



Tough questions and criticism for wind farm developers and West Devon Borough Council

Report – p2

DBJRG reaction – below

Noise issues a key factor at Wind Farm group meeting

REACTION from the Den Brook Judicial Review Group following the CLG meeting held to discuss the Den Brook Wind Farm, where noise issues were a key factor: OBFUSCATION is clearly alive and well. Indeed, one might even say it's thriving. Despite straightforward and specifically targeted questions aimed for addressing widespread concerns, the Den Brook developer somehow managed to leave us as much in the dark as we had been before the meeting began.

All we required was a clear and honest explanation of whether our hard-won noise controls were in danger of being watered-down. Is that too much to ask when the Den Brook neighbourhood is about to be transformed from a tranquil pastoral landscape into a huge industrial electricity factory? We even submitted our questions well in advance, trusting in decency between fellow human beings and giving corpo-

rate developer RES the opportunity to respond in a timely, considered and truthful manner.

But it wasn't to be. We were simply told the noise measurement scheme was robust; tested by the foremost acoustics experts in the land, what's more! How dare we question the integrity of such an esteemed body when it's such a valued part of the wind industry supply chain and refuses point blank to answer our concerns.

We are mindful of the unfortunate, bewildered and innocent bystanders living around the Fullabrook wind farm just north of Barnstaple. They've already had to endure three-and-a-half years of unremitting noise and vibrations from the turbines sited there. There's more, much more. The villagers of Graveley near Cambridge record excessive amplitude modulated wind turbine noise for around 50 per cent of nights. Try sleeping with

that.

The local Borough Council are trumped by the industry's carefully constructed noise assessment guidance and have resorted to issuing a "Power of Motion" for the government to intervene.

Nevertheless, don't despair Den Brook. The Community Liaison Group, itself frustrated with the onslaught of duplicitous responses, formally passed a motion seeking written answers and clarification from not just the Den Brook Developer but also the local Council who is of course charged with ensuring the neighbourhood isn't acoustically harmed.

Our question is simply this: "Does stage 4(c) of the Den Brook developer's noise measurement scheme water-down its obligation to comply with noise condition 20?" Is that too difficult a question to answer or could it be they just don't really give a damn when a possibility of reduction in

corporate welfare enters into the equation?

• See meeting report in page 3.

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PROXIMITY OF ONE TURBINE TO RAIL LINE 'PUSHED UNDER CARPET', CLAIM

By Alan Quick

Devon District Council was noted.

Changes were made to the terms of reference, largely about the length of period the group would operate and local community definition.

There was discussion about the Local Electricity Discount Scheme (LEDS), and the benefits, expected to be at least £100 per year per household off the electricity bills of local residents.

Who would benefit from a shared supply was left for a more detailed response. Tax benefits were questioned with regard to LEDS and when it is payable.

Conditions, such as commenting on possible noise issues if these payments were accepted, would not exist RES confirmed.

COUNCIL NOT TOLD OF CABLE

Mr Wagstaff told the meeting that construction was proceeding well on site.

He said consent for the scheme was granted in 2009 and construction began in July 2015.

He explained that there was 6.5 km of site road and there would be 33kv grid connection running from the site to connect behind the North Tawton Cheese Factory.

North Tawton Town Council representatives said no approach about this cable had been made to the town council.

He said five turbine foundations had been completed and that the sixth site would be poured (with concrete) the day after the meeting.

He said 95 per cent of the site roads had been constructed and off site highway works had been completed.

He said the nine 75 metre hub height 2 MW V90 Vesta

turbines would produce 18 MW when installed.

The blade lengths was not mentioned.

He explained that the ground works should be completed in April and the turbines to be delivered by ship to Teignmouth and then transported by road in July.

Each one has three tower sections, three blades, a nacelle and hub.

Completion he explained would be in November 2016.

ONE TURBINE TOO CLOSE TO RAIL LINE

Tony Hill, from the Exeter/Okehampton Rail Consortium, raised the long-standing issue which has been raised many times before.

He said: "In the last 11 years there has been many instances of turbines falling over and blades falling off."

"The Department of Transport says turbines should be sited their height and 50 metres from roads and railways."

He said RES had "pushed

under the carpet" the issue that one turbine, if it fell over, could fall directly onto the Exeter/Okehampton rail line.

Mr Hill added that this line could see increased use if the "Dawlish effect" resulted in future further increase of traffic on the line.

He then called on RES to move construction of the turbine in question away from the rail line.

Mr Wagstaff said safety was the most important thing and that a report stated that the turbine proximity had concluded that it was safe at the intended distance.

Mr Hill insisted: "I am far from convinced that you are not violating regulations."

"Most people think this needs to be looked at and your company has the power to alter it."

One member of the audience said it would be easier to move the turbine before it was built than move the railway line afterwards.

Another member of the audience said that despite the safety report, it was "foolhardy" if it was constructed within 90 metres.

WHIDDON DOWN JUNCTION ISSUES

There was strong criticism for RES about its recently installed new road junction at Whiddon Down which was built to ease the delivery of the turbines.

There has been anger and confusion about signs at the new junction which has resulted in a spate of accidents.

Temporary barriers and traffic cones have now been put up to mark out part of the new road layout.

One member of the public highlighted how unsafe it was for residents of Hole Farm to walk up the road since the scheme had been completed.

He called for land to be purchased and a footpath to be created.

Mr Wagstaff said that new signage was being prepared and a meeting

had been held with Devon County Council and Drewsteignton Parish Council as well as local residents and businesses to discuss the issues.

"We have taken this on board", he outlined.

"We have chevron signs there and cones at the moment and will be adding white lining in due process."

Lighting was also suggested, speed restrictions were questioned and changes to an "imbalance of the camber" also suggested.

Mr Wagstaff was questioned about who the future owners of the Wind Farm would be and said he was unable to say at this stage.

TURBINE NOISE ISSUES

There were long and frank discussions about po-

tential noise issues from the turbines when constructed.

Dave Sexton said he believed the conditions imposed upon RES were "technically robust" and that WDBC was happy to approve them.

Discussions included both tonal noise and AM noise and complaint procedures should there be noise issues.

Complaints and compliance were discussed in detail and there were questions over whether sound would be "filtered" as recorded.

Details about the Wind Farm can be found on the website: www.den-brook.co.uk.

• See statement in page 7 concerning noise issues raised at the meeting.



The entrance to the Den Brook wind farm site off the A3072 between Bow and North Tawton. AQ 8767