**Fullabrook windfarm public meeting minutes**

**Tuesday 29 September 2015**

**The Ilfracombe Centre**

**Panel:**

* Jeremy Mann, Head of Environmental Health and Housing, North Devon Council
* Andy Cole, Service lead, Environmental Protection, North Devon Council
* Claire Holm, Customer and Corporate Communications Manager, North Devon Council
* Majella McCarron, Community Liasion, ESBI
* Ian Whitehead, GB Windfarm Manager, ESBI

**Apologies**

Apologies were received from Cllr Joe Tucker

**Introduction:**

Jeremy Mann introduced the panel and then outlined the agenda for the evening:

* To respond to the three challenges posed by the audience at the previous public meeting in February
* How NDC will update its website with all the relevant documents
* ESBI to give a position statement on sound monitoring
* Questions from the floor

**The three challenges**

1. **The community wanted reassurance that monitoring at seven locations would be representative of the worst case scenario across the whole affected area**

Andy Cole explained he approached the council’s acoustic consultant Bob Davis and asked him to further expand on why he felt the locations chosen were representative of the area. He responded with the following key points:

* He is satisfied that the equipment, position and measurement used met the requirements of the planning conditions
* That the monitoring followed recognised best practice
* He carried out several site visits and was confident the sites chosen were representative
* He couldn’t absolutely guarantee that under certain atmospheric conditions, the noise levels wouldn’t slightly exceed the noise levels
* He couldn’t justify NDC asking ESBI to change the scope of their monitoring exercise

Jeremy Mann explained the contents of Mr Davis’ report will be put on the council’s website if people want more detail.

**Question from audience: What time period should the noise monitoring be carried out according to best practice?**

Andy Cole explained that it’s the range of different weather conditions that needs to be captured rather than a specific length of time and that Bob Davis is satisfied that all the conditions have been captured

**Comments from audience: It’s disappointing that Bob Davis isn’t here**

Jeremy Mann explained that the community had asked us to provide reassurance over the adequacy of the monitoring and we now have that in a comprehensive report. We are happy to receive feedback on it and relay that back to Mr Davis but there was no point in going to the added expense of bringing him here tonight.

Jeremy invited the residents to appraise the information that we will place on our website and then pose any further questions.

**Question from the audience: How old is the best practice guidance?**

Andy Cole advised that the original ETSU guidance was produced in 1997 and that the current best practice guidance was produced in 2013.

1. **The community asked the council to carry out random checks on the monitoring to ensure it was being carried out correctly**

Andy Cole advised the residents to look at Mr Davis’ report which we’ll place on the council’s website as it was an easy to read document.

He explained that Mr Davis carried out several unannounced checks using almost identical equipment to ESBI. The original testing identified some anomalies and Mr David discovered his equipment was faulty. So he repeated the exercise with Andy accompanying him on several occasions to verify he was happy with Mr Davis’ approach. Mr Davis then compared his raw data with ESBI’s and it was virtually identical within acceptable tolerances. Mr Davis concluded that the ESBI monitoring was carried out in a competent manner, using the appropriate equipment in accordance with best practice.

**Question from the audience: The double monitoring was only carried out over a short period of time – what does the best practice say about this?**

Jeremy Mann explained that this exercise was not about collecting data for noise monitoring purposes, it was to check that the monitoring being carried out by ESBI was being done correctly. It was to ensure consistency and accuracy. He will, however, ask Mr Davis why he is confident that such a short double monitoring exercise was adequate.

**Question from the audience: Will the monitoring be consistent in all weather conditions?**

Andy explained that the equipment used by both Mr Davis and ESBI were of comparable type and sensitivities. It should give the community confidence that the readings in any meteorological conditions would be the same but we will provide further reassurance on this point.

1. **The community wanted reassurance that the previously agreed control measures required were being undertaken on the windfarm**

Andy explained that ESBI provided some raw data that was reviewed by Andy and he consulted Bob Davis for further reassurance and they both came to the same conclusion that the mitigation strategy was being adhered to.

Ian Whitehead explained there were three elements of mitigation:

* Speed control
* Blade pitch
* Total shutdown

He also explained all the turbines were put into ‘delta’ mode to ease tonal noise and that a number of turbines had been shut down for a number of hours.

There is also an alert on the turbines if any of the settings are tampered with.

Jeremy said this gave him a high degree of confidence that ESBI were complying with the mitigation strategy. Bob Davis has advised the council to ask for ESBI to report to NDC at regular points in the future to give further reassurance. Jeremy said he agreed with these recommendations and would seek to put such arrangements in place once compliance had been achieved.

**ESBI position statement**

Majella McCarron explained that the monitoring exercise began at the beginning of the year and it has now been completed and the equipment has been removed. She said they expect the report from their consultants Hayes McKenzie by the end of October.

**Question from the audience: How can the monitoring be finished when it’s not been carried out throughout the worst months of the year?**

Majella explained that it’s not about the length of time, it’s about capturing data across all the required wind sectors. She also pointed out that monitoring was carried out throughout February which is a harsh winter month and can be very windy. The criteria was to gather data from all wind directions and that they are confident that they have captured all the data needed.

