



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

19th December 2023

Dear Claire,

I hope you are well. I write following the end of the Examination by the Planning Inspectorate of the proposed Mallard Pass solar plant in Rutland and Lincolnshire. Once the Planning Inspectorate finalises its recommendation in three months time, the final decision whether to approve or reject Mallard Pass will rest with you. I continue to have wide ranging concerns over this development and believe it should be rejected for the following reasons, which I have set out in more detail in my Closing Summary Statement to the Planning Inspectorate:

- Loss of Best and Most Versatile agricultural land against DEFRA guidelines.
- Evidenced forced labour in Canadian Solar's supply chains.
- Lack of consultation and engagement on Compulsory Acquisitions of private land.
- Inappropriate approach and inducement to my office by Canadian Solar.
- Inadequate consultation and poor public engagement.
- Windel Energy and Windel Energy's Director's financial record.
- Impact on landscape and amenity.
- Lack of community consultation.
- Biodiversity and environmental concerns.
- Suitability and efficiency of the site.
- Flooding risk.
- Questionable carbon benefit.

Whilst the Planning Inspectorate can consider most of these areas under national planning frameworks the issue of forced labour falls outside of their remit. As such, I would request that you use your executive judgement to consider the level of exposure the primary developer Canadian Solar has to Uyghur forced labour and make a principled stand by rejecting their involvement in constructing a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project.

As you know, I had tabled an amendment to the Energy Bill regarding forced labour in the solar industry's supply chains, which I ultimately did not push for a vote. I was grateful to Minister Bowie for signalling your department's support for more stringent measures to curb forced labour and ensure our green transition is not compromised by a reliance on forced labour produced solar. A rejection of the Mallard Pass solar plant would demonstrate this Government's rejection of companies that benefit from and contribute to the Uyghur genocide.



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The scale of this issue was set out in a new report into forced labour in solar supply chains by Sheffield Hallam University. The ‘Over-Exposed’ [report](#) sets out clearly how Uyghur forced labour has infected a large proportion of the solar industry, and devotes five pages to Canadian Solar’s exposure, the company behind the proposed Mallard Pass solar plant in my constituency of Rutland and Melton. I wrote to your predecessor numerous times requesting that Canadian Solar be blacklisted from building NSIP projects in the UK, and I repeat this request again to you.

I have attached a brief with this letter setting out Canadian Solar’s well-documented exposure to forced labour in Xinjiang. This information is easily discernible through open-source research, and I was deeply concerned that officials in your department felt it appropriate during meetings over my proposed amendments to argue that it was ‘disputed’ as to whether solar supply chains utilised Uyghur forced labour. There is an expansive evidence base demonstrating that it is not ‘disputed’ and with 89% of polysilicon coming from China and up to 40% from Xinjiang the issue is serious, as demonstrated by the USA and EU having already taken steps to insulate their markets from tainted goods.

The US Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act and incoming EU regulations are leaving the UK as an outlier lacking any meaningful deterrent or regulation against tainted goods entering our market. We are fast becoming a dumping ground for solar products made with Uyghur forced labour. Indeed, in the last year alone the USA has stopped over 1000 solar imports for their links to forced labour whilst the UK is yet to block a single import, ever.

Canadian Solar is one of the worst offenders globally, has faced sanctions in the US, actions by its own shareholders, tariff dodging investigations and more. Such a company has no place building our key national energy infrastructure. Whilst you rejecting Mallard Pass would constitute an important and principled stand, I would also urge you to consider introducing national policies to insulate the UK market from forced labour in solar supply chains.

I would ask that you consider working with Cabinet and DBT colleagues to establish import controls on the solar industry to block materials and companies using forced labour in the Uyghur region. This model has already been successfully implemented in the US and the EU Commission will introduce a similar policy soon. I would be happy to meet with you and your team to discuss how we could follow suit and ensure the UK does not become a dumping ground for dirty solar.

I would request that you launch a national solar strategy to properly monitor the geographical distribution of solar, total land lost and types of land lost. The East of England region has been disproportionately affected by solar development proposals, with over 50% of all land up for solar development in Lincolnshire and the surrounding counties.

At my last count there were 77 solar plant applications in Lincolnshire and the surrounding counties totalling over 38,000 acres of land. Given Rutland, Lincolnshire, and the East of England’s vital importance to our national food security this is greatly concerning. A national solar strategy would



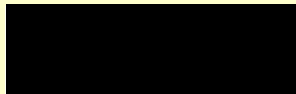
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allow for a planned rollout of solar and avoid the current geographical bunching in richly agricultural areas.

Finally, I want to thank Minister Stewart for his engagement so far on getting fair community compensation for solar projects. Communities facing wind developments receive a mandated minimum compensation amount, but solar development compensation levels are not regulated, resulting in a wild west like atmosphere where some developers seek to pay as little as possible. I know Minister Stewart has written to Solar Energy UK on this, but should they fail to introduce an industry standard, would your department consider creating a legally binding minimum community compensation level for solar developments?

Thank you for your engagement on these important issues. I would be grateful for the opportunity to meet with you to discuss them in greater detail and to see how we can work together to ensure our green transition is free from forced labour, planned and rolled out intelligently, and that those most affected are properly compensated.

Best wishes,



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