

CRUNCH TIME ON TURBINE DECISION

Wind farm challenge gets High Court hearing date

EXCLUSIVE

by Caroline Abbott

THE appeal against the decision to approve a wind farm in the Den Brook valley is set to be heard at the High Court in London next month.

Following a public inquiry last year, Renewable Energy Systems (RES) was given approval in December for a development of nine turbines — each 120m high or three times the height of Exeter Cathedral — on a site



Mike Hulme

between Bow, Spreyton and North Tawton.

But Spreyton resident Mike Hulme, 61, is challenging inspector Andrew Pykett's decision on the grounds that the noise condition imposed is defectively worded and unenforceable,

and therefore does not provide essential protection for local residents in the event of excessive noise, which could have health implications.

The case will be heard at the High Court on Tuesday, July 27, and Wednesday, July 28.

"I've come so far, I've got to see it through," said Mr Hulme, who has been campaigning for more than five years and has been through one High Court appeal already with the Den Brook

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Hearing set for wind farm plea

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Judicial Review Group (DBJRG).

"I'm determined to get proper noise conditions in place," he said.

The issue has been drawn out so long, Mr Hulme is having to undertake the latest battle in his own name, not that of the DBJRG.

"The work is horrendous and I'm on this pretty much full time," said Mr Hulme, whose Volvo car maintenance business has taken a back seat.

He said one of the biggest problems is raising funds, and in a worst case scenario the upcoming court case could cost him £10,000 to £15,000 — and that doesn't cover any of his time.

"I've had donations from other parts of the country," said Mr Hulme. "It's a national issue — that's why I'm still fighting it."

Mr Hulme has been to an inquiry in Huntingdon, near Cambridge, where noise was challenged on a major scale.

He said: "The decision, expected in early July, will be interesting and will probably have a bearing on Den Brook."

RES claims the development will supply "clean, green electricity equivalent to the needs of 8,000 homes" and generate a community fund of £27,000 a year. It also claims there will be no noise nuisance.

RES project manager Helen Hall told the Gazette: "The Den Brook wind farm proposal has already been through two rigorous public inquiries, both of which concluded that it should be allowed to go ahead, so we are confident that the High Court will come to the same conclusion.

"The continuing delay is frustrating, because the wind farm could by now be generating clean, renewable electricity for Devon and helping in the fight against climate change.

"We are also receiving repeat inquiries from businesses in the South West looking to tender for aspects of the construction work, which unfortunately we have to keep putting off.

"The project has always had local support and recently a community liaison group has been established, through which local residents are working constructively with us to help the community benefit financially from the project once it is built."