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Protest highlights concerns over pylons in Boyle area

The protest is the latest stage of an eight-year campaign against the ESB's plans, part of a high-voltage power line from Flagford, County Roscommon to Srananagh, County Sligo. Representatives from SAFE (Safe Alternative For Electricity), AMP (Alternatives Means of Power), local residents, landowners and school children attended the protest.

Mrs Martina Roddy of AMP stressed that the protest was not intended to block any works, but to highlight their opposition to the proposed plan.

"We are not here to block workers, but to highlight our concerns, for example health and safety issues associated with power lines.

We are trying to keep the landowners united, to fight for these lines to go underground," she said. Mary Horan of SAFE explained that alternatives were found in other regions. "In Bantry and Cobh, lines were put underground and underwater," she said.

Concerns were also raised by protestors as to the nature of the proposed route.

Local resident Mr Frank Mulligan pointed out that the shortest route would have been to run the line along the N4. He also echoed Martina Roddy's claim that they were not trying to stop the power line from being built, but to put it underground.

"We are not trying to stop the power line, we want to see it go underground.

It doesn't make sense that the chosen route is about 50 miles in length when the

shorter, more direct route is about 30. When you have a choice why pick the longest route?

From an economic point of view, it would make more sense to build it along the shortest route."

Mr Mulligan also raised concerns that the longer route was chosen because more pylons could be constructed 200 approximately as against 100 which, he claimed would in turn allow for the pylons to be used as bases for communications antennae.

He also claimed that high rents could be obtained by renting out space on the pylons. "They are a licence to print money", he said. Mr Mulligan also pointed out that planning permission had already been sought for a communications mast at the Flagford ESB Sub-Station.

Local landowner Mr Michael Roddy said the power line should have been laid when the Curlew By-Pass was being constructed. "The power line should have been laid when the by-pass was being built.

It would have been easy to dig the road and put the cable in if they were anxious to get it from A to B." Roscommon County Councillor Ernie Keenan voiced his concerns from a health aspect: "It is common knowledge that pylons are a health hazard.

When they (ESB) are willing to put the pylons underground then the people will allow it.

This is a profitmaking exercise when you read down to the small print," he said.

To date no pylons have been erected at Knockarush, but the bases for the pylons have been constructed on land where consent has been given.

It is expected that the erection of the pylons will take place in the next four to six weeks.

The main concerns associated with high voltage lines include health and safety, insurance cover that would cover the Electric Magnetic Field and the devaluation of land and property.

Once consent is obtained to erect a pylon, the landowner forfeits rights along a "sterile corridor", 30 yards either side of the power line.

Michael Roddy pointed out that the total area of sterile corridor land in question along the proposed Flagford to Srananagh route amounted to 840 acres.

The anti-pylon group has vowed to continue its campaign of opposition to the power line. Next Monday week, members will address an anti-pylon meeting in Trim, County Meath, where they will share their experiences with other communities from around the country. They also plan further protests in the future.

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