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Wednesday, June 22, 2005 :

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Landowner 'prepared to go to jail' to stop pylon plans

A LANDOWNER this week vowed that he is prepared to go to jail to stop the ESB installing pylons on his land as part of the new ESB powerline from Flagford, Co Roscommon to Srananagh, Co Sligo.

Michael Roddy stood his ground on Tuesday morning and refused to give the ESB access to land, adjacent to his home at Grange, Boyle. It was the fifth time that the ESB attempted to establish points of entry to his land.

Michael Roddy and his wife Martina have refused to sign the deed of easement, which would give the ESB access to land for the construction of a pylon base.

Two ESB officials visited his home on Tuesday morning in a bid to secure access, but were told that it "wasn't going to happen" and that they would under no circumstances sign the deed of easement.

Up to 30 neighbours and friends were present as a show of support for the Roddy's stance and to voice their opposition to the new power line.

"I'm prepared to go to jail on this. I won't sign the deed of easement which the ESB requires in return for compensation," Mr Roddy told the Roscommon Herald.

"We have put plans in place, regarding who will look after the farm and everything, in

the event that we have to go to jail.

"We have received huge support from family and friends who are behind us all the way on this," Mr Roddy stressed.

"We're taking a stand against the ESB and this new power line and we are not prepared to stand down. It's nothing to do with compensation, that's not the issue," he said.

Mr and Mrs Roddy, like other concerned landowners and residents in the area, believe that alternative options were open to the ESB and that there was no real need to construct an overhead power line with pylons ranging from 78-177 feet in height. Mr Roddy said that he offered the ESB the opportunity to run the lines underground at no cost but the ESB declined the offer.

His wife, Martina, who is also prepared to go to jail on the issue, said that they remained opposed to the plans on health and safety grounds. "Why take a chance by taking compensation money now when down the road you might find out that your child has leukemia," she told the Roscommon Herald.

A total of 46 bases are proposed along the Croghan to Boyle part of the power line and it is understood that just six bases have been laid in the North Roscommon region, five being on Coillte land.

This week, the ESB said in a statement that "50 per cent of the tower bases have been put in place and work is continuing on the remaining tower bases".

In relation to the visit to Roddy's on Tuesday, the ESB said that necessary legal action would follow.

"As part of the construction of the line, and in line with the laws governing this area, ESB personnel visited a property today (Tuesday) to meet the landowner and discuss access for the necessary works. The ESB staff were denied access. ESB will now have to take the necessary legal actions to proceed with meeting its responsibilities of developing this vital infrastructure," the ESB statement said.

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