

I have just listened to recordings of parts of the Issue Specific Hearings last week. I will try and listen to, and comment on, as much as I can before the short deadline, but I could not believe some of what the Applicant's Mr Schultz said – that the GBEP site is adjacent to the Trent River Valley that has a 'significant amount of large coal-fired power stations' which give an 'industrial character to the overall landscape'. What absolute rubbish!!

There are a maximum of TWO visible coal-fired power stations from any area of the combined four solar farm projects. How on earth is TWO in this context a SIGNIFICANT AMOUNT? How can the Applicant argue that those two power stations, covering a much smaller footprint than the GBEP alone, give the overall landscape an industrial character? They are two sets of cooling towers and chimneys in a landscape which, as far as the eye can see, is otherwise nearly exclusively agricultural. How can that assertion by Mr Schultz be accepted by the Examiner? It begs the question as to whether the other 'assessments' (eg. re the overall pattern of the landscape) he makes and the 'conclusions' (eg re the impact being moderate) he reaches are based on similarly inaccurate descriptions of the landscape and views.

One or both of the power stations MAY appear on the horizon looking west from some of the villages/ tracks/ roads within the areas affected by the solar projects, but they certainly are not visible from more than a tiny fraction of the 360 degree viewpoints from which solar panels/ battery storage sites/ transformers etc connected to the solar projects will be visible. I find his comments disingenuous. When I walk/ run along the public rights of way from Sturton to Stow, then on Wooden Lane to Willingham Road and then east across the PROW over a field, back onto the B1241 to Stow and another PROW parallel to Fleets Road back to Sturton – I will see firstly West Burton panels and structures, then GBEP panels and structures, then the removal of the corner of Cotgarth Lane to facilitate the transport of the Battery storage complex on Stonepit Lane, then the effects of the cable corridor across the road at Normanby, then from Normanby top I will see panels and structures from Cottam and possibly GBEP, then to the east of Stow I will see more of the Cottam panels. The result will be a 6 mile journey where I will see solar farm connected changes to the landscape almost throughout. If I'm not seeing panels and other structures I will see (after 15 years!) unnatural screening to try and hide them – rather than the open views I can now enjoy. (I will try and upload a video/ photos to illustrate)

In the literature, on the website and at information events, the Applicant made reference to sheep being able to be grazed within the project – a direct quote from their website 'Solar farms provide valuable income for farmers, they can still be used for grazing'.

Again a rather disingenuous/ throw away comment that the Examiner laid bare in the ISH when the Applicant was forced to admit that there was never any intent that sheep grazing was to be a commitment. So all the residents who were led to believe that there would be sheep amongst the panels were lied to – there was never any intention to include provisions for this – it was just a sop to Cerberus!!

During ISH 3 part 3, again the Applicant was forced to admit that the size/ capacity of the battery storage units within the project is not driven by the capacity needed to receive and store the power produced by the solar panels covering the agricultural land within GBEP, but rather the maximum capacity that the National Grid will allow the Applicant to import and store on its behalf during times when the power produced on the project is lower than the battery has the capacity to store and the National Grid needs more storage to 'balance' the grid. The Applicant admitted that there is a distinct possibility that the power imported and stored in the battery will not be low carbon/ green energy.. When asked about the relative income projected to be received by the Applicant from solar power production, storage and export, compared to import, storage and 'balancing' at the behest of the National Grid, the Applicant refused to answer, saying that it was unnecessary for the Secretary of State to concern himself with the financial modeling of the project!! So, they basically told the Examiner to just concern himself with purely planning matters and not question the profit-based incentive of the Applicant in making this project proposal. This is EXACTLY what so many of those of us opposed to the project have been saying all along. This is NOT a project with clean, green, renewable energy at its heart – it is a money-making scheme for investors at the expense of our local communities.

The Applicant cannot say that this is truly the best use of our land – what it is, is the closest land to the Cottam and West Burton power station sites that they could convince enough local landowners to rent out to them, regardless of BMV land, the local communities' financial, physical, mental and emotional health and welfare, etc, where they can put their untried and untested for 60 years batteries (with an unproven safety record), non-recyclable solar panels that are produced from finite mineral resources by labourers with dubious human rights protection in place, cables and transformers that are going to be left in or on the ground on decommissioning – all to make money for their investors and/ or successors in title. I sincerely hope that the Examiner sees through the 'clean, green, Net Zero' propaganda and protects the future of our local communities by NOT recommending to the Secretary of State that this project be allowed to happen.