

# Upper Liddesdale & Hermitage Community Council

S P Energy Networks

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Sir

## **Response to SPEN on the proposed cross-border transmission link**

We note that since the first round of consultations, the preferred corridor in which the transmission line will be placed is now shifted to the East of Newcastleton, rather than to the West as originally set out. This will now bring it further within our community with additional impacts. In consequence, SPEN were persuaded to put on a presentation at Hermitage Hall on the 24th of April.

We note that in general, the rural and scenic nature of this landscape is particularly valued by the community and this is reflected in our Place Plan, where it is regarded as the primary asset of our natural capital. Any significant alteration of the landscape by energy infrastructure would be regarded as a significant degradation of the natural capital of the area.

We note that the new corridor potentially moves the transmission line further away from Hermitage Castle, the finest example of a medieval castle in Scotland, but it would still be only 2-3 kilometres away and it is felt that this is still too close to the castle as it will ruin the isolated and rural setting for this scheduled ancient monument. It should be noted that proposed wind farms in the area have been heavily criticised, objected to by landscape architects and turned down by Scottish Borders Council planning committee due to the sensitivity of this landscape to large energy infrastructures.

We note that another scheduled ancient monument, the megalithic stone circle Nine Stanes Rig, will be similarly impacted by the transmission line only about 1 km away.

We note that the so-called Holdford Rules, "Guidelines for the Routing of New Transmission Lines", states that (Rule one) wherever possible, areas of high amenity value should be avoided altogether. Areas of 'high amenity value' include scheduled ancient monuments. Since these landscapes do not currently have transmission lines or any energy infrastructure in the landscape, then the Rules are clear that the area should be avoided "altogether".

We note that in bringing the preferred corridor further East, the line would now potentially fly overhead the settlement of Steele Road, and the properties Steele Road End, Hewisbridge End, Mountain View, Dinlabyre, Dinlabyre Cottages, Boghall, Kirndeane and Florida.

In view of the effects on the landscape for historic sites and the proximity to a settlement, plus a number of properties, we urge that the line be undergrounded this along this section.

At the presentation at Hermitage Hall on the 24th of April, Euan Borthwick stated that undergrounding the line would cost "... nine or ten times as much as overgrounding" and so was to be discounted on a matter of cost. However, Mr Borthwick seemed to be ignorant of the report, "Network Topology Assessment Report" (March 2024) by DNV which was commissioned by NESO and is available on their website. This report

compared the increased costs of undergrounding a line to the landscape impact overgrounding a line would have. Their estimate was that a whole-of-life cost for undergrounding a line would be 4.7 times that of overgrounding.

In particular however, the report notes that, “*Composite overhead circuits with short sections of underground cable can mitigate some of the visual impact of an overhead circuit, at a **marginally higher cost***.” (Our emphasis). We would suggest then that there would not be a significantly increased cost to the whole project in undergrounding the line through (say) the 10km from the proposed Teviot sub-station to the Northern edge of Newcastleton forest.

Possible impact of the pylons on the springs for private water supplies is also a big concern and water springs need to be accurately mapped. Not all spring sources are known and when surveying the area for pylon positions, SPEN should endeavour to determine the sources of springs for potentially affected properties.

Yours sincerely,

Geoffrey Kolbe (Chairman).