



WIND POWER MYSTERY: One of the fallen masts

Mystery of felled wind masts

ISLANDERS SAY IT COULD BE SABOTAGE

MYSTERY surrounds the grounding of two wind-measuring masts which crashed down at the site of a proposed giant windfarm in the Western Isles.

It is unclear if the wind brought down the pair of Lewis anemometers, which are badly damaged.

The equipment, owned by Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE), is on the Paire Estate where the power giant wants to build a 57-turbine wind-park.

When they disappeared from the skyline local residents assumed the masts were removed by SSE, but doubts have since surfaced.

A crofter on the estate said: "We obviously get some very strong winds here and one did fall down a couple of years ago during a winter storm, but it didn't seem to have been particularly windy when they disappeared.

"However, it seems strange that both should go down at around the same time and some people are wondering if it was sabotage. It wouldn't be a surprise - there's a lot of anger about the windfarm proposal and increasing frustration that politicians and the developers are just not listening. People are sick of having this hanging over them."

He added: "Whatever happened, it's a bit worrying. These masts are big and someone could have been killed."

Earlier this year, a wind turbine at a nearby school in the village of Balallan was vandalised within 48 hours of being erected.

A spokeswoman for SSE said: "There is no sign of sabotage or vandalism. We are looking at the cause of the damage, but it doesn't appear to be anything involving a third party."

Asked if it was possible that

the wind was to blame, she said: "We're investigating at the moment. We're looking at the cables themselves. It's possible that there's just been a bit of wear and tear, to be honest. There was certainly no danger to the public." The company is considering the erection of replacement masts.

A comprehensive review of public attitudes towards wind power on Lewis claims to demonstrate the scale of opposition to the proposals for massive schemes on the island.

The statistics, collated by the Views of Scotland pressure group, spell out the findings of 27 separate opinion polls since 2004 - each opposed to major onshore windfarms. The report is available online at www.viewsofscotland.org/snp_conference/LewisSurveys-01Nov07-MedRes.pdf