



## Chairman's Report October 2015

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It is over 25 years since the 'Enron' Teesside Power Station was consented (1989), precipitating the 75 km 400 kV overhead line in North Yorkshire. It is almost 25 years since that line was applied for (1991) and Revolt was formed. The power station has now been demolished, yet still there are unsettled issues with the line. Local farmer and conservationist Willie Osborne wrote in the Darlington and Stockton Times last month that he has still not been paid the compensation finally agreed with NG last year.

That Yorkshire line has been a long saga, with extensive public inquiries and wayleave problems delaying consent for the line until 1998 and installation until 2003. The *raison d'être* has changed from the dash-for-gas to renewable energy, exacerbating the need for large-scale grid development. Technology has moved on, as anticipated by Revolt, with the prospect of HVDC supergrids. The planning system keeps changing, in the UK as elsewhere, with an eye to speeding it up and imposing national plans on local communities.

It is proving difficult to engage the affected public in early strategic considerations which shape the rash of power line proposals. More documents are shared on the internet, somewhat chaotically, with SYS and ODIS giving way to ETYS and FES, in parallel with Ofgem, ENSG, ENTSO, EWIS and EU reports. We will have to wait and see how the new NIC works. I attended the RGI conference on "public acceptance" in London last November, but its positive view on engagement is not typical of the wider industry. I declined an invitation to the FES conference in July, as it was presenting conclusions already made. Community groups are not yet engaged upstream in the process, but projects will affect communities widely.

To its credit, National Grid has improved its approach to undergrounding and to health concerns over the last 20 years. Both are acknowledged as proper considerations and not dismissed as brutally as formerly. Possible undergrounding is built in to project planning and EMF research and information are funded and (very limited) precaution accepted. These are small and sometimes ineffective concessions in practice but principles are important. NG has also engaged stakeholders in the selective removal of pylons in National Parks and AONBs. Even so, there are still many criticisms of NG consultations and practices.

NG-supported EMF research in epidemiology has used large UK databases to try to get to the bottom of the cancer association near powerlines. Even with the largest data sets the statistical power is low where it is needed, and the results do not support clear interpretation. NG tends to interpret results as tilting against a causal explanation, but they are on very thin ground. Results are results, however, and should be noted, while not forgetting the methodological limitations: a decline over 50 years in the association with distance from overhead lines, and exclusion of any large trend in risk with distance from underground cables (both specifically for childhood leukaemia in the UK). The long-standing association with magnetic fields persists.

The International EMF Scientist Appeal 2015 calls on the UN, WHO and UN member states for EMF policy changes. Revolt is a supporting NGO and I am a signatory scientist. I resisted signing similar previous ventures, despite sympathy with their motives, since I could not agree with key points. This 2015 Appeal seems more reasonable.

World forces shape the imposition of ever more pylons. Population growth, manifest in trans-continental mass migrations across the world, combines with climate change and more importantly economic systems predicated on relentless growth. Where resources are finite, that must be ultimately unsustainable.

Mike O'Carroll, Chairman