

Electricity Act 1989

Town & Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997

DPEA Code of Practice

Tealing to Kintore OHL Proposal TRL-120-1

CHS Statement: Need and Planning by John Houston

I am John Houston. I worked for 30 years in the Oil and Gas industry and for the final five5 years of my career as Finance and Commercial Director for a company that constructed and ran Onshore wind farms before moving into the offshore sector. I was part of the commercial bid team of a JV that was awarded a lease option in the leasing round announced in January 2022.

Expectation within the industry was that Scotwind round two would announce projects with total capacity of 14/15GW. The grid solution for that expected capacity was being developed prior to the announcement. The projects announced in the January 2022 Scotwind award are now expected to have a capacity of 31.4GW. The subsequent "Intog" award added a further 4.4GW. A total of 35.8GW, enough to power around 20m homes using the standard metric.

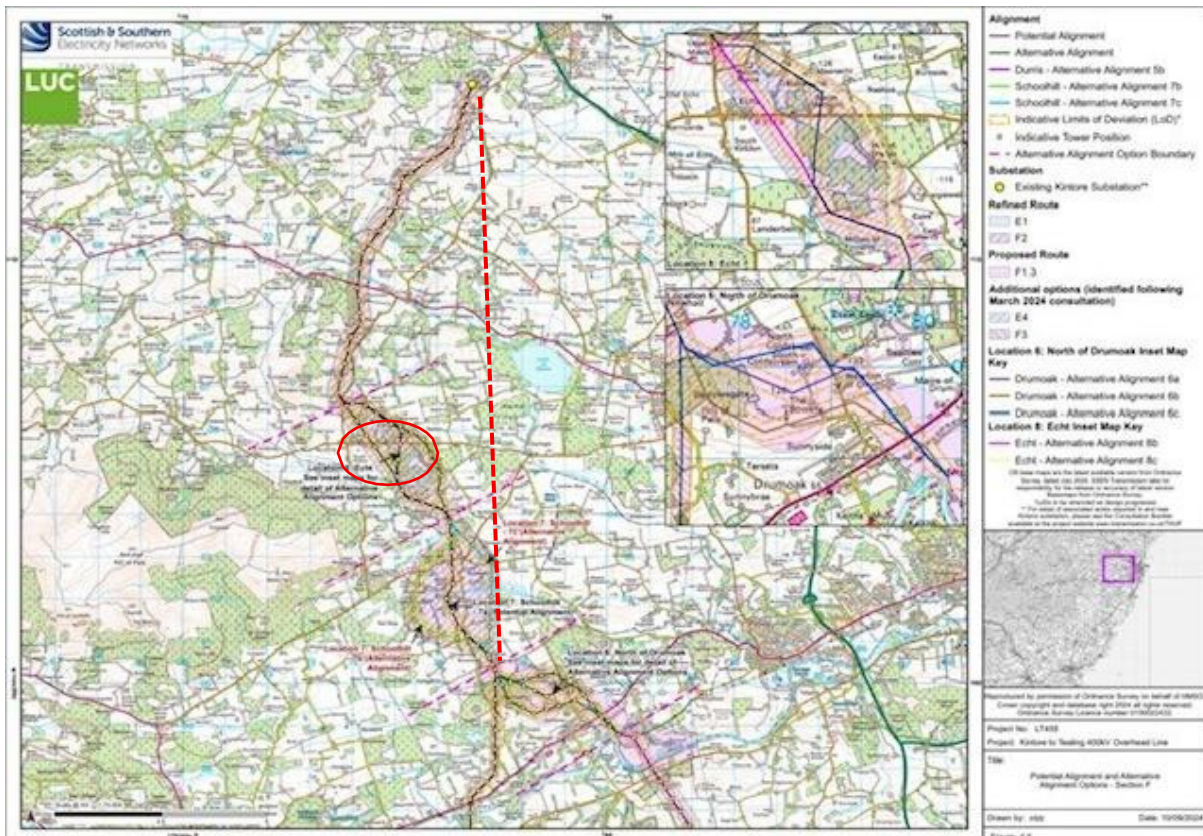
The grid manager I worked with described the reaction to the Scotwind award as being somewhere between shock and panic. It was completely unexpected and rendered much of the grid planning to that point either obsolete, irrelevant or inadequate. From the perspective of someone new to the sector it was bewildering to watch such an important project be managed so haphazardly. The disjointed and uncoordinated approach exhibited at that early stage continued and has led to a rushed, poorly managed, planning process.

The guideline that there should be a 2km community separation distance in Scotland mentioned in Gillespies report dated July 2014 appears not to exist (Page 3, section 2.1). The current pylon route also appears to ignore the Holford rules where pylon lines are intended to:

- "avoiding altogether, if possible, major areas of highest amenity value"
- "choose inconspicuous locations for angle towers, terminal towers and sealing end compounds"
- "utilise background and foreground features to reduce the apparent height and domination of towers from main viewpoints"
- "when a line needs to pass through a development area, route it so as to minimise as far as possible the effect on development"
- **"Avoid routing close to residential areas as far as possible on grounds of general amenity"**

I appreciate the Holford rules were devised to apply to Hydro electric transmission but the fact the power is being generated from a different source does not impact the principles of where pylon lines and towers should be sited?

The village of Echt will be partially encircled by the pylon route to the north, east and south east of the village as shown on the map below. The current estimate is that 12 towers will be visible particularly from the higher land to the north of the village close to the area of land currently set aside for housing development and subject to planning consent ref APP 2013/3472.



I asked several times during consultation sessions why the proposed route requires pylons to run so close to the village of Echt when there's a broadly depopulated area two miles wide between Echt and Garlogie. The pylon line could be routed through that gap disturbing far fewer residents or visitors to the villages (shown with a dashed red line on the map).

I didn't receive a convincing reply to my question. Among other things, soft ground, migratory geese and proximity to gas and oil pipelines were mentioned but the responses were not comprehensive or convincing. All of the issues mentioned could be resolved so I was forced to conclude that a "path of least resistance" had been chosen that was most acceptable to the major landowner in the area but ignored the rights of the residents of Echt and Dunecht, among others. It's important to be sure the chosen route is the correct one because the visual impact influences; current land and house prices, potential development in Echt & Dunecht area and the mental health of people who reside close the path.

I remain unconvinced that the planning process for the pylon route has been carried out effectively since it was obvious to me during my time within the industry that planning was rushed and disjointed. I constantly heard the phrase, "**nothing else matters, it has to be done because we in a climate emergency**". That simply reinforces the view that plans have been created to meet broad ambitions of political zealots rather than to create a comprehensive plan that minimises visual impact and maximise value for money from the investment.

Large infrastructure projects such as this must be planned well, not quickly.

There's no reason why this pylon line needs to disrupt the residents of Dunecht and Echt

specifically or Aberdeenshire, more widely, to the extent currently envisaged. It was obvious when I talked to the project team at the various meetings that none were familiar with the area or had “walked the route”.

John Houston

11 May 2026

The discussions I had with the team simply highlighted repeatedly that the project team have not had time to do the job properly.

We risk inflicting unnecessary damage on the landscape and the wellbeing of the residents of Aberdeenshire without effectively evaluating the alternatives to try to meet illogical, politically driven, targets.