



Stirling Before Pylons



10th July 2008

Dear Ms Kelly,

SHEP Consultation on Historic Battlefields

Stirling Before Pylons (SBP) are pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the above document from Historic Scotland. SBP is a Community Group, with almost a 1,000 members, set up to respond to the proposed Beauly to Denny Powerline running through the Stirling Council area.

We have fully participated in the Beauly to Denny Public Inquiry, the outcome of which is awaited later this year, prior to a decision being made by Scottish Ministers. This has been Scotland's largest such Inquiry and a major issue in the Stirling session was the Sheriffmuir Battle site, which it is proposed the power line will pass through the centre of. We believe that had the proposed Inventory of Battlefields existed prior to the Inquiry then the battlefield site would have received protection from significant damage, and an alternative underground route would have received greater consideration.

We are therefore pleased to fully support the Inventory of Battlefields proposed by Historic Scotland. As a community group, we do not intend to respond to the proposals in detail, others are better placed to do that. Rather we propose to present a case study of the Sheriffmuir battle site and show how it complies with Annex A : 'Criteria and Guidance for determining whether a battlefield is of national importance for inclusion in the proposed Inventory'. We believe this is an excellent case study to illustrate the importance of the proposed Inventory in protecting battlefields across Scotland.

According to Annex A : 'Criteria and Guidance' a battlefield must comply with one of the following criteria 1-3 and criteria 4. We believe the Sheriffmuir battlefield complies with all 4 criteria.

1. Be associated with historical events or figures of national importance:

The Battle of Sheriffmuir was the principle battle of the 1715 Jacobite Rising. The failure of the Jacobites to win the battle effectively led to the end of the

campaign. Had the Jacobites won the battle they would almost certainly have gone on to seize the whole of Scotland.

It meets the key considerations in relation to this criteria :

- That the battle was of importance in its own right and directly associated with a nationally significant event.
- That key players in the battle were of national significance, and it also included many highland Clans
- The battle was clearly key to the campaign and the turning point in it.

It should also be noted that Sheriffmuir is part of a uniquely important series of battlefield/historic settings around Stirling which relate to the city's historical and landscape importance. These include : Stirling Castle, the battle of Stirling Bridge and the Wallace Monument, Bannockburn with the least well known currently being Sheriffmuir.

2. Have significant physical remains and/or archaeological potential :

A limited archaeological study was carried out by Dr Tony Pollard, Director of the Centre for Battlefield Archaeology at GUARD prior to the Public Inquiry. Whilst carrying out this work he indicated that he hoped to be able to carry out a much fuller investigation of the site following the discovery of artefacts from the battle.

Most of the battlefield site is open hill ground or animal grazing. Part of the battle site has been planted with conifers, but, some of these are windblown and will shortly or are currently being felled. We understand that the Council have objected to this planting being replaced due to the battlefield site. As a result the battlefield site will become accessible and the landscape setting be retained.

The following key considerations are met for this criteria :

- Physical features that were present at the time of the battle, whether natural elements such as hills and ravines, or constructed elements, such as field walls or buildings
- Elements resulting from the battle itself, including earthworks, graves and artefacts such as bullets, arrowheads and personal effects
- Other buried archaeological deposits, such as remains of camps or entrenchments

3. Have a clear landscape context that allows the events of the battle to be understood or interpreted :

The battlefield stands in the Ochils Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV), this is the only such designated landscape that the power line passes through along its whole length. The setting thus has a recognised landscape that enhances the battlefield.

The landscape has been little altered or disturbed, apart from the already mentioned forestry. Dr Pollards site investigations and the historical records have clarified where the armies deployed and the main fighting took place. It has been confirmed that the powerline will pass through the line were the Jacobites deployed prior to the battle commencing.

Due to the documentary evidence the wider landscape where associated skirmishes took place is well known, as are burial sites, and the advance and retreat of the wings of the two armies. This area stretches across from the Sheriffmuir from towards both Stirling and Dunblane. Much of this area is in the AGLV and has been relatively little altered.

The battle is well remembered with three memorials and annual commemorations by Jacobite groups at the anniversary.

The key considerations cited in the Annex to be met for this criteria are :

- The area where the armies deployed and fought initially
- The wider landscape where associated events occurred, including secondary skirmishes, associated earthworks, camps and burials, and lines of advance and retreat
- Additional detached elements such as memorials

4. Be capable of definition on a map

This criteria must be met in every case, sites which cannot be defined in this way will not be included in the Inventory, even though they may have witnessed nationally important events.

Evidence presented at the Public Inquiry identified a Core Area for the battle where the armies deployed and a Wider Area where skirmishes and advances and retreats took place. These areas were agreed in principle, although there is further work required to clarify details. This will probably involve carrying out archaeological investigations to resolve apparently contradictory documentary evidence.

Discussion

It is clear, therefore, that the Battle of Sheriffmuir meets all the proposed criteria for being included in the proposed Inventory of Battlefields. If the Inventory had been in place at the time of the Public Inquiry it is probable that alternative routes for the powerline would have been investigated or given a different priority.

It is significant that the Consultation proposes giving the Inventory of Historic Battlefields the same status currently enjoyed by Gardens and Designed Landscapes within the planning system. The applicants for the powerline ensured that their route didn't pass through any Garden and Designed Landscapes through its whole length, because of their designations.

Historic Scotland felt that they didn't have grounds object to the powerline proposals through Sheriffmuir battlefield, because of the lack of existing designation or protection. In fact they had to rely on the evidence, as did their archaeological advisors, from the Environmental Impact Assessment of the applicants. This document concluded that there were not any other suitable

alternative overhead routes for the overhead powerline. SBP position is that there are no suitable overhead routes through Stirling. At that stage, however, Historic Scotland were not aware of the case made by SNH and SBP for an alternative underground to the west of Stirling. At the public inquiry the applicants consultants accepted that this route was technically and environmentally feasible. Had Historic Scotland been aware of this information, and the Inventory of Historic Battlefields had been in place, we would assume they would have objected to the proposed overhead line through the battlefield, and agreed with the Council and SNH that underground alternatives needed to be investigated.

SBP acknowledges that the Inquiry is now closed and cannot take new evidence. We will, however, be asking the Reporters to note in their report the existence of this Consultation on Historic Battlefields, and its potential implications.

Following the publication of the Inquiry Report, it will be a matter for Scottish Ministers to make a final decision, and we will also be asking Ministers to take note of this Consultation in reaching their decision on the powerline in relation to the Sheriffmuir Battlefield.

We hope that you find this submission useful and would be pleased to clarify any of the contents.

Yours Sincerely

Peter Pearson : MRTPI
Secretary : Stirling Before Pylons