

**Published in Danish Daily Politiken 29<sup>th</sup> March, 2012**

# Vestas smears wind turbine neighbours

The Danish wind turbine manufacturer accuses concerned neighbours of giant wind turbines of merely wanting to destroy the wind turbine industry. A harsh smear, but it works, says a professor. Vestas rejects the criticism.

**MICHAEL ROTHENBORG and Rasmus Bøttcher Christensen**

When the world's largest wind turbine manufacturer, Vestas, today holds its general meeting at Aarhus Concert Hall, one of the speakers will be less welcome than the rest.

The main message of specialist in occupational medicine, Doctor Mauri Johansson from Bording in Central Jutland, will be that Vestas is deceiving the public when portraying itself as an ethical and moral company.

He brings a letter from Vestas' Australian branch to the New South Wales State Government in which Ken McAlpine, Director of Policy and Government Relations, dismisses neighbours concerned about the low frequency noise of giant wind turbines as activists who simply want to destroy the wind turbine industry.

"This shows that Vestas also has a low moral standard in Australia," Doctor Johansson says.

In the letter, Ken McAlpine writes about what he calls 'anti-wind activist groups':

“These groups are not interested in compromise or balanced solutions. They are not interested in policies based on evidence (...) They want nothing less than the death of the wind turbine industry regardless of where the turbines are placed.

The Director of Policy and Government Relations of Vestas in Australia also writes in the letter that no serious researchers recognise the wind turbine neighbours’ concern about low-frequency noise.

## A battle of facts

According to Doctor Johansson, you also encounter these two main arguments among wind industry advocates in Denmark. He points out that the Danish Wind Turbine Owners’ Association writes in a leading article in the February issue of its newsletter that the neighbours are conducting an “aggressive and well-organised fear campaign”, and that “experts have vehemently refuted” the claim that noise caused by wind turbines can present a problem.

In reality, the typical opponents of wind turbines are neither against wind power nor isolated individuals in the debate. The Danish Association of Neighbours of Giant Wind Turbines (*Landsforeningen Naboer til Kæmpemøller*) is, for example, in favour of wind turbines, but argues that most of them should be located offshore. Scientists both abroad and in Denmark have warned that the authorities apply less strict requirements to the wind turbine industry than to other types of industries.

As previously mentioned in the Politiken newspaper, the new Danish Executive Order issued by the Ministry of the Environment has been criticised by internationally renowned experts such as Professor of Acoustics, Henrik Møller from Aalborg University, and Professor of Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Kerstin Persson from Gothenburg University.

Even the Danish Society of Occupational and Environmental Medicine pointed out during the hearing in November that “the Executive Order does not provide sufficient protection against the health risks associated with the noise” – but the Executive Order, nevertheless, has not been amended.

“It’s the wind turbine people who don’t have their facts in order these days. The only chance ordinary citizens have to get the message through politically is to have all the right documentation,” says Doctor Johansson.

## Conscious smear

However, neither he nor the neighbours of giant wind turbines stand much chance according to Professor of Political Science, Peter Nedergaard from Copenhagen University. He is of the view that the wind turbine industry’s status as a supplier of ‘good’ energy means that it is extremely difficult for critics of the industry to have their points of view taken into account.

“There’s no doubt that Vestas here smears its opponents, but perhaps this is the optimum solution – from Vestas’ point of view – because in this way they can discount the opposition in advance. If no opposition materialises, no harm would really have been done. However, if opposition does materialise, they’ve prepared the authorities according to the ‘I told you so’ principle, which is another good way of neutralising the opposition,” Professor Nedergaard explains.

The Professor adds that it is often part of the democratic process that you have to put up with derogative speech between political opponents, but that the relative strength of the parties in this case is more than normally skewed – in favour of the wind industry.

The Politiken newspaper has tried in vain to get an interview with Senior Vice President, Peter C. Brun, Vestas Group Government Relations, but in an e-mail he denies that it is a conscious strategy to talk about political opponents in derogative terms.

“It has, of course, not been Vestas’ intention to talk about others in derogative terms – and we also do not think we do so by insisting that this important debate must be based on scientific facts and evidence,” the Senior Vice President writes.

Vestas acknowledges, however, that the erection of the wind turbines can trigger a lot of debate. “Especially in a country like Australia where the tone is often very straightforward,” the Senior Vice President writes.



Suite 413, 1 Queens Road  
Melbourne, VIC 3004  
Melbourne Phone (03) 9005 6661  
Sydney Phone (02) 8003 5446  
Brisbane Phone (07) 3040 0226  
Perth Phone (08) 6102 1211

[www.translationz.com.au](http://www.translationz.com.au)

Mauri Johansson from Bording has no illusions that he can stop the giant wind turbines by speaking for a couple of minutes at Aarhus Concert Hall.

“I won’t be among friends, but I feel that I have to talk about Vestas’ lack of ethics and morals.”

CERTIFIED A CORRECT TRANSLATION OF THE DANISH DOCUMENT

4 April 2012

Margit Pehrsson, Danish translator, NAATI No. 37342