

**Beauly-Denny
Landscape Group**
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Proposed Beauly-Denny 400kV Transmission Line



Scottish Wild Land Group



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The National Trust
for Scotland



Parliamentary Briefing

The Beauly to Denny power line will cause unacceptable damage to Scotland's landscapes and is unnecessary to meet carbon dioxide reduction targets.

This power line is an expensive project that will shape the landscape for decades to come. We must be completely sure that it is the best option for Scotland, when assessed against alternatives.

The Report of the Public Inquiry into this power line proposal is now with Scottish Ministers for decision. A key message for the Ministers is to look beyond the detail of the route of this proposal and seriously consider the strategic alternatives.

The Government received over 17,000 objections to this project when first proposed, and the final decision should surely reflect the public interest in this, and not just special pleading from the electricity generating industry.

Main points for consideration :

How much onshore wind power is realistically expected to connect from north of Inverness?

Management of the existing grid can be modified to accommodate more renewables capacity than was stated in the proposal for the power line – this has been publicly accepted by the industry in evidence to the Scottish Parliament (EE&T Committee 11.02.09). The present system can cope with about 2300MW capacity north of Inverness – there is currently between 1000 and 1500MW of onshore wind in the planning system and 500MW of hydro. The probability of some planning refusals along with the intermittency of wind means that there is no urgent technical need.

Examination of the “Windfarm Footprint Map” produced by Scottish Natural Heritage (www.snh.gov.uk/strategy/renewable/sr-rt01.asp) demonstrates that a pattern of wind farm development is emerging, lying mainly toward the east of the country. Developments in the south-west highlands do not need to connect to the Beauly to Denny route. The physical need for any increased capacity would therefore seem to lie along a reinforced East Coast Route, and not over the mountains where there is little in the way of new renewables development planned.

Where in the north and west of Scotland are future power sources likely to be located?

The practical deployment of wave and tidal power is so far in the future that Beaully-Denny line is not currently essential for their development.

When marine renewables become a significant power source in the north, then High Voltage Direct Current subsea cables will be the most likely preferred means of transmitting power south to the mainland. Surely, it is better to extend such direct subsea cabling to centres of demand in the south, rather than take this power over the Scottish mountains?

There is evidence that the electricity regulator, Ofgem, when assessing this proposal overestimated the amount of payment due to generators if they are constrained by lack of transmission capacity. The economic justification for this power line is therefore flawed. Moreover, Ofgem has stated that they are reviewing the way in which transmission is “booked” and paid for – both of which are likely to undermine the case even more. If, however, more transmission capacity is required, incremental upgrading of the East Coast Route would be an economical way providing capacity as and when it is actually justified, without providing over-capacity and the subsequent cost to the consumer.

In Conclusion

The character of the Highland landscape has been gradually eroded over the last century through development of conifer plantations, bulldozed tracks, telecom masts and the like. It is not a limitless scenic resource that can be shaved away time and again to satisfy short-term commercial demands.

Transmission of power is important for Scotland, and there are renewable electricity generating targets to be met. However, the impact of new transmission lines through Scotland’s most scenic areas has been demonstrated to be of major concern to many thousands of people.

If the Scottish Government rejects the Beaully to Denny power line then they can be reassured that alternatives exist, they are not burdening consumers with excessive transmission charges at a time when budgets are tight, and that carbon dioxide reduction targets will not be affected by this rejection of a costly and unwanted power line through some of Scotland’s finest landscapes.

The Beaully to Denny line is a 1950s solution when we need 21st century vision. We trust the Scottish Government will give the needed leadership.

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Further information about the Inquiry : www.beaullydenny.co.uk

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