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[HOME](#) →[SEARCH BY DATE](#) →[SEARCH BY KEYWORD](#) →[CLIPBOARD](#) [HELP](#) →

[TCM Archives](#) > [Roscommon Herald](#) > [2005/08/03](#) > Anti-ylon group join national protest in Dublin

**Wednesday, August 03, 2005 :**

[FRONT](#) | [NEWS](#) | [SPORT](#) | [AREA NOTES](#) | [OTHER NEWS](#)

Anti-ylon group join national protest in Dublin

LOCAL RESIDENTS in the Boyle area, who are opposed to plans to erect an overhead power line across their land, joined anti-ylon groups from all over the country in staging a national protest outside the ESB headquarters in Dublin recently.

Over 150 protesters gathered outside the ESB office on Lower Fitzwilliam Street in Dublin to protest over the proposed overhead power lines in Fingal, County Dublin; Bantry, County Cork, and the proposed Flagford to Srananagh 220kv line that will pass through counties Roscommon, Sligo and Leitrim.

The protesters were united in their demands that the ESB adopt an alternative strategy to the overhead lines and place all highvoltage power line cables underground out of health and safety concerns.

The groups, including those from the Boyle area, are opposed to overhead powerlines on health and safety grounds and handed a letter into ESB officials highlighting their concerns.

According to the protesters, recent research findings reported in the British Medical Journal indicated that living 200 metres from a high voltage line increased the likelihood of a child getting leukaemia by 70%. They contended that the ESB had dismissed these claims and refused to answer questions on the matter.

“How can cost come into play when dealing with people’s lives? After all who pays the

ESB bills, only ourselves, and we should have some say in how that money is spent," Martina Roddy from Grange, Boyle, said. "People want to be left alone to get on with their lives in peace, free from health hazards and the dangers of living close to high tension wires. It is not too much to ask in this day and age. In a time when all new housing wires must be undergrounded and in towns and villages participating in tidy towns competitions it is also a requirement," she added.

The protesters also pointed out that all of the groups refused to be affiliated with the ESB/IFA negotiations or deals and stressed that "compensation is not an issue". All landowners emphasised that they would never sign the 'Deeds of Access/Easement' or otherwise as required by ESB.

The groups also took issue with the ESB for ruling out undergrounding the cables on the basis that it was "too costly", without providing proper figures and costings on doing so. As part of their campaign, the protesters are planning further protests on a nationwide basis.

Meanwhile at the July meeting of Roscommon County Council, Cllr Ernie Keenan raised a notion of motion asking that the council "support the people of North Roscommon in their campaign to stop the ESB from putting health endangering pylons on their property when the obvious solution is to place dangerous power lines underground". Cllr Keenan was speaking in relation to the Flagford to Srananagh 220kv line. He said that this was an issue which was going on for the past five years and he feared that it would end up "like the Rossport 5in jail".

Cllr Keenan explained that the Flagford to Srananagh line was a twenty mile journey but that the ESB was taking a route of some thirty-five miles. He stressed that the people of North Roscommon were not anti-development but they just wanted to see this power line being placed underground as they had serious concerns in relation to health. Cllr Keenan said that the base and requirements for the line were such that if someone had thirty acres of land the ESB would have rights to twelve acres of that land and he called for fellow council members to support his motion.

Cllr John Cummins said that it was a very good motion before the council and the only way forward was dialogue between the ESB and landowners. The council agreed to support the motion.