

## Wind farms can cause noise problems finds study

Article by Louise Gray, Environment Correspondent, Telegraph, [www.telegraph.co.uk](http://www.telegraph.co.uk) 28 January 2010

The noise caused by wind farms can make some people ill, according to experts.

The study by a panel of independent experts found that the irritation caused by the noise around wind farms can effect certain individuals.

Scientists dismissed the idea of a "wind turbine syndrome" where the vibrations in the air or the particular sound waves from wind turbines cause headaches, nausea and panic attacks.

However, they did concede that the swishing sound caused by wind turbines can "annoy" some people, keeping them awake at night and even causing psychological problems because of the stress.

The Government is planning on building thousands more wind farms onshore and the report has led calls for more research into the noise effects caused by the turbines.

But the wind industry said if wind turbines were harmful, it would be impossible to live in a city given the sound levels normally present in urban environments.

The Government insisted that wind farms do not have a direct impact on health.

Wind farms have traditionally been seen by protesters as a blot on the British countryside, but it has now emerged that their noise may make people ill.

A new study found no evidence for "wind turbine syndrome" where the wind farms directly cause a host of health problems such as headaches, nausea and panic attacks.

But the swishing sound caused by wind turbines can be a problem for certain people, causing sleep deprivation and even mental health problems.

It has sparked renewed debate on the Government's plans for more onshore wind and led to calls for more research into the problems caused by noise.

A panel of independent experts in public health, audiology and medicine looked at peer-reviewed studies on the health effects of wind turbines.

Wind Turbine Sound and Health Effects, commissioned by the American Wind Energy Association, found that some people may be "annoyed" by the sound of wind turbines. A major cause of concern is the fluctuating nature of the sound, which is particularly stressful for some people because it is difficult to get accustomed to intermittent noise.

Dr Geoff Leventhall, an honorary fellow of the UK's Institute of Acoustics and one of the authors of the study, said noise from wind turbines can disturb people in the same way as any other noise pollution, such as an airport nearby.

"The conclusions of our report were that the main effects of wind turbines noise is similar to the effect of any other noise and will disturb people if they are listening to a noise they do not want to hear. One of the main effects is sleep disturbance which can lead to other stress related effects."

Presenting the evidence at a Wind Turbine Noise meeting organised by the IOA in Cardiff, he emphasised that only a small number of people find the noise distressing, which can lead to sleep deprivation and psychological problems.

"The number of people who suffer these extreme effects are small and \*\* if the turbines are designed properly the effects are minimised even further," he added.

Jane Davis is hoping to take the country's first private nuisance case against a wind farm to the High Court.

The 54-year-old was forced to move from her home in Lincolnshire after eight wind turbines were built in 2006.

The qualified nurse said one in five wind farms cause noise problems for the local people.

"All I know is the amount of health problems people have suffered since [the turbines were put up] seem to be excessive in relation to what was happening," she said. "Those symptoms include sleep deprivation, tinnitus, vertigo, depression, raised blood pressure, atrial fibrillation (abnormal heart beat), needing to go the lavatory at night more often than you would normally, pneumonia, ear infections, stomach disorders and psychological stress."

Mrs Davis said 190 campaigners around the country have complained of noise and are expected to consider legal proceedings if the test case is successful.

"This is not Nimbyism. These things have devastated my life and continue to do so," she said. "The last four years have been hell and there has been no redress."

The Government has plans to build up to 6,000 new turbines onshore over the next ten years.

Mary Stevens, policy officer at the charity Environment Protection UK, said there will need to be more research into the problems caused by noise.

"While we fully support the deployment of renewable energy, we believe, that like any major development, the siting and operation of wind farms must be carried out with full regard to any significant and lasting impacts on local environmental quality and health," she said.

However the British Wind Energy Association pointed out that the new report said there were no direct health effects from wind farms.

"The findings of the study tally with UK research on the subject. In 2007 a Government-backed study carried out by the University of Salford found that only one wind farm in the UK was ever found to present a noise nuisance to residents and the issue has since been resolved," a spokesman said.

Wind turbines by numbers

The Government wants to built up to 6,000 new wind turbines on land over the next ten years.

At the moment there are more than 2,500 turbines onshore.

The turbines are around 300ft high

Onshore wind provides around 2.5 per cent of the country's electricity needs

The current limit for noise is 43 maximum decibels at night

Campaigners want it reduced to 33 decibels at night