

BREEZE BLOCK: Tunstall Hills Protection Group members, from left, Barry Robinson, Allan White, Barbara Mason and Sheila Liddle.

An ill wind



Campaigners vow to protect Tunstall Hills

CAMPAIGNERS today vowed to fight any attempt to build a wind turbine near a historic Wearside beauty spot.

Protestors have battled repeated attempts by developers to build a golf course extension and relief road at Tunstall Hills.

The plans sparked a long-running campaign by the Tunstall Hills Protection Group (THPG) to preserve the area, parts of which are classed as being a site of scientific interest and local nature reserve.

Now the group has raised fresh concerns about a wind turbine feasibility study, which is being carried out close to nearby playing fields.

"If this goes ahead, we really fear for the future of the site," said Sheila Liddle, chair of the group. "We've been here once before. They've tried to ruin this site on other occasions and we won't let it happen."

Allan White, who is also a member of the group, said he fears the wind turbine, if given the go-ahead, will lead to others being installed in the area.

"For over 200 years the people of Sunderland have enjoyed unimpeded views to all points of the compass whilst walking these hills," he said. "Sadly, this will no longer be the case if this ill-conceived devel-

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opment is allowed to proceed.

"And will it stop at one turbine?"

Mr White said the group was determined to win its latest fight to "preserve the natural beauty" of the site.

"Many people may remember the 1991 campaign fought by local people opposed to plans to convert Tunstall Hills into a golf course," he said.

"The THPG was set up at that time to lead the successful protest.

"Two years later the THPG and local people successfully fought plans to build the Ryhope relief road across the southern end of the hills.

"In 2003, Tunstall Hills were designated a local nature reserve

for their wildlife, geology and importance to local people.

"We want to protect this site for future generations."

Keith Lowes, head of planning and environment at Sunderland City Council, today confirmed land close to playing fields, near Tunstall Hills, was the subject of a feasibility study by the Partnership for Renewables (PfR).

"There is no proposal to build a wind turbine on Tunstall Hill as such," he said. "An area of land has been identified adjoining the playing pitches, but clear of the site of Special Scientific Interest.

"This area of land is to be the subject of a feasibility study by PfR, to examine the possibility of installing a single wind turbine and to carry out all necessary surveys and consultation.

"An option has been agreed with PfR giving it a three-year period to show that the land is suitable and if that is the case, then planning permission will have to be applied for, which will be publicised and considered by the appropriate committee in due course.

"There is no commitment from either side at the moment, this is simply a study to look into the suitability of the site, and to assess how it could be of overall benefit to the city."

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Echo Feedback

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Should Tunstall Hills be protected, or does providing green energy come first?

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