

An inordinate amount of local residents' time and emotional energy has been taken up as the unexpected onus of responsibility for protecting our environment falls, unsolicited, on us. We have hoped for, and largely been denied, an open and fully-informed debate with those who seek to impose an industrial scheme – claiming to have environmental interests at heart. We have been born, or chosen, to live in an environment which we know to be productive farmland, our wellbeing assured by the space and rural beauty and the wildlife it sustains in between the cultivated, or grazed land which provides for local employment and nourishment.

The wholesale disruption to, and transformation of this expectation, in which we have invested – some of us for generations, is bad enough, – with minimal environmental or carbon neutrality arguments on its side, let alone fulfilment of any local benefit, in employment or otherwise.

The whole operation is reliant on battery storage – yet it only mentions this (by word – BESS) 32 times in the prospectus. The detail on this area is scant – the reference to Fire Safety controls and mitigations wanting. Just over half a page of reassurances – some misleading. Yet it is the most significant element, both in terms of risk, and impact.

The witness accounts for recent Grenfell tower Inquiry seem particularly apposite. From the outset – when it became clear that SUNNICA was not about solar panels, but about the BESS installations – my thoughts turned to catastrophic fire events – which is the risk with such installations. This is why, where they exist (and not on this scale, either,) they are situated miles away from settlements. The risk to life is well-documented. SUNNICA fails to fulfil the requirements highlighted by the fire risk and safety failures leading to the catastrophe in 2016.

I quote from the recent submissions to the enquiry  
– in which profits were pursued at the expense of public safety'  
– The public deserve to know the products being used – have been effectively and robustly tested and certified safe. Objectivity and high standards are paramount.'  
– Fire safety engineering is about protecting people; when you forget that you get caught up in the game of making things work and guessing things through, and you forget about your primary responsibility- which is protecting people'

There are, as far as I have experienced, no reassurances nor hard evidence from SUNNICA that these responsibilities will be assumed for this project. It is of great concern – and intrusive examination must be undertaken to call these risks out.