

## WINDFARM PLANS SLAMMED BY CPRE

MARK CLOUGH

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Plans for what would become Devon's biggest wind turbine site have been condemned by an environmental lobby group, which said the proposal was in fact a "massive industrial development". PLANS for what would become Devon's biggest wind turbine site have been condemned by an environmental lobby group, which said the proposal was in fact a "massive industrial development".

The Devon group of the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) made its criticism in its formal objection to the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to the plan to build a windfarm at Fullabrook Down between Braunton and Ilfracombe.

The CPRE has already fought windfarm proposals in the North Devon area and veteran campaigner Tony Bohannan has submitted a lengthy document outlining the organisation's opposition to the proposed windfarm.

Mr Bohannan said the CPRE objected "strongly" to the windfarm and recommended that it should be refused.

He said that even the use of the term windfarm was wrong. "Windfarm is a misnomer. This is an electricity generating station; a massive industrial development in the open, exposed countryside, five kilometres long and four kilometres across, reaching to over 350m (1,130ft) above sea level," he said.

"It will occupy a far greater area than just Fullabrook Down itself. Visually, it will dominate across the whole of North Devon - indeed it will be by far the highest feature in the whole of Devon."

The application submitted to the DTI by Devon Wind Power proposes 22 wind turbines 360ft high to the blade tip.

Mr Bohannan said the applicant acknowledged that the development would be highly visible, but CPRE disputed the applicant's submission that the visual impact would not reach beyond about three miles from the site. Mr Bohannan said the landscape was open and from the site there were "clear, unobstructed sight-lines to Exmoor, Dartmoor, Hartland, Lundy and Wales".

Mr Bohannan said the CPRE disputed Devon Wind Power's claim that the visual impact on the North Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) would be "moderate and limited" because the terrain between the windfarm and the AONB was well-wooded.

"Apart from the fact that trees in North Devon rarely reach higher than 70ft and these turbines are 360ft high, the fact is that there are no woods intervening between the AONB and the windfarm site," Mr Bohannan said.

He added that there was also concern that there would be visual overlap with the approved windfarm at Bradworthy, where three turbines, 246-ft high are being built and are due to be up and running early next year.

The CPRE submission also contains trenchant criticism of the claims made about the generation capacity of the proposed turbines, which would be enough to supply at least 40,000 "households".

"A household is a meaningless unit for expressing windfarm output. We need to be told the true likely input of electricity from this windfarm into the grid and the data on which it is based," said Mr Bohannan.

He added that the CPRE was also extremely concerned about the impact on the local environment.

"People, residents and visitors, do not, as some developers seem to imagine, just sit in their houses with the windows shut, hiding from the impact of these turbines," Mr Bohannan said.

"Instead they stroll through the villages, walk the lanes and footpaths, work in the fields and enjoy wide access to the open countryside - more so now under the right to roam.

"Their environment will be wholly dominated and changed out of all recognition by these turbines. This offends against their lawful human rights."

Mr Bohannan said the wind turbines would have an adverse impact on the local quality of life. "No one can with any credibility claim that these giant turbines will in anyway improve the local quality of life," he said.

"This is a rural area recorded as having a very low ambient noise level, and with a significant number of individual households and small settlements, distributed evenly across the area.

"Many will have turbines within a few hundred metres. These giant turbines will be bad, unwelcome neighbours - not just their noise, but their dominating presence."

Mr Bohannan said the development would leave the area "wholly industrialised". "The local people have lived under this threat of windfarm development on their doorstep for some 12 years now. It is time this threat was lifted," he said.

CPRE has also warned that the proposed development would hit the local economy.

"The number, size and distribution of these turbines is such that they will change out of all recognition, the peaceful, unspoilt, beautiful nature of this area that is so attractive to visitors and vital to the important local tourist industry," said Mr Bohannan.

"Again, no one can claim with any credibility that this windfarm will not have a significant, adverse impact on the local economy, especially the hard-pressed farmer where bed and breakfast is an essential economic lifeline."

The CPRE has said that the application ought to be determined at a local level, either by the local authority or by an inspector at a planning inquiry, where there could be a detailed examination of the area for the proposed turbines.

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