



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Claire Coutinho MP
Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
1 Victoria Street, London
SW1H 0ET

5th April 2024

Dear Claire,

I hope you are well. I am writing to raise my serious concerns over the responses (published 28th March) to the Planning Inspectorate's requests of the applicants, Mallard Pass Solar Plant (sent 14th March), for further information on their proposals for a side agreement on highways with Rutland County Council and Lincolnshire County Council and an agreement with Network Rail for the use of a cabling route.

I have written to you previously when the applicant announced the inclusion of widespread compulsory acquisition (CA) orders, despite having told me in-person that they had no plans for CAs as part of the development. The residents affected were equally shocked, having not been consulted on this possibility during the consultation process or in the run-up to the addition of CAs in the application. It seems clear now that the proposed CAs in Essendine were included by the applicant as a contingency measure should an agreement not be reached with Network Rail for the use of a cabling route.

With your decision due on 17th May residents are being left in a state of limbo as to whether they will face CAs. It is clear that the developers have failed to plan or consult properly and as such are unable to provide the Planning Inspectorate and you with the answers requested on 14th March. For a NSIP energy proposal to not have a cabling agreement in place at this late stage is unacceptable but sadly indicative of their lacklustre approach to this application from the start.

There is also no agreement on a side agreement for highway use with Rutland County Council and Lincolnshire County Council. In the applicant's response to you they state that they are confident of an agreement imminently but Rutland County Council 'anticipate that an agreement would not be likely to be completed within a period of two months without significant amendments made by the applicant.'

These positions are clearly contradictory and suggest that the applicant is attempting to present negotiations as more advanced than they are to encourage you to grant them planning permission. I would be grateful if your officials could write again to the applicant asking them to provide an accurate picture of negotiations and a fair assessment of whether a highways agreement will be concluded.

Telephone: [REDACTED]
Email: [REDACTED] Website: [REDACTED]



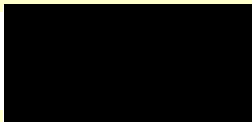
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I wrote to Minister Stewart on 19th March to ask for an update on plans for an industry wide community compensation scheme for solar developments but am yet to receive a response. The applicant has been engaged in private negotiations with local authorities over a compensation figure but included a figure in their reply to the Planning Inspectorate, despite not being asked to. I do not think it is good practice to publish a figure that is still being negotiated publicly and would question why the applicant felt this was appropriate.

Furthermore, \$400 per annum per megawatt would represent only £96,000. Given the size of the development and number of people affected this figure is extremely low and would likely mean zero direct compensation, even for residents of Essendine, who are facing CA and the total envelopment of their community by the solar plant. It is vital that we quickly introduce a standardised compensation scheme to avoid such situations, particularly as increasing numbers of NSIP solar plants progress through the planning system.

Whilst I understand your quasi-judicial role prevents you from commenting on individual aspects of this development, I would be grateful if you could personally look into the points I have raised before making your decision and ensure your officials interrogate the issues above and ensure you are appraised on these issues when you make your decision.

Kind regards



Alicia Kearns MP
Member of Parliament for Rutland and Melton
Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee