

AN ELECTRICITY CABLE FROM ICELAND?

Building an electricity cable from Iceland to the UK has been described as 'technically feasible, politically achievable and commercially viable'. How can this be the case?

To provide 1GW of electricity necessary for a cable will require exploitation of sources that are currently protected from development and from many small and marginally economic schemes.

If the protection was overturned, this would damage or destroy internationally important breeding bird areas, reduce carbon sequestration potential in wetlands and in river valleys, and destroy salmon rivers of great ecological and commercial importance.

And, two major transmission lines would be needed in areas where there are currently none. One along the south coast of about 300kms and one from the north west to the south-east corner totalling at least 400km with substantial effects on the amenity of the coastal and inland areas crossed.

Tourism has substantial and growing importance to Iceland's economy, so visitors' views are important. Recent survey evidence demonstrates that visitors dislike power lines in previously undeveloped areas.

Iceland has developed a unique process for adjudicating between development of renewable energy and environmental protection: Rammaáætlun. It is based on expert stakeholder involvement to judge between the competing interests, followed by government proposals and parliamentary decision. Many decisions are still in the deliberation process, at least 18 hydro-electric and 10 geothermal schemes. So, it is pie-in -the-sky to say that feasibility of supplying sufficient electricity to fill a cable has been proven.

In short, there are no surplus electricity supplies or no power lines to allow this to happen in Iceland. And, British interests fail to understand Iceland's unique process of making decisions about new renewable energy sources. These matters cannot be lightly dismissed in Britain. So please think again UK Government and devolved administrations and quash this idea. Instead, let's continue to develop our own renewable energy sources with the technological ingenuity we possess.