

Media Release from North East Pylon Pressure campaign (NEPP)
8TH April 2009

‘Underground makes sense’ - NEPP

NIE / EirGrid’s announcement of the preferred route corridor for their proposed giant pylons and high power electricity wires from county Meath to county Tyrone does not change one incontrovertible point. Underground cables make sense. Pylons and overhead wires do not.

Underground makes sense because over the full 45 year lifetime of the project it is cheaper for electricity consumers and for the wider community. Compared with overhead, underground is more cost effective, more secure, more reliable, more environmentally friendly, does not interfere with farming or other enterprises and is safer for human and animal health.

The North East Pylon Pressure campaign (NEPP) spent two full days last week in technical discussions with EirGrid. We were accompanied by our internationally respected adviser, Professor Noack, from Germany. EirGrid were accompanied by a representative of their consultants, Parsons Brinckerhoff. The discussions were not concluded and both sides had agreed to meet again for at least another day for a further exchange of data and information. On Friday last, without any prior notification to us, NIE / EirGrid issued a press release that seriously distorted the proceedings of the technical discussions. Through NIE, they ensured that the press release was sent to media outlets throughout the island.

Despite the fact that consultations with NEPP were far from concluded, NIE / EirGrid are now attempting to move to the next stages of this project by ignoring the concerns and interests of the people affected. This raises a question mark over the integrity of their dealings with the 65,000 citizens from Meath to Tyrone who are affected by their proposals.

In moving now, EirGrid are relying on the discredited report by Parsons Brinckerhoff which is long on misleading ‘headline’ figures for alleged cost, but is short on the technical expertise required for assessing a project such as this. The report is fatally flawed for a number of reasons, including the fact that it did not analyse the most obvious and cost effective route for cables – along the existing and redundant rail infrastructure from county Meath to county Tyrone. This glaring omission alone – conceded in our last meeting with EirGrid – renders the entire report virtually useless.

NIE / EirGrid's announcement puts landowners immediately in the firing line. Today, across the North East landowners have received aerial photographs and maps from EirGrid showing exactly where each of the giant pylons will be located. This provocative gesture has served only to harden the resolve of landowners and rural communities. Now they can see precisely the farms, dwellings, schools, playing fields and heritage sites that are under threat.

NEPP assures all landowners potentially affected that we will continue to act vigorously in defence of their interests, unlike NIE / EirGrid.

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