

Highland campaigners ready for fresh fight against ‘monster’ pylons plan

By **John Ross** ⌚ September 18, 2021, 6:00 am



Kit Fraser of Moniack, near Kiltarlity, is against the proposals by SSE. Picture by Sandy McCook



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Campaigners are preparing to restart a fight against the upgrading of power line pylons in the Highlands.

Construction of a new 400kV double circuit overhead line is planned between Beaully and Blackhillock substations for completion by 2030.

A project by Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) was halted in 2017.

A National Grid [network options assessment \(NOA\)](#) changed the project recommendation for the power line from “delay” to “do not proceed”.

However, its status has now altered to “proceed” in an updated NOA document.

‘Monster line’ will harm countryside, say campaigners

Objectors fear it will lead to the erection of 210ft-high pylons near some well known landmarks, including castles at Beaufort and Moniack, as well as the Belladrum festival site and part of the NC500 tourist route.

But SSEN states no proposals have been developed yet, including the planned route or the type and height of towers.

The [No More Pylons campaign group](#) said: “This monster line will defile our beautiful countryside for a generation.

“We must fight it united, resolute that alternatives must be found.”



Beaully substation

Businessman Kit Fraser, who stays in the grounds of Moniack Castle which his brother owns, supports the objectors.

“This is ugliness walking across a beautiful place,” he said.

“I know the modern world tramples on absolutely everything, but we need to invest in beauty.

“They have to pay to bury the lines under the ground. Yes, it costs tens of millions of pounds, but beauty is priceless.”

He said the pylons will be the first impression people get when visiting the area, including on the NC500.

Project needed due to offshore wind generation

“People come to the north because of its beauty. But we are going to trash it with thumping great pylons.

“We must never stop at least articulating an alternative view.”

The NOA is an annual report which outlines which strategic investments should go ahead to meet the future needs of the electricity transmission system.

The Beauly-Blackhillock project is aimed at improving network resilience with generation volumes forecast to increase, particularly from offshore wind, towards the end of the decade and into the 2030s.



residents of Monymusk Craigearn and Leschangie who campaigned against pylons previously

An SSEN transmission spokesman said: “The Beauly to Blackhillock project is at a very early stage and will be developed in full consultation with local communities and wider stakeholders to help inform the design of this critical network infrastructure, before any funding requests are submitted to Ofgem for regulatory approval.

“The development of the project will consider economic, environmental and technical factors, as well as being informed by stakeholder feedback.

“We look forward to working with the local community and wider stakeholders as we take forward this project of critical national importance to support the transition to net zero emissions.”

In 2017, campaigners in Aberdeenshire [welcomed news that the National Grid recommended project did not proceed.](#)

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