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1. The EU Parliament produced 19-12-08 a Preliminary Report 2008/2211(INI) "On preoccupations concerning the effects on human health of electro-magnetic fields". It is principally about mobile phones and wi-fi, and calls for precaution, noting that 9 member states plus China, Switzerland and Russia have adopted precautionary standards stricter than the ICNIRP/WHO recommendations. It also calls for solutions based on dialogue and stricter exposure standards when installing new power lines. The Report (in a translation by www.next-up.org) "notes with bitterness" the delay in publishing Interphone study results.

2. Regions in both France and Belgium have adopted precautionary policies on EMF exposures from mobile phones. Le Soir 16-1-09 reports the Constitutional Court adopted a 3 V/m standard to come into force in the Brussels region on 15th March. The City of Lyon is mounting a campaign against mobile phone use by under-12s, and there are moves to reduce the standard to 1 V/m for exposure from masts, as reported by Le Progres 13-12-08. For an English translation of both, see www.next-up.org who say "The essential point is that now the WHO and the ICNIRP are no longer credible and are *de facto* totally marginalized".

3. At national level in France, the environment minister has publicly proposed legislation to restrict advertising and sales of mobile phones for children. See http://www.powerwatch.org.uk/news/20090115_france_ban_mobile_phones.asp for more and precautionary developments in other countries.

4. A European Commission EMF conference is to be held in Brussels 11/12 Feb 09. Speakers include Eileen O'Connor of the Radiation Research Trust and David Gee of the European Environment Agency.

5. President Obama is making many changes soon after coming to office. It is good to hear of facing facts and using evidence-based decision making. Steps are being taken towards energy self-sufficiency and in response to climate change. "More than 3,000 miles of transmission lines would be established to transmit the [green] energy." Ouch, but perhaps that's facing reality in the USA. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/americas/7851038.stm>

6. In parallel with the USA, more transmission lines are expected in the UK. From a CPRE circular:

"With the *Planning Act 2008* now in force, the Government will produce a National Policy Statement (NPS) on electricity transmission networks for the first time. The NPS will be the primary consideration in deciding applications for new high voltage

electricity lines either above or below ground. The NPS is not expected to be released for consultation until June, but the implications for CPRE are potentially very significant. Indications from Government and from National Grid suggest that major investment in transmission networks is expected on a scale not seen for 50 years. The NPS is expected to set out how much additional infrastructure is needed in England and Wales, and possibly also the broad locations where new lines may be routed.” Likewise the implications for REVOLT are serious. We shall respond to the consultation and meanwhile probe what we can. See APPENDIX A.

7. Steve Nuttall reports from France that the powerlines health survey (news255.6, 252.6) is complete and preliminary results were released in French last weekend. An English version will be published shortly.

http://www.stop-tht.org/IMG/pdf/090123_Synthese_enquete_THT.pdf

8. Perhaps we can at last wrap up the safety clearance and related cases pending (news264.6-264.9, 255.7, 252.7 etc.). My enquiries which started with BERR have now migrated to the new government Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC). DECC also has responsibility for powerline consents. The Finnigan case in Sale was resolved at court, as far as safety clearances were concerned, but that was specific to the case and didn’t really translate into a generic ruling, as discussed in news264. As for the alleged unlawful movement of a pylon, DECC declines to discuss it beyond the parties affected. On the 132kV line case of alleged breach of safety clearance near Wolverhampton, DECC points out that potential safety issues should be referred to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). That case is nearing a negotiated solution, but if unsolved may revert to the HSE. DECC did mention their guidelines on wayleaves and their termination at

<http://www.berr.gov.uk/files/file23024.pdf>.

9. In Northern Ireland the public group SEAT (news263.1-3) has responded to a government leaflet to MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly, the Northern Ireland government). The leaflet gave a bland account of EMF risks connected with the proposed 400kV Cavan-Tyrone interconnector. I’ve helped SEAT to provide balancing advice to MLAs.

10. ESB/Eirgrid made formal application for the 100km 110kV Donegal Project on 2nd December. Documents are at <http://www.donegal110kvproject.ie/>. The public group Alternatives to Pylons (ATP) has lodged a formal objection, to which I contributed, in the streamlined new Irish national planning process.

APPENDIX A Comments for UK planning review of transmission lines

Revolt has long warned of the severe transmission consequences of renewable energy policy. In particular, the policy of large scale wind farms in the far north (Shetlands and Hebrides for example) is likely on the one hand to encounter limits of practical absorption into the electricity system and its patterns of demand, and on the other hand to need many more large powerlines between the far north of Scotland and the areas of net demand in the south of England.

