

Claire Coutinho, MP  
Secretary of State for Energy,  
House of Commons,  
Westminster,  
London SW1

27.10.23

## MALLARD PASS SOLAR FARM

Dear Secretary of State,

I live in Rutland, very close to the site for the Mallard Pass Solar Park, which will shortly be presented to you for consideration and approval or not. The local community is unanimous in their opposition to Mallard Pass given the impact it will have on our environment, our way of life and to the local economy. While I completely understand the need to move away from our dependency on fossil fuels and build more sustainable energy strategy for the future but cannot be at any price and certainly not at the expense of reducing our agricultural capacity.

I simply would ask that as you consider Mallard Pass you acknowledge and respect the interests of the local community, consider whether this project really aligns with the needs of our National Security and whether it is as green as it appears.

Rutland is the smallest county in the UK, with a population of 736,000 spread over 147 square miles or 38,176 hectares. It is a perfect example of a rural community with agriculture forming a significant part of the local community and where the countryside is really the only amenity for the people of Rutland and the reason why people choose to live here.

Mallard Pass is, as of now, the single largest Solar Project under consideration in the UK and will be spread over 2175 acres/880.1913 hectares which represents 2.3% of Rutland. I do not believe any other county in the UK is being asked to host a scheme of comparable acreage. Building a solar farm over 2.3% of rural county like Devon would deliver a scheme of 15,428 hectares, which would be unthinkable. The sheer scale of Mallard Pass and the impact it will have on the local surroundings is compounded by the proposal to use panels that are 3.3m high which is 0.8m higher than the UK average. Building the UK's largest Solar Installation with above average height panels in the smallest county in the UK is intrinsically wrong by any measure.

The land that will form Mallard Pass is almost exclusively in agricultural production where cereals have been produced over 100+ years. The way land is categorised is open to abuse and manipulation, however surveys indicate that the land in question is rated between 41% and 53% BMV. I understood that the government had decreed that BMV rated land should be outside the scope for solar development which begs the question as to how Mallard Pass has got to their point.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 served notice that securing our future supplies of food and energy had now become a matter of National Security. Taking BMV quality land out of food production and re-purposing to produce solar energy is a zero sum game and makes absolutely no sense. Increasing our agricultural capacity is almost impossible to achieve while re-purposing waste land eg disused airfields etc as solar facilities would appear to offer enormous scope. The lack of imagination in how both objectives are to be met is breathtaking.

I do not believe proper consideration has been given to the disruption that will be caused during the construction phase, when the impact will be felt well beyond the surrounding area. The road system around Mallard Pass is not sophisticated and has not been upgraded in years. This is acceptable until it is required to serve a different purpose and facilitate an

country that is the world's biggest polluter with a very poor human rights record. They are assembled, quite possibly using slave labour, and then transported to the UK for installation. The carbon footprint caused but each step will take half the life of Mallard Pass to remove, assuming the facility actually generates the wattage it has suggested which is highly questionable.

Of course, others will make strong arguments in favour of Mallard Pass but the interests of the local community whose lives will be negatively impacted if this goes ahead must be understood, considered, and respected as must the needs of National Security.

Kind regards,

James Charrington