

JANUARY 2009

Protest to take place at Stormont against North-South NIE Pylons

An emotive demonstration against a proposed NIE Electricity Interconnector, set to be the highest voltage overhead line in NI, will be staged by the SEAT Action Group (Safe Electricity for Armagh and Tyrone) outside Stormont on **Thursday 15th January at 10am.**

The SEAT Action Group (www.seatactiongroup.com), a concerned local action group based in Armagh and Tyrone, will protest on behalf of those whose lives will be affected by the 400 000 volt Electricity Interconnector, which if the planned North –South corridor route goes ahead, will extend through East Tyrone into South Armagh,. A number of MLA's have pledged support for the demonstration.

SEAT's protest on Thursday will coincide with a scheduled briefing session by NIE/ Eirgrid to Stormont MLA's on the proposed North-South Interconnector.

The action group has also expressed concern that the official research papers submitted to the MLA's for the briefing are biased and do not adequately reflect the range of scientific evidence available detailing the impact of the proposed interconnector on health and the environment. They have submitted a response compiled by Professor M.J O'Carroll , highlighting key concerns.

John Wood, spokesperson for the SEAT action group, said;

“We have a number of valid objections, not just to the proposed Interconnector but also to NIE's poor handling of the situation and the quality of the research being submitted to the MLA's .

“In early 2008 more than 80 land owners in Armagh and Tyrone signed a document to oppose the erection of an overhead electricity inter-connector on their properties and farms. The signatories' documents, which were officially handed over to senior staff in NIE, gave authority to myself and William Anderson to champion the opposition campaign. These land owners have requested that NIE does not approach them individually yet NIE have not respected their wishes.

“We have proposed an alternative solution to NIE; an underground power line. Research shows that this option would minimise detrimental effects on the environment, health and property values. NIE have repeatedly claimed that undergrounding is not an option as they state it would cost 9 -10 times as much as the overhead option. However we have officially and extensively researched this option and have not found the cost to be ten-fold. In fact, a recently published German University paper states that over the assumed 40 year life span of a power line, combined investment and transmission costs are estimated at 415 million euro for overhead

lines, as opposed to 345 million euro for underground cables on the same route.

Mr Woods also highlighted a consistent lack of clarity from NIE regarding their overhead powerline proposals;

“As yet no formal and complete environmental impact assessment has been made public. Nor has any satisfactory financial feasibility study for undergrounding the power line been made public. Yet NIE have promised to provide our group with these documents before planning permission is applied for. They also claim to have carried out a satisfactory and full public consultation process. We however feel that the consultation process to date has been limited, ineffectual and has ignored the valid concerns of those whose lives will be affected most by the proposed Interconnector.”

Julie-Anne Denvir is a passionate supporter of the anti-interconnector campaign. Her young family live on the proposed Interconnector corridor route in their home which was bought in 2003.

Julie-Anne says; “I completely understand the fears of the communities under threat from NIE’s plans. I would never have chosen to live under pylons and every day my husband and I worry about the future health and safety of our children, Molly and Charlie. There are also many other valid and important arguments for stopping the overhead Pylons. NIE’s proposed route shows little respect for the tourism industry in an area rich with cultural heritage sites. We believe NIE is failing to acknowledge the negative environmental impact of an overhead power line and is refusing to recognise recent significant scientific research findings which indicate major health problems caused by living in close proximity to such power lines.”

Mr Woods added, “We are not opposing a modern electricity grid. What we do suggest is that the proposed grid would be safer and more acceptable if routed underground rather than overhead. This alternative is feasible and environmentally friendly. We want to see risks minimised as well as a better electricity system serving all the people both North and South.”