



PRESS RELEASE: 18 March, 2015
Attention: News / Environment

Victory for pig protestors

A HUGELY controversial plan to built one of Britain's first 'factory farms' has been withdrawn following growing concerns about its impact.

The application by Midland Pig Producers for the 25,000 pig facility in Derbyshire was last month refused an environmental permit by the Environment Agency in what is a significant victory for local campaigners.

More than 38,000 objections were lodged in a four-year struggle by residents that was backed by celebrities including actor Dominic West.

"The proposed factory farming of 25,000 pigs is an abomination", said Dominic West. "I hope MPP will not just set up somewhere else so, when we buy British, we know we are not supporting this type of cruel and dangerous farming. The costs are much too high, from the superficial horrors of stench and stressed, unhealthy animals to antibiotic resistance that brings us closer to the end of antibiotics as a cure for human diseases. The world must move on, and we can all help by only buying pork from high welfare UK farms."

Midland Pig Producers have blamed the Environment Agency for the decision to withdraw the application for the unit at Foston on the grounds of 'odour pollution.'

Campaigning organisation Farms Not Factories welcomed the news. "Intensive, indoor animal factories belong to the past," said director Tracy Worcester. "We hope this means people are waking up to the importance of knowing where their food comes from as well as the hidden costs of intensive farming."

There is mounting evidence that industrial, intensive pig-rearing systems not only cause stress and illness in animals but also threaten human health. The regular over-use of antibiotics in factory farm systems has produced antibiotic-resistant superbugs. In addition, they pollute water and air as well as damaging local businesses.

"Industrial-scale farming threatens the livelihood of high welfare farmers in rural communities," said Ms Worcester.

Sue Weston's family home is 100 meters from the proposed sheds. "It has been horrendously stressful so our relief is immense", said Ms Weston. "Our house is on the market and twice

buyers pulled out when they understood the size of the proposed pig factory. If they try to set up somewhere else we will all help others to oppose it."

South Derby District and County Councillor, Julie Patton said, "It has been terribly stressful for the local residents and so today it's like a cloud's been lifted for them."

In a statement Midland Pig Producers called for an overhaul of the planning and permit application process, which they blame for the failure of their application.

"The time taken by the Environment Agency to reach its conclusions has drawn out the entire process way beyond our initial estimates, something totally beyond our control, but we appreciate the pressure this has placed on the planning authorities and the lengthy period of uncertainty for local residents, both of which we feel could have been avoided. We believe that there should be a fundamental overhaul of the planning and permit application process to prevent such a long-winded situation from occurring again," said a spokesman.

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Notes to editors

- Farms Not Factories supports the Foston Action Group which actively objects to the Midland Pig Producers (MPP) Foston application. It campaigns against intensive pig farming worldwide, advocating leadership to enable farmers to move to smaller and medium scale farming able to deliver fair farm gate prices, healthy food, rural economic vitality and environmental benefits. Contact Tracy Worcester (tracy@tracyworcester.org.uk or +44 (0)207 584 6592/589 5950).
- Environment Agency decision: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/foston-pig-unit-anaerobic-digestion-plant-foston-derbyshire/foston-pig-unit-and-anaerobic-digestion-plant>
- BBC article quoting Midland Pig Producers: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-derbyshire-31584461>