



# ***RESTORING THE RIVER GARRY?***

The River Garry upstream of Struan is one of the most abused rivers in Scotland. It is badly affected by water abstraction for hydro-electric generation, operated by Scottish & Southern Energy plc. In fact it is probably the most abstracted river of a comparable size in Scotland.



THIS SCOTTISH AND SOUTHERN ENERGY SIGN WARNS ANGLERS OF AN OVERHEAD POWER LINE CROSSING THE RIVER GARRY. IRONICALLY THERE IS NO WATER IN THE RIVER BECAUSE ALL THE WATER HAS BEEN ABSTRACTED TO MAKE THE ELECTRICITY!

# ***ONLY FOUR WIND TURBINES' WORTH OF ELECTRICITY WOULD RESTORE THE GARRY***

The Garry, an important tributary of the mighty River Tay, was one of the first major rivers in Scotland to be seriously harnessed for hydropower. The scheme was partly designed just after the First World War but largely during the Second World War when environmental considerations were not high on the agenda. Subsequent hydro schemes tended to be less severe in their impact.

Water is abstracted from the River Garry itself in two places and from a number of its tributaries. In every case all the flow may be taken, all of the time.

This means that in dry weather there is no or very little flow over the 13 mile length of the river, familiar to drivers on the A9, from a little upstream of the House of Bruar up to Drumochter Summit. The river has become an ecological desert and a blot on the landscape along one of Scotland's most important tourist arteries into the Highlands.



As a result of recent European and now Scottish Law, an opportunity to restore the Garry has arisen after 50 years.

Perhaps in order to gain advantage in the process, Scottish and Southern Energy plc have volunteered to put back a pitifully small flow – but only as much as they can justify by cutting the flow into the neighbouring River Spey! No electricity and no revenue will therefore be 'lost'. The proposal was agreed 'in principle' with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, seemingly with some support from the previous Scottish Executive.

However, the small flow proposed is much too small to properly fill the channel and the lack of any artificial spates would prevent most salmon getting up to spawn.



THE RIVER GARRY, FAMILIAR TO TRAVELLERS ON THE A9, HAS ALL ITS FLOW REMOVED TO GENERATE ELECTRICITY

## WHAT IS REALLY REQUIRED?

If the River Garry is to be realistically restored more water must be released into the Garry and some tributaries, including periods of high flow in the autumn. But this will mean that SSE will have to 'lose' some electricity. In fact, about four wind turbines' worth. While SSE have used the renewable energy card as a defence against 'losing' any generation, this amount of electricity would be an insignificant component in the global warming debate. Surely a whole river is worth more than four wind turbines?



## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The future of the River Garry is partly in the hands of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency who have the responsibility of reviewing the flows by 2009. However, the ultimate decision may be one for the Scottish Ministers.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

If you care about the future of the River Garry and would like to see a chuckling highland river as you travel up the A9 then you should make your feelings known.

You could write to a local newspaper, but you should, especially, contact the local MSP, John Swinney. You could also contact local councillors, regional MSPs, the MP and the MEP.

John Swinney can be contacted either by writing to:

John Swinney MSP  
The Scottish Parliament  
EDINBURGH  
EH99 1SP

or by email:  
[john.swinney.msp@scottish.parliament.uk](mailto:john.swinney.msp@scottish.parliament.uk)

For further information visit  
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