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Our ref: SSE transmission consultation

Your ref:

Date: 8 October 2010

Dear Mr Anderson,

The future of electricity transmission in the north of Scotland

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation. I offer apologies for the late submission of our comments and hope they may still be able to be considered.

The Aberdeen City and Shire Strategic Development Planning Authority (SDPA) has responsibility for statutory strategic planning matters that contribute to national spatial planning priorities and / or cross boundary issues affecting Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council.

The Aberdeen City and Shire Structure Plan (2009) has targets related to climate change and sustainable development and takes a positive, promotional approach to renewable energy production and network enhancement. In terms of proposals, the upgrade of the east coast electricity grid to 400kV is shown in the key diagram and officers have engaged with SSE on the pre-application stages of this development in an attempt to facilitate delivery of this vital project.

Reflecting National Planning Framework 2, the structure plan also recognises the potential for a subsea energy network, including, but not limited to the Peterhead to Hawthorn Pit link.

In terms of the current consultation, our primary area of interest is in the “conditions for network connections” as these are often cited as a constraint to the delivery of proposals. We see a number of areas where practices may be improved, these are not solely SSE’s responsibility, but involve ourselves as the SDPA, the local planning authorities, developers and agents.

Early engagement

There needs to be greater certainty around key infrastructure projects, their intended timescales, benefits and impacts. This information would enable planning authorities to include such projects in their development plans where appropriate and consider land use

and other aspects of these proposals. Early identification would also give greater certainty to renewable and other scheme developers and the communities potentially affected.

Small and large proposals

There needs to be a more strategic approach to plan network capacity for particular areas and a balanced approach between large and small-scale developments. The obligation to make a connection offer to projects under 10MW should remain, but not to the detriment of major schemes.

Wider policy objectives

The decarbonisation of electricity must be a central policy goal and the supply network must be managed to facilitate this. In this respect, upgrading the east coast transmission network must be seen as a top priority, along with the Peterhead to Hawthorn Pit subsea link.

It is also critical that process improvements are put in place that reduce the delay currently being experienced by renewable energy schemes once they achieve planning permission. Minimising the consented output unable to connect to the grid could be an important performance measure. In this regard, the capacity of the grid to accommodate additional renewable energy generation by area should be in the public domain to inform implementation and discussions and actions.

The SDPA would welcome continued engagement to facilitate the delivery of shared objectives over the months and years ahead.

Yours sincerely,

David Jennings
Strategic Development Plan Manager