**Question from the audience: But it’s not just about wind, it’s about temperature, whether there are leaves on the trees etc**

Andy Cole reiterated the point made by Majella that the data is needed for wind speed and that’s it’s commonly accepted by the acoustics industry that this is not necessarily required over all four seasons. Bob Davis has previously provided some information on this and we will place that on our website.

**Next steps**

Jeremy Mann explained that ESBI are expecting the Hayes McKenzie report by the end of October. Andy Cole and Bob Davis will then review it and we will feed back the results to the public as soon as we can. Only then can the council make a comment on the course of action it will take if there is still non-compliance with the planning conditions.

**Questions from the audience: How can we have confidence in this data when the controls on the light flicker aren’t working?**

Jeremy Mann said that light flicker had not been raised with us recently but we will independently review that data to give reassurance.

Ian Whitehead explained that he was aware of a problem with light flicker. The sensor on that particular turbine had been checked and was working but the timing hadn’t been adjusted as expected. He apologized for this and explained it now needed manual programming. He asked anyone having problems with light flicker to get in touch with him directly so he can investigate.

Jeremy Mann said that people should also tell the council with all noise and flicker complaints so they are logged with us.

Andy Cole explained that planning needed to know because they can refer to good practice guidance on whether alleged instances of flicker actually constitute light flicker as the guidance offers a definition of ‘light flicker’..

Jeremy said he’d discuss this with planning colleagues and feed back and may invite a planning colleague to the next public meeting.

**Question from the audience: What is non-light flicker?**

Cllr Rodney Cann said it was obviously an issue and that ESBI should take direct action.

Ian Whitehead responded saying changes can be made straight away and he doesn’t know why this particular problem hadn’t been sorted but he’d follow it up in the morning.

**Question from the audience: Surely the sun is in the same place at the same time of year so it should be easy to sort it out?**

Ian Whitehead confirmed this was correct and once it’s been programmed, it will work.

**Comment from the audience: The Institute of Acoustics are doing a site visit tomorrow and they say on their website that the latest data is available.**

Andy Cole said he will follow this up in the morning with the Institute of Acoustics..

**Comment from the audience: Some people are feeling it’s not worth coming to these meetings as they are fed up with listening to the same excuses**

Jeremy Mann said that it was a matter of fact that noise levels had reduced and we will update the chronology to show what has been happening so residents can be assured that action is being taken.

**Comment from the audience: But we are still suffering a great deal of noise.**

Jeremy Mann explained that the council’s obligation is to ensure compliance with the planning conditions but we also have a duty to investigate noise nuisance and it is out commitment to make things right but our fist priority has got to be securing planning compliance.

**Question from the audience: What wind speeds/directions was the compliance assessment tested against?**

Andy Cole said the compliance was made in accordance with ETSU and best practice guidance but he would be happy to look into this further if the gentleman put his specific query in writing. We will then publish the correspondence on our website.

**Question from Cllr Cann: This shouldn’t just be about meeting planning conditions but also the wider noise nuisance.**

Jeremy confirmed that this is the case but planning compliance is the first priority and we cannot speculate what action we may or may not take further down the road. We do have a commitment to see this through and will take a report to the council’s Executive.

**Comment from the audience: These turbines were designed to be out at sea, not on land and it’s made life very uncomfortable with local residents.**

**Question from the audience: I’ve heard there have been 30 complaints made about ‘amplitude modulation’(AM) – what have we done about it? There’s now a working group looking at developing a planning condition to control it.**

Jeremy Mann explained we are trying to secure planning compliance as set out in the planning application and this does not feature. However, if people are experiencing noise issues, we will investigate.

**Comment from the audience: Denbrook windfarm has an AM condition on it.**

Jeremy Mann said he’d look at complaints received so far but there is no AM condition on Fullabrook and our first priority is to meet these planning conditions.

When compliance is met, we will investigate noise nuisance, including allegations of amplitude modulation.

**Question from audience: Can you match your data against AM and compare the levels against Denbrook?**

Jeremy Mann reiterated we are seeking planning compliance first, all other noise issues will be looked at afterwards.

**Question from audience: Can the ESBI data report be sent to residents ahead of the next meeting so we can read it in advance?**

Jeremy Mann - Yes

**Question from audience: Can we compare data against the previous data in an east to understand way?**

Jeremy Mann – Yes

Jeremy urged the public to continue to make representations to help us investigate but strongly advised residents not to use technical terms they had picked up that they didn’t fully understand. He advised them to use their own words to describe the noise and using technical terms would not add any weight to their complaint and in fact, could discredit them if the term being used was found to be incorrect. It could undermine the credibility of their complaint if they say they are experiencing something you are not.

**Question from the audience: Could we have a daytime meeting and nearer where we live?**

The consensus was that as a lot of people work, after work is the best time but it could be earlier at 6.30 and could be at West Down Village Hall.

The panel all offered to supply their email addresses to the residents:

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ian.whitehead@esb.ie

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**Meeting closed 9pm**