

Media Release from SEAT

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SEAT and NEPP reject PB Power consultants' findings on electrical transmission

Action groups SEAT (Safe Electricity in Armagh and Tyrone) and the North East Pylon Pressure campaign (NEPP) have rejected the findings contained in the PB Power consultancy report, published by NIE, as 'fundamentally flawed'.

The headline figures for cost do not stand up to close scrutiny. According to the recent ASKON Report (October 2008) the cost of undergrounding the North-South interconnector project is estimated at 805 Million Euro as opposed to 968 Million Euro for Overhead lines. Therefore over the forty year lifespan of the system there will be a saving of 163 Million Euro – a fact that NIE and EirGrid are failing to publicise.

The PB Power report grossly overestimates the cost of operating an underground system and goes in the face of international expert opinion that, while underground may be more costly to build, it is always cheaper to operate than overhead.

We utterly reject the assertion that underground is more costly to build and operate than overhead.

We are disappointed that this is yet another light weight report. PB Power spent very little time on the ground surveying the proposed route. Despite NIE and EirGrid's commitment to the contrary, the PB Power costings are therefore based on a so-called 'theoretical' underground

circuit that will never actually be built and their calculations have no validity as a basis for decision making.

Nevertheless, PB Power agree that undergrounding is a viable and technically feasible alternative.

Unlike the PB Power report, the Askon Report (October 2008) is the first project specific analysis of the feasibility of undergrounding the North-South Interconnector. In the course of their study the experts at Askon carried out a detailed aerial and land analysis of the project area, in order to achieve a detailed, accurate and realistic set of conclusions. The Askon Report suggests a design consisting of two groups of underground cables running in parallel with each other. These modern XPLE cables (cross-linked polyethylene insulation) are easy to install, easy to maintain and easy to repair. Several underground projects with lengths up to 210 km are under consideration in Europe at present.

The underground cable system suggested by the Askon Report is significantly more efficient than the proposed overhead system. Overhead transmission losses translate to a loss in value and an increase in fuel burn and detrimental environmental impact. Transmission losses will be significantly lower if it is undergrounded – with the additional advantage of reduced greenhouse gas emissions and a better carbon footprint profile.

SEAT and NEPP will shortly begin an intensive process with NIE and EirGrid and the governments North and South, where the international experts responsible for the Askon Report will discuss all technical aspects of the proposed North / South projects, including cost, feasibility and reliability, safety, efficiency and security. We are confident that our experts' findings on the issues will stand up to objective scrutiny and will prevail.

To summarise – the Askon Report found that undergrounding the North-South Interconnector is:

- More reliable
- More efficient- probability of total failure occurring is once in every 100 000 years!
- Safer
- Has obvious environmental benefits
- Significantly cheaper over forty year lifespan
- 163 Million Euro cheaper if transmission losses taken into account.
- Cost per household per year is ONE EURO at most expensive.

Today's reaction is based on a preliminary study of the report and we will issue a fuller analysis after we have studied the report more closely with our expert advisers.

- ENDS -

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