

Written summary of oral submission

I am a complementary health practitioner and I was born, live, work and exercise in local affected villages.

I wanted to address you today - to ask you face to face, not to allow profit-seeking investors, backed up by their expensive experts and lawyers, quoting Net Zero 2050, - to achieve their goals unchallenged - and to ask you not to ignore the fate of the large number of rural communities in this area of Lincolnshire which will suffer for more than 2 generations if this - and the connected proposals - go ahead.

Just because there are relatively few people who have registered to take part in the Examination process in person, does not mean that there is no local opposition. Repeated requests for the projects to be considered as one, to make it easier for locals to marshal their time and resources in objecting to them, have just been ignored. As a direct result, people are not engaging in the formal Examination process because they feel there is no point as it's a 'done deal'.

The thousands of pages of documents for us to read, in an effort to comply with overlapping deadlines for the 4 projects, make it unfairly prejudicial to those whose daily lives will be affected for the next 65 years by the decisions whether to allow the projects. The applicants' legal teams and the respective PINS Examiners are PROFESSIONALS – well versed in both the terminology and procedure of this kind of application – who are paid to spend all their working hours creating and trawling through documents for ONE project. Meanwhile we residents have to spend time at the beginning and end of our working days and weekends trying to understand the procedure, work out what some of the terminology, acronyms and abbreviations mean, look for documents that are cross-referenced only to find the first document we were looking at automatically goes back to page one when we take it off-screen, trying to remember which of the FOUR projects we are reading about and preparing submissions on. How can that not be prejudicial? This problem is compounded by the difficulties in finding information and particular documents. For example I STILL cannot find where there is a plan showing the hedgerows to be removed for this project. Sch 17 of the draft DCO (as amended) still refers to a 'vegetation removal plan' consisting of 13 sheets, but there is no reference next to it showing which document or appendix the plan can be found in. I've wasted far too much time, putting 'vegetation' and 'hedge' into the search bar, going through the listed documents that might possibly be relevant one by one, but try as I might I have still not found it. Basic information like this is needed for us to make informed comment – why make it so difficult to find?

In addition to regularly treating over 200 local residents in my professional capacity, as a committee member of Stow Fun Raisers, secretary and Trustee of the Stow Recreation Fund and administrator of the village Community and Events Facebook page, I engage with a large number of households who will be affected by this project and the three others. Many local residents are very worried about what it will mean to their way of life, but don't know what to do about it as they felt their concerns were just dismissed at consultation events or they don't have the capacity to engage in the Examination process.

The effects on mental health, in addition to a feeling of hopelessness about the outcome, are becoming apparent in our communities –

The worry about the drop in house prices and already the reality of house sales falling through. If this is happening already, when permission has not theoretically been granted, what will the effects be if the projects go ahead?

Where is there a detailed evaluation of the effects on house prices of the proximity of the construction routes and batteries to residences/ the cable corridors with the potential for EMF issues/ and being surrounded by fields of panels? What compensation might be available for such a deliberate act to affect our financial health?

There are concerns about the traffic disruption, especially during the construction periods – not just the additional project-related traffic of HGVs, ALs, workers' transport – but also the combined effects of all the projects' road closures and restrictions referred to in the draft DCOs. Has any research been done on the combined projects' effects on school bus routes, post box collection times and postal delivery routes, courier and home supermarket deliveries, the already almost impossible rural home care worker schedules especially early in the morning and at the end of the day?

References to avoiding rush hour traffic by starting early shows an ignorance of the time that school transport and care-workers are on the roads in rural communities.

Has Lincolnshire Highways been consulted about any planned major works in the next 5 years on any of the road networks within eg a 20 mile radius – to ensure that any alternative routes to the ones affected by the projects will not be further affected by planned closures or works?

APP-003 1.3 2.1.9 - The Gate Burton construction period is aimed to be 1st Q 2025 to 1st Q 2028 which is in fact 36 months and not the 24 months repeatedly referred to as the 'worst case scenario'. So all of the negative effects of the construction period on the local population from THIS project, plus the cumulative effects of the other three projects, will last half as long again. How can the Applicant conclude that a longer construction period would have less impact on the community? You raised that very point in your written questions Sir, and the Applicant's response at page 141 merely acknowledged that the proposed timescale would result in a continuation of the effects identified – but for their purposes they view 24 months as the worst case scenario so that is what is applied in their predictions of impacts on us.

There will be a considerable reduction in safe and unspoiled areas to exercise (on foot, on horseback, on bicycles) during both the construction and operational phases.

APP-023 3.1 Vol1 Chap 14 Table 14.7 – under 'Does the proposal prioritise and encourage walking?' – the applicant's box ticking shows 'yes'.

I fail to see how anyone with any knowledge of the local paths, tracks and back roads could support that conclusion. Just because there are very few Public Rights of Way included in the works area around Marton/ Gate Burton/ Willingham, how does that translate to the effects on the promotion of walking automatically being deemed negligible?

The road that links Willingham to Gate Burton is a popular walking, running, cycling and horse-riding route, which connects PROWs from Willingham, Stow and Marton. Part of it has been on the route of the annual Stow community bike ride for many years, chosen for its family friendly safety- levels. It is a single carriageway road with passing places, bordered along the majority of its length by mature hedges. The proposal to use it as a construction route would result in a significant effect on the health, wellbeing and exercise opportunities of local residents.

We are 'assured' in a number of places in the Applicant's documentation that the panels, mounting poles, inverters and transformers will be "recycled or disposed of in accordance with good practice and market conditions at the time"- does this mean that if the cheapest option available at the time of decommissioning is landfill, that is where they will go?

Where is there any enforceable provision for the Applicant or its successors in title to be required to recycle as much of the apparatus as is technically possible at the time of decommissioning regardless of cost? Otherwise it makes a mockery of any argument about the beneficial carbon footprint of the scheme.

Where are the requirements in the draft DCO for land to be returned in the state it was in when compulsorily acquired or used? .. How will it be decided, (and when) whether the medium voltage cables will be left in situ at decommissioning? How can leaving these in the earth to rot/ decompose/ affect the surrounding land and its future use, be justified?

Finally – another local concern is the cumulative effect of the influx of project workers on local temporary or short term accommodation. There is currently a dire shortage of rental property in the area, and any project staff taking rentals will exacerbate that problem, leaving locals with no affordable rental options. I have already questioned in a written submission the way in which the Applicant concludes that there is ‘no effect’ on the local hotel, B & B and inns accommodation sector by the workers from this or the combined projects- due to its selective use of the data, but where is the analysis of short term rentals in the Applicant’s documents? There needs to be such an analysis – that also looks at the cumulative effect of the four projects.

There are of course many ‘bigger picture’ issues – the safety of battery storage, the verifiable figures for the likely energy production, the ‘ancillary’ use of the (unnecessarily large for the size of the project?) batteries to rent out storage capacity to the National Grid, the true carbon footprint of the project, the human rights questions over some of the companies who manufacture and export the panels, the loss of food producing land etc etc but you Sir (I hope) will be looking at independent expert reports on those issues –

what I am asking you Sir, is, when you are weighing up the arguments to decide whether to recommend this project to the Secretary of State PLEASE consider why the financial, physical, mental and emotional health of thousands of local residents, and their land, and the surrounding countryside, should be compromised and sacrificed for the benefit of foreign investors with little compelling evidence that 10,000 acres of primarily agricultural land under solar panels is the best solution for our need for carbon fuel alternatives.