

Southwest Scotland
Blackcraig and Margree Windfarms – 132kV Grid Connection
8 March 2016 – Carsphairn Community Hall

In attendance Alan Rumble - Balmaclellan Community Council
Alison Chapman - Balmaclellan Community Council
William Adam - Dalry Community Council
Moira Jones - Dalry Community Council
Craig Millar - New Galloway Community Council
Sylvia Sinclair - Carsphairn Community Council
Robert Duncan - Dumfries and Galloway Council
Les Campbell - IEC
Kenny Hope - SPEN
Denis O’Kane - SPEN
Karen MacGregor - SPEN
Colin Wylie - SPEN

Apologies

None received

Welcome and Introduction

CW thanked everyone for their attendance and round the table introductions were made. CW provided an overview of the responsibilities and role of SP Energy Networks in terms of the wider Transmission Network as the licensed Transmission Owner for Central and Southern Scotland. CW explained that all Projects are assessed for Community Impact and the formation of a Community Liaison Group in certain circumstances provides a useful framework for sharing information with Community Representatives.

Project Presentation

D’oK delivered a presentation outlining the specifics of the Blackcraig and Margree Windfarm Grid Connections in relation to the various project elements and the transportation involved around the different stages of the project. (copy of presentation accompanies minutes).

During and after the presentation general discussion took place as follows -

MJ enquired if the timescales for carrying out the work would run consecutively – DoK confirmed that different stages of the work would be carried out during the same time periods as the project progressed.

SS asked if Blackcraig Windfarm had been consented – DoK and LC confirmed it had consent adding that SP Energy Networks were not involved in the construction of the windfarms.

SS asked how much taller the new transmission towers involved in the project would be – LC confirmed that the existing towers were around 24/25 metres with the new towers being an average of 30 metres in height.

AC enquired regarding the intention for the existing overhead line towards Meiklehill (New Cumnock substation) – LC confirmed that the new line would allow the existing N Route to be dismantled.

AR made mention of the new style of pylon – LC explained that use of the new style of towers has only recently been tested by National Grid and as this project had been ongoing for several years they had not featured as a consideration.

AR asked if the wood pole overhead lines involved design considerations for the wingspan of birds. LC responded explaining that they were designed to meet electrical specifications and that birds do at times cause outages. DoK explained that birds featured as part of the environmental assessments of the project and bird diverters are proposed where required.

RD stated that he had been told by the Blackcraig Windfarm Developer that there would be another substation on site – LC confirmed that was correct, a collector substation would be constructed at the Windfarm which the connection would connect into.

AC enquired regarding the tree felling requirements – LC advised that a 25 metre corridor on either side of the line would be necessary to avoid the potential of falling trees hitting the line.

AC and AR asked that if Margree Windfarm was refused would the remaining connection still take place or the requirements change – LC confirmed the Blackcraig connection would still go ahead as there is a contract in place to provide the connection, however if Margree Windfarm is not built, the overall construction requirements would be revisited.

AC asked if consent has been granted for a substation at Margree Windfarm – DoK confirmed consent is in place.

AR and WA asked what the implications would be if the construction of a windfarm does not happen – KMcG explained that the requirements and design would be revisited in such circumstances – DoK added that the consented works are based on connections we are obliged to deliver at present, however explained that if major changes occur, we would consider the consent requirements..

AC made mention of the Loch Urr Connection Project – DoK updated all present that the Loch Urr connection has been formally withdrawn.

AC asked that if other windfarms apply for connection would the route be changed – DoK explained that this would not be the case as the currently consented scheme has been developed to meet requirements of these specific developments, each with a connection date and the Blackcraig / Margree connections would proceed, seeking to meet these dates.

WA enquired as to what would happen with the planned substation at Margree Windfarm if the windfarm was withdrawn - LC advised that the substation is currently being progressed to construction to complete the connection and should the context change, this can be reassessed.

MJ – AR and SS asked about transport route arrangements – DoK explained that there was a wide window for delivery and that materials/equipment would not all be coming at one time. DoK added that routes would be coordinated with the Roads Authority and that Forestry Roads would be used where possible when accessing quarries.

MJ sought clarification about the transport arrangements for the lower end of the project – DoK confirmed that the Transport Plans were still under consideration at this stage.

SS asked if there was an access track constructed the entire length of the route – LC responded that there would not be one continual access track, that access tracks at various points would be needed which would provide access to the required stretches. LC added that approximately 64 km of access tracks would be constructed, often coming from forestry tracks and that these would all be removed. CM sought confirmation that all the tracks would be removed and that schools would be considered when planning deliveries – LC confirmed this to be the case and that the areas would be reinstated. DoK advised that Traffic Management Plan would seek to take peak times on road network into consideration. SS enquired as to the use of any core paths – LC advised that there were no plans to use the core paths.

SS asked what the levels of road movements would be throughout the project – LC explained that they are currently trying to forecast these movements with DoK adding that the numbers will be submitted to the Council for approval. LC explained that at certain stages of the project when different parts are under construction at the same time, the transport and traffic will see an increase.

AR enquired as to where the steel for the transmission towers would be produced – LC responded explaining that the steel was fabricated at a company in Haddington near Edinburgh, however he did not know the source.

Distribution Update

KH provided an update regarding local distribution work in the general area. KH explained that significant work at Carsphairn will be undertaken in the near future to improve the supply and reduce unplanned outages, however the work will involve a series of planned outages which on completion, will result in the majority of the local supply coming from 3 phase. SS responded that outages would need to be well planned – KH advised that he would speak with Carsphairn Community Council to establish the best approach and reduce inconvenience. AR added that on

completion of recent work at Dalry, the number of outages did not decrease – KH explained that there was another fault which when identified and remedied has made a significant difference. KH commented further that there was also work scheduled in Dalry which he would speak with the Community Council about.

Community Liaison

KMcG advised that SP Energy Networks are aware that construction projects can at times cause disruption to communities, however every effort would be made to minimise any impact. KMcG explained that the establishment of a Community Liaison Group provided a good forum for the two way flow of information and that further information about the project could be delivered in a way that best suited the Community Representatives and indeed the wider community members.

WA thereafter asked what measures are considered at the point where the overhead line crosses the skyline on the hill – DoK advised that the line would be undergrounded for this section. AR asked why the entire route not undergrounded – DoK explained that SP Energy Networks have requirements as the transmission license holder which is to provide an efficient, co-ordinated and economical transmission network, with due regard to environmental interests. The starting point for any connection will be an overhead line connection. LC explained that independent persons oversee various aspects of any project providing checks and measures that ensure all work is carried out in line with planning consents and permissions. LC added that IEC work closely with the delivery contractors long before work on the ground commences to ensure contractors have a full awareness of responsibilities and expectations.

With no other questions forth coming, CW explained that those present may want to speak with their respective Community Councils and discuss the merits of a Community Liaison Group. CW thereafter closed the meeting advising that the minutes and a copy of the presentation would be circulated in the near future.