

Community bars bureaucrats to protest Beagle Bay gas plan

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The battle over Colin Barnett's push to make North Head, north of Beagle Bay, the site for the State's gas hub has started with local Aboriginals yesterday setting up a roadblock to stop bureaucrats entering the community to discuss the plan.

Beagle Bay Aboriginal Albert Wiggan said protesters told Gail McGowan and Duncan Ord, senior members of the Government's Northern Development Taskforce, they were not welcome to enter the community for a consultation meeting with residents.

Mr Wiggan, a fierce critic of the North Head site, and others who took part in the blockade claimed about 60 local residents and supporters attended the protest.

He said Aboriginal people wanted to send a clear message that Beagle Bay residents would not engage in any further decision-making with government until they had a governing body to represent their views.

"I really believe it was a strong message," Mr Wiggan said. "I haven't heard throughout Australia's history of communities actually denying government access . . . because of the lack of governance and lack of representation on those community people's behalf.

"We're fighting for one of the most important environments that the world has still got left in its natural status. The community is afraid of engaging in any further decisionmaking process because we do not have a legitimate governing structure.

"This battle's going to continue for a very long time. The community still to this day does not have a true understanding of the implications of development on our land."

Locals held informal talks with the two task force members at the site of the blockade on the only road into Beagle Bay.

The Premier last month named North Head as his preferred site out of the four identified by the Kimberley Land Council for possible development of an LNG precinct.

A spokesman for Mr Barnett said the meeting went ahead despite the blockade.

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