

25th August 2024

Consultation on the proposed regulatory funding and approval framework for onshore transitional Centralised Strategic Network Plan 2 projects

I would be obliged if you would consider my response below.

Q3 - I strongly disagree with the "delivery" track categorisation for the Shetland to Coachford project, as I am of the opinion that there is insufficient justification for fast tracking this project. There are numerous uncertainties associated with it, not least that the first interconnector cable connection is in its infancy and has yet to prove itself.

The proposals for the 1.8 GW cable are based on assumptions that approval will be granted for three off-shore windfarms, which ignores the strong local opposition against these large scale renewable developments.

Environment/ Economic Implications

The areas earmarked for the windfarms will severely impact on the rich fishing grounds, where fishermen have earned a living for centuries. Fishing is a main contributor to Shetland's economy, and apart from the moral right to continue their livelihoods, there must also be an argument for indigenous rights.

Shetland is renowned worldwide for its wildlife and there is a high possibility that recent cetaceans' beachings have been the result of seismic surveying. In addition, investigations show that the electromagnetic field emitting from cables may be causing deformities and paralysis in crustaceans. Our prolific bird life will also be under serious threat from the turbine blades.

The nature and uniqueness of our islands attracts thousands of tourists, creating employment for a number of locals and making a large contribution to our economy.

National Planning Framework 4 states that one of the qualities of successful places is that it is "Sustainable": Supporting the efficient use of resources that will allow people to live, play work and stay in their area. The sustainability of our islands is being threatened by the further industrial sized energy developments proposed.

Reliability

Relying on interconnectors is a risky strategy.

Subsea cables can become damaged or develop technical faults, and any repairs required in the North Sea will be difficult (if not impossible), lengthy and costly.

We are living in turbulent times and there is also the risk of sabotage to cables as seen with Nordstrom 2.

Financial Implications

The capital cost of a second interconnector will be significant and put a further burden on consumers, who have recently been notified of large increases in energy charges.

Costly back-up generation is essential to maintain the stability of the electrical grid system. There are also transmission charges to be considered, along with the losses in transmission in the undersea cable and onward land connections.

Ofgem should be prioritising value for money for consumers and ensuring protection against power outages, rather than bowing to pressure from energy companies such as SSE, whose main concern is increasing shareholders wealth.

Yours sincerely,