

Report in the Roscommon people  
Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> Dec 2005, Tony Conboy  
150 attend Pylon Protest meeting

A crowd of around one hundred and fifty people attended a to update the community on the protest against the erection of ESB pylons along a line via the areas of Croghan, Grange and Kiltycreighton. The meeting was held in the Royal Hotel in Boyle on Monday night.

There were a number of speakers on various aspects of the development and its implications for the community and it would seem that, despite some prior setbacks, the campaign is gathering momentum.

The fact that a similar, but larger proposal, is now in existence in the Meath/Cavan area has broadened the debate into a national one. The core area of the protest locally is in the Grange area near Boyle where an active and focussed group has been involved for around seven years or so.

Apparently a proposal for this line of pylons which stretches from Flagford outside Carrick-on-Shannon to Srananagh outside Sligo was successfully opposed some years ago along another route.

The people involved in this protest are not against the line but do not want the pylons with their implications and want the line put underground. This apparently is being done, after opposition to the overhead lines, in other locations around Cork. They are opposed to the line of pylons on grounds including: alleged health implications of the electro magnetic field (E.M.F.) associated with them, the alleged very intrusive visual impact of the pylons, the possible impact on property valuations, potential insurance implications and ownership rights.

An element of the proposal which, on first viewing, is difficult to understand is the long irregular route that the line is planned to take. The ESB state that this is being done after consideration of all route options, that there is no positive proof of health implications, that this is the most economical way of the distribution of this necessary infrastructure to the North West, that the speed and cost of location and repair of underground faults would be restrictive, that they have gone through due planning procedures and have consulted on the issue.

The meeting was addressed by Mister Roy Henry, a founder member of A.M.P. (Against More Pylons), who has been involved in the issue for a considerable time. He spoke of the proposed 180 pylons along the line with 76 in Roscommon with half the bases (foundations) in places. He said that, with modern technology, the cost of putting these lines underground was no longer prohibitive, a theme also emphasised by a Kildare speaker, Tom O'Shea who had a similar involvement.

Sheila Tipper of S.A.F.E. (Safe Alternative for Electricity), a local organisation of non-landowners living in close proximity to the proposed line, gave a clear outline of their position. She expressed the organisation's opposition on health and visual grounds. She also suggested the need for people to become educated on the potential insurance implications into the future.

She concluded by issuing a rallying call that they "still had everything to fight for though their lives had been turned up-side-down for seven years now". "We are there for the long haul", she concluded to applause.

Tom O'Shea from Newbridge, County Kildare gave an account of his experiences in dealing with a similar situation. He suggested that due to incoming EU regulation the possibility existed that such grids and power supply companies could be sold on the open market and that in ten years it might not be the E.S.B. company they would be dealing with. Dr. Con Colbert spoke on the health issues and the hazards of E.M.E. (Electro Magnetic Energy). He mentioned a 'precautionary principle' in these matters – 'if in doubt don't'.

The role of the I.F.A. was also questioned. When I talked to their representative Mr. Adrian Leddy he said they had negotiated with the E.S.B. on behalf of farmers on local and national levels and this was an ongoing process more especially perhaps with regard to land acquisition for road infrastructure. They had been involved with the E.S.B. for years and the I.F.A. position was quite clear and it was to protect the interests of the farmer and negotiate on his behalf where and when required.

Mr. Frank Feighan T.D. noted the feared health and visual implications of the line and said that it has been discussed at top level with the ESB. He said that he would seek to have the issue reviewed by his party again and promised whatever help he could give to resolving the problem.

The only solution which will appease the residents of this area seems to be the placing of the line underground and while there have had some recent set backs the strength and resolve shown at this meeting will not be easily dissolved.