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Energy firms 'offering sweeteners to communities' to get permission for wind farms

By [Daily Mail Reporter](#)

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Energy firms are undermining the planning process by offering sweeteners worth hundreds of thousands of pounds to communities living in the shadow of new wind farms, critics claim today.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England says growing numbers of 'goodwill payments', which include sports pitches, play areas or pensioners' lunch clubs, bring the planning system into disrepute.

Such gestures could 'be seen as akin to buying planning permission' and should be banned, it said.



Winds of change: Energy companies give sweeteners to communities, according to the Campaign for Rural England

A CPRE report found 35 sweeteners offered by wind farm developers, including a yearly income to one community of £30,000 for the farm's lifetime.

Paul Miner, of the CPRE, said: 'These offers do not go through the proper procedures, unlike similar offers from other developers. Communities may also be getting a worse deal than if wind farm developers were made to offer them through the planning system. The solution is to outlaw these payments.'

Three major wind farm developers - E.on, npower and RES --were routinely offering goodwill payments. In

Cornwall, the community around the Bears Down wind farm was offered a benefit package worth £300,000 over 20 years, the report said.

The planning system allows developers to contribute to a community by building new facilities. However, these 'Section 106' agreements are monitored by planners and are well publicised.

Goodwill payments are different. Council planners may not even know they are being made.

The British Wind Energy Association said: 'These are not "goodwill" payments but community funds designed to bring longterm sustainable benefits to local communities where there are wind farm developments.

'The funds recognise the partnership between local communities and the local developer.'

The Communities and Local Government Department said: 'Our policy is clear - planning permission cannot be bought and sold.'

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