

# Landowner withdraws from windfarm project

Exclusive

## Paul Andrews

PLANS for a major windfarm in Cornwall have been put on hold after a landowner pulled out of the project in the face of local opposition.

Ken Barriball said local campaigners had acted "disgracefully" and the proposals became "too much hassle". The 80-year-old also accused people of "bribing" farmers with bottles of wine into joining the anti-windfarm campaign.

"I never agreed to go ahead, just to an initial assessment. So many lies have been told and the whole thing got distorted," he said.

"I tried to communicate with people but they didn't want to know. Some of the reaction I got was disgraceful."

However Mr Barriball's son Stephen, 39, said the family held "no hard feelings" towards the opponents of the windfarm and that he was eager "to rebuild community relations".

Renewable Energy Systems had applied to North Cornwall District Council to install an anemometer, a device to measure wind speed, on Mr Barriball's Creddacott Farm at Week St Mary. The device would have assessed the viability of the site for a windfarm of 18 turbines, each 278ft high.

Several other farmers were involved in the assessment.

But Mr Barriball, who had the largest area of land available, has now withdrawn the offer to allow his 300-acre farm to be used for the scheme.

He said: "It was all taken out of proportion. I became involved because I am a caretaker of the land and as such I have a responsibility to the country and the Government."

A spokesman for Renewable Energy Systems said Mr Barriball had been put under "serious duress" by campaigners. She said: "We are not going ahead at the moment because of the serious duress Mr Barriball has been put under. The project is now on hold, but we have not pulled out. The situation is under review as to how it should be handled."

When the proposals were first introduced, an action group was formed by people living in Week St Mary and nearby villages including Jacobstow and Canworthy Water. Well-known environmentalist Professor David Bellamy

added his support.

They claimed the turbines would scar the landscape, bring down the value of houses and damage tourism. The group also believed there would be "significant" local damage caused by bringing the structures into the village.

Public reaction on both sides of the argument was so strong that at one point police were called in to investigate the theft of some 100 anti-windfarm placards from front gardens.

Last night, a spokesman for the group, No To Creddacott and Exe Turbines, denied it had acted inappropriately.

Chairman Jeremy Ward said: "I am completely mystified and very disappointed to hear that this is how Mr Barriball feels.

"We ran a very organised campaign and were careful in our approach and in all we have done. We organised a poster and leaflet campaign and used the Press.

"We approached the landowners and had talks with them. It has all been run properly."

Mr Ward said the group was "delighted" that the plans had now been put on hold. He said: "Mr Barriball has been very courageous in making this decision. The landscape and the area was going to pay a far too heavy price."

The Barriballs are expected to announce their decision in the local parish magazine. The statement they have prepared reads: "After looking at the possibility of a windfarm at Creddacott we have decided to take this project no further for the foreseeable future."

Former TV presenter Noel Edmonds, who opposes windfarms, said landowners thinking of selling land to windfarm developers should be aware of the opposition they might face from local people.

The Barriballs' decision came after opponents of another controversial windfarm plan in North Devon launched a High Court bid to derail the development.

London-based solicitor Susan Ring has applied to try to quash plans for three 266ft turbines at Higher Darracott, near Torrington, given permission on behalf of Pat and Arthur Paulton, who live 500 metres from the site designated for the windfarm. Ms Ring, of legal firm Richard Buxton, said: "If the Government builds roads it compensates people who fall within the development area, so why should people who live near turbines not be treated the same?"

[pandrews@westernmorningnews.co.uk](mailto:pandrews@westernmorningnews.co.uk)