

WIND TURBINE FIRM IN 'NORMAL NOISE' SURVEY

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Wind turbine firm in 'normal noise' survey

Developers behind controversial plans for three giant wind turbines on a picturesque site in the Westcountry are planning to carry out a noise survey in the area - despite claiming that residents would not hear anything from the 100-metre high structures.

Residents say that NPower, the developer, told them that there was a high enough level of background noise in the area to cover up the sounds made by the three structures, which would be built on land near the A381 between Kingsbridge and Totnes, next to the turning for Goveton in the South Hams.

But the company's findings were based on a computer calculation of the ambient noise in the area.

Now NPower has conducted a U-turn on its original plans by agreeing to hold a noise survey in the area, after concerns were raised by residents at a packed public meeting just two weeks ago.

In a letter to Dave Mitchell, secretary of South Hams Opposed to Unsightly Turbines (SHOUT), NPower renewables developer Chris Lloyd said: "Due to the level of concern about noise pollution which was expressed at the recent meeting, I am looking at establishing noise monitoring locations around the proposed development, so that should the Environmental Health Officer at South Hams District Council deem monitoring to be necessary before determining the application, we can proceed with the monitoring with limited delay."

He said a noise expert had identified five locations where background noise monitoring equipment would be installed to provide an "accurate understanding" of background noise levels surrounding the proposal.

The letter also issued an ultimatum stating that it was to the "benefit" of residents to have the monitoring in the "most suitable position" to "genuinely determine the current natural levels".

It was not known when the monitoring would take place.

However residents said it was needed because they claimed there was no background noise in the area - despite NPower's original claims that there was.

Mr Mitchell said: "When NPower put in the planning application, they made certain assumptions about ambient noise and they referred it back to the noise that the turbines would create.

"The ambient noise in Goveton was based on readings from a computer programme because they have not taken any actual readings.

"They have now decided that gathering actual readings is what they have to do because they felt that from the meeting, South Hams District Council demanded that from them.

"It is inappropriate for them not to follow the planning policies specifically, not only in terms of doing actual readings but also in that they hold a proper consultation exercise.

"I do believe it is necessary for them to do this so they can actually defend their planning application. But there is no background noise in the village.

"These things will be quite noisy but they said that because of the background noise in the area, we wouldn't hear them.

"Because there is no background noise, we feel the noise from the turbines will exceed appropriate levels and there will be an environment impairment, not just from sound but also visually," he said.

"Our belief is that the best thing about the south of Devon is the environment and that is why we get so many tourists, people buying properties down here and also why people want to live here.

"By desecrating that environment, a lot of damage is going to be done to the local people and the environment."

On Thursday, the WMN exclusively revealed that the value of a home belonging to a couple who live next to the proposed site has been slashed by independent valuers by £165,000 because of the turbine plans.