

People within 1K at risk

Experts at oral hearing in Glenties say wind farm will have health impacts

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Experts called by objectors against the proposed wind farm at Straboy near Glenties say people living closest to the project will have a high risk of experiencing sleep disturbance and effects to their health.

Experts on sleep medicine and noise gave evidence on the third day of the oral hearing into the Straboy Wind Energy's proposed project at Straboy 1.4km from Glenties.

Donegal County Council granted planning permission for 22 of the proposed 25 turbines in January

Dr. Christopher Hanning, an honorary consultant in sleep disorders medicine, told the hearing that there is compelling evidence from two recent studies in the US and New Zealand that wind turbine noise disturbs sleep and can impair the health of people living too close to turbines. He said current guidance over the set back distances of homes from wind farms, which is 500 metres in Ireland, gives inad-

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equate protection. He said inadequate or poor quality sleep can cause obesity, poor memory, increased risk of diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure as well as sleepiness and fatigue. Groups including children, the elderly and those suffering from autism may be at greater risk.

In a lengthy report to the oral hearing, Dr. Hanning disputed the assertion in the Environmental Impact Assessment by the developer that the area is relatively uninhabited saying that there up to 46 dwellings with up to 70 people occupants living within 1.5km of the proposed project.

He said people living within 1km of the wind farm are at a high risk of sleep disturbance and impairment to their health and those liv-

ing at up to 1.5km are at risk of sleep disturbance and impairment to their health.

He said that Irish and UK guidelines were technically inadequate and did not provide adequate protection to sleep quality of people living near wind turbines.

Dr. Hanning said there "is no published evidence that wind turbines are safe with respect to sleep disturbance and health" at the distances proposed at the Straboy wind farm.

"Not a single paper can be offered, merely unsubstantiated assertions and assumptions," that wind farms are safe at those distances while there is good evidence that people living within 1.5km are "at significant risk of disturbance to their sleep and consequent effects on their health," he said.

Dr Dick Bowdler, a Scottish-based noise consultant, criticised the application saying "no credible noise assessment, whatsoever made of

this development by the applicant".

He said the assessment by the applicant does not provide a description of the likely significant effects of the wind farm on the environment as required under EU environmental assessment directives. He said 40 properties would fail to meet Donegal County Council's planning condition that the turbines should

not exceed a noise level of 40 decibels. He said compliance with Irish guidance does not mean there will be no impact. Twenty-six properties close to the turbines failed to meet Irish guidance levels for night time and 54 dwellings did not adhere to the latest World Health Organisation for sleep disturbance.



As the Bord Pleanala held their public meeting at The Highlands Hotel in Glenties, massive poles for the heavy duty power lines make their way through the town. Photo Brian McDaid. 1510bd113

Residents speak of fears about