

Owen Campbell
Central /East Kilbride Line Management
cc Nicola Sturgeon MSP - FOR INFORMATION

Dear Owen

The Strathbungo Society were grateful for the time and effort put into consultation with us, in the meeting that took place on Moray Place on 22nd November 2019 and previously, in the presence of Nicola Sturgeon MSP at her constituency office. The Strathbungo Society position is that we would welcome electrification as this is much healthier and greener than the present diesel, but it was also noted that the potential loss of thousands of trees along this line alone, represents a major carbon release and is retrograde when a climate emergency has been declared.

Network Rail acknowledged that mistakes had been made in the past in the management policy for trees and vegetation, and that this resulted in the alienation of communities who live beside the line. This was exacerbated by poor communication with these neighbours. At the time of our meetings however, in our exchange of notes we seemed to have come to a measure of consensus about how matters would be proceeding. Last week's letter sent to Strathbungo households, (which we were emailed one day in advance) seems like a retrograde step.

Your new letter talks again about removing all trees and vegetation within six metres of the track, and that the volume of trees within the six metres is minimal.

The exchange from November talked about the desirability of a screen of trees as protection for local householders, and acknowledged that the proposed works will leave some within the six metre boundary; you specifically acknowledged that parts of the line along Moray Place are just six metres between line and boundary, and also that trees will only be felled if dangerous - in your own words, on a tree by tree basis. Specifically, you stated that "we can retain a 2 metre deep screen through the conservation area." Can you confirm that our agreed position remains in place?

To ensure that the work was carried out sensitively, the November exchange stated that an ecologist and an arborist would be on site. Can you confirm that this remains the case, as it quelled our fears about indiscriminate site clearance?

Our agreed position was that no glyphosate or herbicide would be used, specifically in relation to the aspen trees on the north side of the line at the rail bridge. Again this is not mentioned. Will that still be the case?

We had a full discussion about future planting, specifically “retaining and enhancing local vegetation”, depending on future budgets, but Network Rail acknowledged that the Strathbungo Society rejected mitigation planting in other locations, and want to see it in situ.

What is the position with regard to this?

Finally on a practical level, it was agreed that there would be regular exchanges with the Society. Sending us a letter one day before it went out to general circulation, a letter that fails to acknowledge any of the previous dialogue, does not produce any level of confidence that any of the assurances that you offered to us will be honoured.

As a Society we have found that the issue of the tree felling is very sensitive in this community, given the previous history. Many lived through the previous line clearance and know its effects on the area. Network Rail acknowledged this in our negotiations then seem to ignore the considerable effort that we jointly put in to reach an accommodation. We await your assurances that our agreement still stands and that we can circulate that information to the community, or will meet you in a suitable format if you feel that there are further areas of discussion.

Jane Carolan

I enclose the summary of our discussions as you had them minuted.

Appendix 1 - communication from Network Rail 26/11/19

“Some practical commitments from us include

- We will safely retain as many trees as possible beyond the 6m area measured from the rail
- NR will not apply herbicide beyond 6m
- No herbicide application on Aspen – and monitor any regrowth within the 6m corridor
- We aim to include mitigation on site rather than somewhere else as far as is practically possible
- We will develop a good practice approach that is transferable to other work / projects
- NR will look to replant within the boundary hedgerow species in areas of total tree loss – noted that Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Holly are good candidates.”