

Dear Secretary of State,

Planning Act 2008 and The Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010: Application by Mallard Pass Solar Farm Limited (“the Applicant”) for an Order granting Development Consent for the proposed Mallard Pass Solar Farm:

I am a retired conservation professional. I spent nearly twenty years working on agri-environment schemes. I led the team that developed the English Environmental Stewardship Scheme and was awarded an OBE for services to Agri-environment in 2005.

I have submitted evidence to the Planning Inspectorate’s examination of this development proposal relating to its likely environmental impacts and the ways in which these could be mitigated. I am now responding to the invitation contained in your letter to interested parties dated 2nd April to submit comments on the responses received to your information request issued on 13th March 2024.

I am particularly concerned that the response from Mallard Pass states that the applicants have not yet obtained the necessary IAPC from Natural England. The applicant’s response implies that they are awaiting a response from Natural England but, when read carefully, it isn’t clear that the applicants have actually even submitted a draft Great Crested Newt district level license application.

The applicants’ response also reveals that there are at least two other major loose ends, there is as yet no agreement with Network Rail over the important issue of the routing of power cables and there is no side agreement over highway matters with either Rutland County Council or Lincolnshire County Council. The response from Rutland County Council suggests that there are major obstacles in the way of such an agreement.

The fact that there are a number of significant outstanding issues at this late stage in the process does not bode well. It reinforces the impression given by the applicants during the latter stages of the application process, that they are unwilling to do more than is absolutely necessary and will only address some issues when forced to do so. In my submissions to the Planning Inspectorate, I made a number of positive suggestions for addressing some real weaknesses in the proposed mitigation measures, but these were very largely ignored.

Given all this, I would ask you to consider carefully whether it would be wise to grant these applicants consent for a development on this scale, with the potential to significantly affect both the environment and local people.

At the very least, from an environmental viewpoint, I would ask that, if you are minded to give your consent to this development, you make the obtaining of a suitable license to ensure that Great Crested Newts are protected during the construction process a condition of the consent.

Yours faithfully

Dr GP Radley MCIEEM (Retd.), OBE