

Developers 'absolutely appalled' as grid runs out of room for new projects

# The big squeeze

Developers planning projects in the north and west of Scotland could be forced to wait until 2007 to connect to the national grid if they do not already have a quote in hand from area operator Scottish and Southern Energy.

It is understood that the 1.3GW of capacity allotted to renewable projects in the region has already been exhausted and that while some quotes are still being issued the connection dates involved are in the long-term timeframe.

Others have not even been that lucky. At least one small consented project was left stranded without a grid connection last month while another larger scheme due to get the nod in the summer faces the same fate.

"What's going to happen when more consented projects can't get a connection?" asks a developer caught in the shortfall. Another says: "I'm absolutely appalled."

So uncertain is the route going forward that SSE is understood to have waived the customary 25% connection down-payment for those on the unofficial "reserve list" until more definite dates for new hook-ups can be provided.

Complicating the picture, only 700MW worth of projects with grid quotes are thought to have planning consents while the remaining 600MW on SSE's books have yet to make their way through the planning process.

One developer source says the situation has been evolving for a long while and that any project now caught without a grid quote should have known better. "All I've got to say to those complaining now is: Well, duh!" SSE plans to spend £200



Long-term relief: £200 million upgrade coming down the line for the Beauly-to-Stirling transmission link (above)

Photo: Scottish and Southern Energy

million to upgrade the Beauly-to-Stirling transmission line by 2007 but that schedule depends on rapid progress through the planning process, something few are counting on.

The company is expected to explore a number of other reinforcement projects that will free up space on the system ahead of the 2000MW of capacity that will become available once the new north-south line is complete.

Outside the Highlands, SSE is nearing completion on upgrades to allow constrained connections on the Orkneys and the company continues to analyse options for new lines to both sets of northern isles as well as the Western Isles.

A number of routes are under consideration for a new wire to Lewis with the mainland destination most often discussed being Ullapool.

For Shetland and Orkney, it is understood SSE is continuing to gather information ahead of asking Ofgem to approve new lines.

One option remains a cable running through both sets of islands while still on the table is a pair of cables, one running to Orkney and the other from Wick to Shetland.

Less public are discussions about the status of the ScottishPower network area, although reinforcements are understood to be underway at

a number of locations. Pinch points are known to exist throughout southern and central Scotland but the situation is not thought to be as critical or widespread as in the north.

Nevertheless, the Renewable Energy Transmission Study completed last year estimated a total bill of nearly

£400 million to accommodate 6000MW of renewable generating capacity on the network in the ScottishPower area.

RETS shows that equivalent figures for the SSE region are slightly higher with the Western Isles line expected to boost the total by some £250 million.

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