



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
Secretary of State
Department of Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

16th January 2017

Dear Greg,

Heckington Fen Wind Farm – variation application

I am writing regarding the Heckington Fen Wind Farm S36 Variation Application, submitted by the developer Ecotricity to increase the length of the blades fitted to their 22 wind turbines consented back in 2013, along with seeking to amend the MOD Radar Mitigation Condition 5, to commence ground works prior to agreement and testing of any software solution to safeguard operations around the local RAF stations.

The variation application, along with the initial application back in 2009, has caused a great deal of ongoing concern within the affected local communities in my constituency. I have had sight of a joint letter signed by my predecessor Stephen Phillips QC and Matt Warman MP, which states:

“A grouping of local affected Parish Councils and residents has commissioned Dr John Yelland, a highly qualified and respected acoustician, to investigate the Noise Impact Assessment, submitted as an integral part of the original planning application and his report has now been submitted to your department.

“Dr Yelland’s report makes for concerning reading. He finds that, amongst other defects, the background noise surveys that were carried out were deeply flawed. These are the background noise measurements made at a number of homes close to any proposed wind farm, typically over a period of four weeks, and are fundamental to the creation of any valid noise impact assessment report.

“The original consent was nevertheless granted, in spite of the applicant’s use of defective and non-compliant noise data. Dr Yelland concludes that the project in its original form would already have significantly exceeded the Government’s permitted noise limits. If the variation application were granted relying on the original noise impact assessment the project would exceed those limits by an even greater margin.”



The report dated 6th June 2016 has been forwarded to your Department, along with two accompanying appendices A & B, which provide important documentation in the form of detailed photographic evidence and letters from residents.

Appendix B also included copies of letters from those residents who hosted the background noise monitoring equipment (requesting the data recorded during the monitoring period in March 2011- April 2011, to enable a full evaluation of the data for comparison with the data analysis derived and provided by Ecotricity's acousticians Hoare Lea, as these residents are entitled to do), copies of the response letters received from Hoare Lea declining to provide the data and suggesting they write to Ecotricity (which they subsequently did, only to receive no response to date). Dr Yelland also wrote to your Department requesting that Ecotricity be encouraged to provide this data, but also to date no response has been received.

The letter continues:

"In the light of Dr Yelland's report the District Council, (NKDC) are investigating the implications arising from this and would therefore benefit from the call for compliant background noise surveys to be carried out jointly by the developer's chosen independent noise consultant and Dr Yelland. The six Parish Councils and community resident's action group would also support this course of action.

"The data produced from this survey would be analysed and reported jointly if both these parties are in agreement or separately if they are not. By independent we mean acousticians who are not predominantly employed by or contracted to the wind energy industry. This would allow for your officials to have full knowledge of the facts before coming to a decision.

"We write to make you aware of our concern as Members representing the affected communities, and we would be grateful for your assurance that the report, and our requests for further background noise surveys and noise impact assessment(s), will be fully taken into account before any decision is considered or made."

I have recently met with representatives from the local community who have advised me that your Department has now opened a third round of consultations. Our Local Planning Authority, North Kesteven District Council, state in their Planning Officer's Report to the Planning Committee:

"The Ministerial Statement does have relevance to this application, although it should be noted that it falls within both the Electricity and Planning Acts. The development site, like the whole of the District, is not specifically identified



within the Local Plan as an area suitable for wind energy development and therefore the second element that of demonstrating that the planning impacts identified by local communities have been fully addressed, and therefore the proposal has their backing, is applicable. At present there are outstanding objections to the proposal from the local community in relation to matters including noise impact."

NKDC then make this recommendation:

"In light of the conflicting technical noise reports that exist, the District Council strongly advise that the Secretary of State commission his own fully independent Noise Impact Assessment in order to have full regard to the likely noise impacts that the proposed revised development will have upon the residential amenity of nearby residents. This is particularly important as the Secretary of State is the decision maker for the proposal and as such has a duty to satisfy himself that full regard has been given to all the likely impacts that the development will result in, and then to carefully balance such considerations as part of the overall decision making process. The existence of competing technical noise impact reports suggests that that at this time, the Secretary of State is not in a position to make a robust planning decision on the merits of the revised proposal".

I fully support my predecessor and Matt Warman MP in their request for a new noise survey. This needs to be undertaken in an open and transparent way to ensure that my constituents have confidence that every effort is being made to protect them from potential harm from adverse wind turbine noise impacts.

I would be grateful for your comments.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Caroline Johnson MP

