

[Skip to main content](#)[Skip to navigation](#)[Skip to navigation](#)

[UK news](#)

🕒 This article is more than 16 years old

UFO puzzle: it was the Guardian wot done it

This article is more than 16 years old

Sun's wind turbine scoop sparked by birthday party

Fireworks explain lights but not rotor damage

Esther Addley

Fri 9 Jan 2009 00.01 GMT

[Share](#)

"It was huge," John Harrison, a farmer from Saltfleetby, said yesterday of the light display he saw in the Lincolnshire sky on Saturday night. "At first I thought it must have been a hole where the moon was shining through, but then I saw the tentacles. It looked just like an octopus."

To Dorothy Willows, watching from her home in Louth, the "strange lights" hinted at a "low flying object ... skinning across the sky towards the turbines".

Hours later, after an "almighty smash", one of the enormous wind turbines at the Ecotricity plant in Conisholme, 15 miles south of Grimsby, was found to have shattered, leaving its 130ft rotor a mangled ruin. To the Sun, which splashed the story over its front page yesterday, there was only one possible explanation: "UFO hits wind turbine."

The BBC's Today programme eagerly followed up, questioning Ecotricity's founder, Dale Vince, about what could have caused the damage. "Something about the size and weight of a cow would probably do it," he said. As for the lights, he remained mystified. "The UFO theory, funny as it may sound, is the best one that we have currently got."

The Guardian is able to reveal one possible explanation - one with uncomfortably close links to the newspaper itself. Late on Saturday night, the Guardian's director of digital content, Emily Bell, was a mere two miles from the Ecotricity plant when she witnessed an unusual light show in the night sky: the firework display she and her brother had arranged in their parents' garden to mark their father Peter's 80th birthday.

"There were several roman candles, and some of those ones which are orange and have the little blue dots when they go off," Bell said yesterday. "My brother said he got them from the local garden centre. Because it's so flat in that part of the world, you can see for miles and miles. So if you were perhaps a certain distance away and perhaps had had a drink, you might mistake them for orange balls of fire."

The next morning they noticed the shattered turbine, visible from the bottom of her parents' garden, and joked that one of their rockets might have damaged it. "There we are in the middle of a scoop and we're beaten to it by a red-top tabloid," Bell's mother, Bridget, 74, said. Bell's husband, Ed Crooks - who happens to be the energy editor of the Financial Times - also found himself beaten to the story.

"I think the fireworks certainly might explain the lights in some instances," Vince said last night, adding that there was "absolutely no question" fireworks could have caused the "catastrophic failure" of the turbine. For that, the company is continuing to consider metal fatigue, and looking into the possibility of a cow-sized piece of ice falling from a passing plane, which might explain the absence of other debris at the site.

Explore more on these topics

- [UK news](#)
- [UFOs](#)
- [news](#)

[Share](#)

[Reuse this content](#)

Most viewed

Most viewed

- [UK](#)
- [UK politics](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Media](#)
- [Society](#)
- [Law](#)
- [Scotland](#)
- [Wales](#)
- [Northern Ireland](#)

- [News](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Sport](#)
- [Culture](#)
- [Lifestyle](#)

Original reporting and incisive analysis, direct from the Guardian every morning
[Sign up for our email](#)

- [About us](#)
- [Help](#)
- [Complaints & corrections](#)
- [SecureDrop](#)
- [Work for us](#)
- [Privacy policy](#)
- [Cookie policy](#)
- [Terms & conditions](#)
- [Contact us](#)

- [All topics](#)
- [All writers](#)
- [Modern Slavery Act](#)
- [Tax strategy](#)
- [Digital newspaper archive](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [YouTube](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Newsletters](#)

- [Advertise with us](#)
- [Guardian Labs](#)
- [Search jobs](#)
- [Patrons](#)

[Back to top](#)

© 2025 Guardian News & Media Limited or its affiliated companies. All rights reserved. (dcr)



