

Lagoon backer denies 'misleading' MPs over relationship with Cornish council

THE businessman behind the Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon project has denied misleading MPs about his company's relationship with a Cornish parish council.

Last week, during a joint evidence session to two Commons committees, Mark Shorrock told Welsh Conservative MP David Davies he had not offered a "financial inducement" to St Keverne Parish Council to secure its support for a planning application his firm had submitted.

Tidal Lagoon Power, of which Mr Shorrock is the chief executive, intends to use material from a Cornish quarry in the construction of the Swansea lagoon.

The quarry was



bought by Shire Oak Quarries, another company of which Mr Shorrock is a director.

A draft agreement between Shire Oak Quarries and St Keverne Parish Council detailed how the council – a statutory consultee in the planning process – would agree to back the planning application in return for the creation of a "community benefit fund".

Members of the parish council refused to sign the agreement.

Nevertheless, during a joint session of the Welsh Affairs Committee and the Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee, Mr Shorrock denied offering a financial inducement to the parish council.

In a statement, Mr Shorrock said: "At the Select Committee, the question put to me by Mr Davies was: 'Is there any truth in the allegation that you, or that your company, offered a financial inducement to the parish council?' I replied 'No'.

"I understood Mr Davies to be relaying an accusation of offering improper – hence the use of the word 'allegation' – inducements. I have not done so and neither has my company."

Mr Shorrock went on to state that there was "nothing improper" about undertakings. They were legal, transparent documents, and entering undertakings was an entirely normal practice in planning. He added: "Undertakings are given to overcome objections in relation to all sorts of infrastructure projects, whether given by Secretaries of State for schemes like Crossrail or High Speed 2, or by commercial developers at a local level where community impacts may also need to be addressed."

Mr Davies, who chairs the Welsh Affairs Committee, said in response to Mr Shorrock's statement: "In my view, the draft agreement put to the parish council was very different to what normally happens in the planning process.

"I have never heard of a situation where the payment of a sum of money to a public body is conditional on their support for the grant of planning permission. Decisions on planning applications should be decided on planning grounds alone. If this is going on regularly we should know about it because in my view it is not acceptable."

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Mark Shorrock, chief executive of Tidal Lagoon Power