While the position has moved on, it is worth recalling from Revolt news195 of 22.8.05:

“2. The Beaulay - Denny line may be just one of many to come, if wind power proposals and targets become reality. How many more might we expect? APPENDIX 1 works this out in some detail and shows, theoretically at least, how radical (but costly) alternatives might require far fewer new lines.”

Past issues of Revolt news may be seen at www.revolt.co.uk.

Appendix 1 to news195 discusses transmission requirements at some length and answers the question of “how many more lines” (double-circuit 400kV lines as proposed for Beaulay-Denny) as follows:

“A1.5. An answer with stated assumptions.

Perhaps a fair answer to the question would be, in terms of new double-circuit 400 kV lines or their equivalent by 2020:

- four lines from the far north of Scotland (beyond Inverness) down to central Scotland;*
- an additional three lines (including possible upgrades of east coast 275 kV lines) from the north east coast (Aberdeen etc.) to central Scotland;*
- three new lines through southern Scotland snowballing to five through northern England;*
- the need for five new lines will taper off in the midlands of England after more transmission losses and after more coal-fired plant can be constrained off to give way to high wind output, although with extra wind in-feed from Wales and from east coast off-shore there will be other needs for new lines scattered throughout England and Wales.*

This answer is based on the following key assumptions:

(a) around 20 GW installed capacity of new wind power from northern Scotland including on- and off-shore, islands and North Sea;

(b) around 4 GW additional wind power from central and southern Scotland and northern England;

(c) output from the above wind power fed into the UK grid, with typical transmission losses around 3% per 100 km; and

(d) continuing nuclear power, but coal generation constrained off at times to make way for high aggregate wind output.”

The above Appendix 1 to news195 goes on to examine the changing policy context and the ideas of under-sea cables as well as using hydrogen storage to even out the variable generation at large concentrations of wind farms, thereby reducing the need for transmission. Apart from wind power, with its high variability and problems of timing, there is now (2009) a prospect of greater dispersal of renewable generation and likely renewed nuclear power. Grid reinforcement is likely to become more widespread than the large power-flow from north to south.

In addition there is the EU policy of developing networks internationally. That is seen with the Irish proposals for grid reinforcement and interconnectors to Wales and to Northern Ireland, and with the proposed interconnector from Norway to England.

On such a large scale, the prospect of HVDC cables under the sea, and under ground, becomes more viable. Two international consultants' reports were produced in 2008 for the Irish situation, one by Ecofys for the Irish government, the other by Askon for the public group NEPP. One balances the other. The reports consider HVDC and other underground options in a modern context. The Beaulieu-Denny public inquiries in 2007 considered a report on underground cable options from Europacables, who also gave a presentation to the Scottish parliament in 2006 and gave later updates in Ireland. There are comments on and links to these reports and others in various editions of Revolt news (e.g. news249, 250, 253, 255, 259, 262, 263).

Elsewhere in the EU, policies and practices are developing more in favour of underground cables, in increasing lengths and proportions, for example in Lower Saxony, Salzburg, Switzerland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Holland, France, Spain (news248, 256, 258, 263, 265). From news248:

“10. There is a very strong momentum for cabling across Europe at the moment. We hope political decision makers in Scotland and Ireland are paying attention. The Beaulieu-Denny line cries out for either a sub-sea alternative or substantial partial undergrounding. The new 400kV single-circuit proposals in Ireland raise the prospect of full HVDC undergrounding, given the limited capacity required and the end-on proposed DC inter-connector to Britain.”

The EU Second Strategic Energy Review, COM(2008) 744/3, calls for a European Supergrid including a North Sea offshore grid (news263). From news263:

“10. The EU Strategic Energy Review refers (section 2.5) refers to a Strategic Energy Technology Plan, endorsed by Council in 2008. Its working document SEC(2007) 1510, in section 14 on “Smart Grids”, recognises both the need for grid development and the problems with conventional overhead lines (extract at APPENDIX A below). [Download here](#) It is timely and important for public concern groups like Revolt to encourage industry and governments to recognise their concerns and to pursue these alternatives to overhead lines. The forthcoming UK government response to the SAGE report will be one test; the Scottish government response on Beaulieu-Denny another, especially with a north-sea offshore grid suggested.”
