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NEWS

Councils call for new look at wind farm guidelines

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Two local authorities are pressing the Government for new guidelines to deal with noise complaints from people living close to wind turbines.

Huntingdonshire District Council (HDC) and South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) claim existing legislation is inadequate for assessing low frequency noise, described as a “distant and irregular whoomp”, from wind turbines.

Both councils have received hundreds of complaints from people living in several villages around the Cotton Wind Farm in Graveley, but after carrying out an investigation and recording sound levels, environmental health officers concluded that under current legislation the noise did not constitute a nuisance.

They have, however, acknowledged concerns from local communities and will be working with Government and the Independent Noise Working Group to help produce new guidelines to assist those who have reported being unable to sleep due to the noise produced by the 90-metre blades. This will enable campaigners to take action against the wind farm operators.

Cllr Jason Ablewhite, leader of HDC, said: “Along with our council partners at SCDC we have worked together to find solutions for these issues that protect the amenities of our communities. However, it is now clear that the current regulatory tools available to us are inadequate. We have no hesitation in asking Government to review this situation so the needs of our residents are properly balanced with the requirements for renewable energy and we will continue to review the impact of Cotton Farm on the living environs of our respective villages.”

Cllr Ray Manning, leader of SCDC,



■ The wind farm in Graveley.

Picture: SUBMITTED

added: “We have spent a long time working with local communities to assess the issues local people have been telling us about. Both ourselves and HDC have talked to residents and been to various locations to carry out noise monitoring assessments. Unfortunately, the guidance we are operating to means the noise that exists is not classified as a statutory nuisance and that leaves us powerless to take action. We have left our investigation open as the key piece of information we now need is the guidance we have been promised by Government to assess low frequency sounds such as those that have been reported by residents. As soon as we have the information needed we will

look into this case once more.”

Campaigners have told *The Hunts Post* there was a high degree of noise over the Christmas period and that the turbines dominated the background noise.

Bev Gray, whose home is 1200 metres from the Cotton Wind Farm and has set up his own noise monitoring equipment, says neither council understands its own responsibilities and powers.

“They should be using BS4142:2014 as this is the noise specification for all and every other noise nuisance. They have the power over factory noise, airport noise, domestic noise, etc. Why is turbine noise different?”

“Think of a boy racer car with that loud thumping from the base speakers, which can actually hurt the ear drums of nearby pedestrians, this is the power or pressure behind the noise driving the sound. There are very low frequencies included in the turbine noise emissions that people cannot hear which can affect the brain. No studies have been done on this but it is known it does cause problems. Turbines of the size at Cotton Farm should be a minimum of 2km from the nearest habitation and there are about 800 homes inside the 2km from the turbines at Cotton Farm.”

The wind farm industry is thought to be worth between £6-£8 billion a year and is vital to the Government's drive to cut carbon emissions and provide renewable electricity generation.

In a statement, Greencoat, the company that owns Cotton Farm, said: “Since taking over ownership of the wind farm in October 2013, we have established a collaborative relationship with the residents' association, and look forward to continuing this. Greencoat UK Wind PLC is a responsible investor as well as a green investor and takes its social commitments very seriously.”