

How they 'hide' the wind farm noise

Your correspondent replying to David Bellamy's letter on wind farms says that he cannot hear any noise when standing underneath the blades of a wind turbine (Letters, September 5). This is a phenomenon well understood by developers who will encourage anyone threatened by a wind farm to seek out a convenient turbine and stand underneath it to satisfy themselves that there is no-noise problem and thus no cause to object to their plans.

The reality of the matter is somewhat different. The noise perceived by those living within a mile or more of a wind farm, and particularly if downwind, is caused by the pressure wave that is generated each time a turbine blade passes the mast. For a single turbine these broad-band pressure fluctuations are not excessively intrusive, but where several turbines operate in proximity the pulses move into and out of phase, creating a doubling, tripling or more in the sound level, depending

on how many turbines are grouped together.

Several low-magnitude pulse trains thus cause noise with an unexpectedly strong impulsive character whenever they synchronise. This is inaudible close to each individual turbine but is known to be the cause of considerable distress at greater distances. The effect is much more noticeable at night due to the greater differential between air flow at ground level and hub height and also the greater sound-carrying capability of the cooler night air.

The wind industry and the Department of Trade and Industry are not unaware of the problem but prefer to ignore it. Instead, they rely on research completed in 1997 that has little relevance to the serious low-frequency noise problems arising from the latest generation of monster wind turbines. This is disgraceful but sadly symptomatic of the whole wind power ethos.

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