

Timed and recorded remarks at OFH2 – edited transcript of prepared script

I would like to open with a protest – at yesterday’s hearings [ISH3] into the safety of Giant Batteries, likely to be, by a wide margin, the largest BESS in the world, of wholly unprecedented scale. Instead of the full day I had formally requested at the start of this process, the business was compressed into a wholly inadequate time slot, mostly occupied by an essentially private conversation between Mr Rigby on the panel and the unfocussed Mr Gregory for the Applicant.

Meanwhile, though I was probably the only person left in the room with the technical competence to question the issues raised, I was not offered anything like the time needed to raise more than handful of the very serious safety issues I had identified.

It also became clear yesterday that the Examining Authority lacks the necessary skill sets to appraise completely the most serious industrial safety issues I have encountered in my life, not excluding, many years ago, my work on a commercial scale but essentially experimental nuclear reactor. That was handled with professionalism and integrity by the statutory regulator at the time.

I believe it is now essential that the Examining Authority calls on the Health and Safety Executive so that the statutory regulator of today becomes fully engaged with this process, as overarching policy clearly requires.

Unless the regulator becomes properly engaged, the Examining Authority will lack the necessary basis to make a correct and fully-informed recommendation to the Secretary of State, specifically on the critical question of major accident prevention and mitigation.

To move on to what I had planned to say, I’d like to examine the benefits of this scheme. Any critic should look honestly at the upsides of a proposal. Aside from the energy trading function, identified by a number of speakers this morning already, the scheme will generate some electricity, scooping up sunlight from what used to be open countryside, but won’t be any longer.

The question is: how much energy ? Two years ago I did a simple sum. Taking Sunnica’s own estimate of the energy output over 40 years, divide by 40 gives the annual energy. Divide by the number of hours in a year give the *annual average power*. The answer: 67 MW, less than 1/7 of the 500 MW claimed by Sunnica.

Our national demand wanders around 35 GW or 35,000 MW in round numbers. Sunnica's contribution to this is about 1/500 of current demand. That is how insignificant it is, from the point of view of energy generation.

Now that the scheme has been pruned, first once, then again yesterday, it is even more insignificant than it was at the start.

And for this, we sacrifice over 2500 acres of productive farmland, amenity and wildlife habitat ? This folly at a truly spectacular level.

Meanwhile, there are 230 Sunnicas on the country's south-facing commercial rooftops, which you can panel with solar PV to your heart's content, without harming a single blade of grass.

Sunnica is a terrible example of what the late Professor Sir David MacKay, former Chief Scientist at the Department of Energy and Climate Change, called, in a deathbed interview, the "appalling delusion":

There is this appalling delusion that ... we can take this thing which ... currently ... deliver[s] 1% of all our energy and we can just scale it up. And oh, if there's a slight issue of it not adding up, oh yes we'll do energy efficiency.

MacKay goes on to say:

There's so much delusion and I think it's so dangerous for humanity that people allow themselves to have these delusions that they're willing to not think carefully about the numbers and the realities, and the laws of physics and the realities of engineering.

Some real wisdom from someone who must surely have known he was a dying man.

This scheme should be rejected unconditionally, and I believe I have already given the Examining Authority a more than sufficient technical, legal, and policy basis for doing so.

Thank you very much.