

Windfarm appeal row

A pressure group claims "local democracy will have been completely bypassed" if the Scottish Government rules on plans to alter a controversial windfarm.

Falck Renewables has called on Holyrood ministers to rule on potential changes for Mochrum Fell near Parton as the council didn't make a decision within the required time frame.

However, the Save Our Hills group has hit out at the move.

Spokesman Iain Milligan said: "When major onshore windfarm applications are lodged, the public expectation is that the council will make a decision.

"That's why people elect local councillors and why their council tax pays for planning officials.

"It's the whole point of local democracy, so that those living with the decisions taken have a considerable hand in making them.

"But with Mochrum Fell we see once more a major democratic deficit.

"If the Scottish Government allows this application to go through, it will have happened against the will of local elected representatives."

Falck's original plans for Mochrum Fell were for eight, 1265m turbines on the site.

They were approved by the Scottish Government in 2016 despite having previously been kicked out by the council after more than 600 people objected.

Last year, Falck applied to reduce the number of turbines to seven but increase their height to 150m, claiming the new proposal received three times the level of support of the original plans. And they also say the development will generate around £4.4 million during its 30-year lifespan.

But Mr Milligan added: "The community has said no, the planning experts have said no, and the local authority has said no. For officials and ministers in Edinburgh to say yes would be an outrage. Local democracy will have been completely bypassed."