dwellings.

They have ignored the fact that major Insurance Companies now regard Power Line EMFs as a serious threat.

They have quoted out of date information and very selectively from Studies and individuals and have introduced misleading information. There are examples of spin on every page.

For example, on Pages 7 and 10 of Chapter 32 the Power Line Companies assert the UK Study published in 1999 found no evidence that exposure to magnetic fields associated with proximity to Power Lines in the UK increases risks for childhood cancer. This is not true. There was evidence, that was thought not to be statistically significant at the time. Not mentioned by the Power Companies, is that the Authors of that Study published a correction in the Lancet in 2000 saying that when their results were included in the pooled analysis an association was apparent.

This Study was referred to in the Draper report, "a previous UK Study showed a relative risk of 1.42 for acute lymphocytic leukaemia within 400m of 275 and 400kV lines".

On the second last page of Chapter 32 the Power Companies concede that electronic equipment such as computers are adversely affected by low level magnetic fields. The brain is a particularly sensitive piece of electronic equipment

that has a direct or indirect control of nearly all body systems. It therefore comes as no surprise that “interference” with it by low level magnetic fields is going to result in adverse health effects.

The Precautionary Principle is not even mentioned. This Principle allows big Companies to take precautions without admitting there is a problem with their product and Sir William Stewart, of the HPA, recently said that with regard to new Power Lines, the principle should be followed.

A full and proper Risk Assessment needs to be done. Looking at, for example, how many children might die, how many serious adult conditions might result and doing a full Cost Benefit Analysis for the whole route and comparing it to other routes and options.

We cannot play down the long-term consequences of altering the environment of those communities affected by the proposed Pylons. Stress levels are already apparent.

Factors, which considerably alter our quality of life and fall outside our ability to control, will invariably impact on our mental wellbeing. This in turn has extraordinary social and financial costs.

Communities are aware that it is not just the magnetic field that may pose them a danger. It is known that the electric field produces so-called corona ions and that these particles attach to pollutants to create cancer-inducing particles. These particles can be carried kilometres downwind of HV power lines. The proposed new Power Line passes very close to thousands of people living to the east of Stirling.

Mr Paterson referred the environment and the wellbeing of citizens as priceless and that underground had been done in Yorkshire with good effect. He indicated that the cost had been much less than the Public Companies had indicated. He contended that difficulties of undergrounding had been exaggerated; there were health benefits from undergrounding and the issues raised needed a full Public Inquiry.

Kenny Logan, on behalf of the Objectors, thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak, concurred with the sentiments of the previous Speakers concerning Health and the importance of Tourism for the area, reminded them of Stirling area’s past history, the need to move forward and referred to Stirling Town’s recent elevation to a City. He reiterated the need for a Public Inquiry to take place on the Power Lines and hoped that the council made the right decision to prevent the Pylons ripping up the countryside.

Dr McLean advised that information on the indicative position of the Pylons was available. The Confidential Annexes did not bear the question of Undergrounding – only ecology. In terms of the concerns raised re access to the Confidential Annexes it was the Scottish Executive who decides who sees what.

The work on the access routes was of a temporary nature – period of months rather than years.

The Chair requested that information on the location of the Pylons be available for a meeting scheduled for November 2005 with two Councils to go over the information.

It was confirmed that the Objectors could obtain a copy of the Pylon Application. Clarification was sought on why any of the information concerning the Application had been kept confidential since this only raised suspicion and the Chair urged that all Confidential items pertaining to it be made available to the public.

The Committee was advised that the location of the Pylons was indicative only and there was an option to change them. The Application contained limits of deviation and that the freedom was there to ensure that the best possible route was found. This was a point of sensitivity – the Council could provide consent to the Application subject to a Condition that further information. Was provided.

The opinion was given that SAGE's position had moved on since the time that the Developers had provided them with information.

Referring to a 300-400 metres deviation it was pointed out that with Outline permission the Developers would be permission to do what was in their best interests. Stirling Council must identify all the details in the Application so that in the event of the Developers doing deviations the Council can hold them accountable. The opinion was given that the Developers provided no guarantee that the work would be done with sensitivity.

It was acknowledged that it would be easier if the Developers had had a fixed position. The Appendices provided the Developers with flexibility to find the optimum position with the corridor already assessed. It was up to the Council to impose conditions to limit movement or set down a process.

In response to a statement that across Europe a large proportion of electric cabling was underground, the Committee was advised that this was not the case.