

Health risks associated with pylons justify putting cables underground, meeting told

Radiation expert says high-voltage cables linked 'beyond reasonable doubt' with leukaemia



According to Denis Henshaw, a retired professor of human radiation effects at the University of Bristol, a study carried out in the UK into overground cables carried by pylons concluded that the costs of undergrounding more than matched the health costs involved. Photograph: David Sleator

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The health hazards connected with overground cables justify the costs of having them buried underground, a public meeting heard last night.

[Denis Henshaw](#), a retired professor of human radiation effects at the University of Bristol and a scientific director of the charity Children with Cancer UK, said high-voltage cables were linked “beyond reasonable doubt” to childhood leukaemia, adult leukaemia and adult brain tumours.

There was also “very strong evidence” to link them with Alzheimer’s disease and increased risk of miscarriage.

Prof Henshaw told a public meeting in Trim, Co Meath, organised by MEP [Marian Harkin](#) that a study carried out in the UK into overground cables carried by pylons concluded the costs of undergrounding more than matched the health costs involved. The EU recently concluded that radio frequency and electromagnetic fields exposure “do not unequivocally indicate an increased risk of brain tumours, and do not indicate an

increased risk for other cancers of the head and neck region, or other malignant diseases including childhood cancer”.

Adverse effects

However, Prof Henshaw said all living creatures were affected by electromagnetic fields and the evidence of adverse effects on human health had increased in recent years. “If they are buried, you are strongly mitigating against these emissions and the fields associated with power lines,” he said.

“From a health perspective, and only from a health perspective, my advice is to avoid the exposure and bury them in populated areas.”

Partial undergrounding of cables is a solution that has worked in other countries, according to Dr [Volker Wendt](#), public affairs manager of [Europacable](#), a lobby group for the European wire and cable industry.

Dr Wendt said the UK, France, [Netherlands](#) and Germany were among the countries having a similar debate.

“You are not alone in your views on this issue,” he said.

Prof Henshaw said there was only a one in 10 million chance that electromagnetic fields were not associated with adult leukaemia. He said the link “passes any criteria in science for proof”.

About 400 people attended the meeting in Trim.