

TEALING TO KINTORE UPGRADE PROJECT PUBLIC INQUIRY

DPEA REFERENCE TRL-120-1

COMMUNITY HEARING STATEMENT by MARSHALL BAILEY, Milton of Craigeassie House by Forfar, Angus considering the impacts of the proposed Tealing to Kintore OHL, particularly with reference to Milton of Craigeassie House and farm.

I'm **MARSHALL BAILEY**, a farmer and businessman. I have owned Craigeassie Farm since 2018. I grew up in very ordinary city surroundings in Birmingham and trained as a teacher. Throughout my life I have always had a passion for nature and the countryside.

A change of my 'life plan' took me to the Middle East, where I learned engineering and did well in business.

In 1996 I bought my first farm, a 2000 acre arable farm at Duddo in Northumberland. I learnt quickly that farming is a business for experts, balancing the need for commercial acumen with the responsibility of looking after the environment during the period of one's stewardship. I worked in business as well, and in 2018 I sold Duddo and bought Craigeassie.

I chose the farm after a long search because of its unique combination of prime agricultural quality and excellent amenity. It consists of high-quality arable land, with a large area in production, growing timber, specimen woodland, archaeological sites, river amenity, cattle production capacity, wildlife and landscape amenity, agricultural buildings and resources, cottages, residential property and formal gardens. It has been a high value investment which I wish to conserve.

Since acquisition the property has benefitted from significant investment with a view to preserving and enhance its many assets. I acquired it as a longterm investment, a place for retirement and enjoyment of my passion for the countryside, farming both quality cattle stock and productive arable land, and my acquired affection for the lovely Angus countryside.

It is proposed that the overhead line is installed near to the River South Esk running just north of Craigeassie house, and roughly parallel with the northern boundary of the farm. The pylons will of course be clearly visible and will dominate Craigeassie House, the farm buildings and the farm cottages. This kind of damage to business and residential amenity is hard to put into words, but easy to recognise when one sees it. It will occasion me a serious loss.

The proximity of the OHL to the river itself will not only damage residential and business amenity, but also value. It will place at risk and damage, not to say destroy, one of Craigeassie's

significant assets, the salmon fishing that goes with the farm and house. Priceless high value Salmon fishing in the South Esk is an important asset of the estate. Not only will its actual value be diminished, but the enjoyment of the fishing itself and the amenity value of the river in this location will be materially depreciated.

The river is an SAC (a European Site) for the protection of both for Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) and Freshwater Pearl Mussel (*Margaritifera margaritifera*). According to NatureScot, the latest assessments show the SAC as:

"Unfavourable recovering" for fish, while the incredibly delicate Freshwater Pearl Mussel habitat is rated *"Unfavourable declining"*.

It will be noted that not only will the amenity value be affected but also the capital value of the whole property. The farm has been formally valued by GFW, Valuers, to estimate the impact of the OHL on the capital value. A significant reduction is projected.

I understand that there is a political imperative for grid line reinforcement. I am not professionally qualified to enter the many controversies on the corridor and route choices for this line.

However, it does seem to me that clear alternatives are available to take North Sea generated power to market, and these must be much more fully explored before final decisions are taken. I don't believe that SSEN have done that. All indications are of undue haste.

Offshore connection to England and Wales is but one obvious alternative choice. So also is possible undergrounding of the line, which has proven to be perfectly feasible across Europe and in many parts of the UK. Aberdeenshire and Angus terrain would seem ideal for this purpose, as has already been shown with the natural gas pipelines.

The immense value of undergrounding is not only measured in money, but also in the way in which the public's acceptance of that solution assists the 'buy in' for a reduced carbon economy. SSEN need to move into the 21st century – their methodology is simply one of 'buy cheaper, build faster' and they seem to pay little regard to public responses and attitudes.

Net Zero may be a theoretical ambition, a glint in the eyes of speechwriters and politicians, but constructive progress towards actual carbon reduction across our economy is not. It's real, and it's needed, and in rural Scotland we do it every day in so many small ways, which all combine to make a difference. 6:58 am OHL would not be one of them. Many other things are possible with both the engineering skills and the financial resources available to SSEN in promoting this project.

It seems to me that far too little effort has been devoted to seeking consensus with the population, and explaining the project's purpose. At the same time, enormous effort and expense are devoted towards confrontation. This inquiry is a good example. What can we achieve ere that we could not have achieved with receptive dialogue and a better understanding of competing priorities.

The supposed advantages of an OHL have been over simplified to vanishing point by SSEN, while the complexity of multifaceted disadvantage, damage and harm to so many communities, farms, residences and to the hard working indigenous population have barely been understood.

To choose towers of this size, and to string them with massive cables so as to (in theory) one day carry power from an as-yet-unnamed source is, if I may say so, planning through the Looking Glass. To a businessman, used to scrutinising the bottom line, it makes little sense.

I won't take up the Inquiry's time with describing the landscape, visual and other effects on Craigeassie, but will leave that to the landscape architects. Language such as "*Significant adverse*" and "High Magnitude of effect" doesn't really do it justice, in my mind.

I have consciously striven to establish at Craigeassie House and Farm a place with exceptional productive value and high grade amenity. I have been fortunate to be able to earn the means to make that investment, and to enjoy it, in pursuit of the personal values I have espoused through my whole life. I have to say that the prospect of the imposition of the planned pylon line is more than distressing to me as I see my efforts being squandered.

I have learned in my 50+ years of business life that rushed and poorly considered decisions are rarely correct. This is a striking example. Consent and Planning Permission should be refused on the ground that the OHL's purpose is foggy and unclear, and the planning, corridor and route selection processes are simply ill defined and inadequately rationalised. Nobody in a serious way of business would make a decision in the way this one has been made.

I respectfully invite the Reporters to recommend refusal.

MGB

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