

Catrin and Peter Fieldson: Concerns to the Planning Inspectorate regarding SOLAR

I have decided to speak up because I feel very strongly about the solar proposals and want to ensure that you, the Planning Inspectorate, understands first hand our concerns and will act to ensure that the quality of life of the people who would be affected by these schemes is given priority over the quality of life of those who will not be and that you recognise, as we do, that there has been a deliberate attempt by the various developers to disguise the fact that what they collectively propose, is effectively, one large, joined up 10,000 acre solar site, which is increasing by the day!! No community, authority, council should face such an onslaught. The pursuit of green energy should not be at all cost..

I will now outline the personal and community costs, should the proposals go ahead:

Firstly, The farming industry represents a significant sector of Lincolnshire's economy. Agricultural-related businesses employ over 75,000 people in the county and is responsible for 12% of England's food output . It does this on a variety of land grades, including 3B. Grade 3B land has successfully grown crops for hundreds of years and has played a huge part in feeding the nation, especially during times of global conflict when farmers became part of the war effort, given special status to remain at their posts and keep the crops growing and food on the tables, much on 3B land!! My father was one such farmer and his father before him. We have been stewards of the landscape for 4 generations and are very concerned about what kind of landscape we will be passing onto the next generation. Based on what we know this land is capable of, to imply that 3B land is non productive or "lesser" in some way is misleading and distracting. Surely, to take 10,000 acres of good quality farmland out of production for 40 years when we really don't know what the next 40 years is going to bring, seems short sighted and positively dangerous. Using Lincolnshire farmland for solar energy would take away our regions ability to react at times of food crisis or be able to take advantage of new and more effective carbon capture or energy creation technologies that may come along during the next 40 years. At the pace of technological advancement, it's a very real concern that these solar panels could be obsolete before they can be plugged into the upgraded power generation infrastructure, once its ready, which at the moment, it isn't..

Everyone involved here today shares the concerns that are driving these proposals, we understand the need for green energy, but to take 10000 acres of prime agricultural land to produce it, negates its impact, as all we would be doing is swapping out one kind of energy for another. Land with the ability to grow food has, and will always be, a huge driver in global economics. With the current state of the planet and the conflict affecting other global growers like Ukraine and Israel, now surely is not the right time to take growing land out of production. To decommission agricultural land for 40 years, to deny its use in the fight to capture carbon and react at times of need, must be fully scrutinized. We turn to you, as the planning inspector, to do this on our behalf.

You cannot imagine what the impact would be for farmers and everyone living in sight of these solar fields, of having land bordered by 10ft high illuminated security fencing instead of hedges and low walls. To be denied the beauty and freedom of the open landscape for the duration of our lifetime would be devastating to many. Our famous Lincolnshire night skies would be obliterated by security lighting and the air silenced as wildlife migrate to other areas. How will any wildlife cope in this newly industrialized landscape?

Regarding roaming Deer, there have been no environmental impact studies that we are aware of, to look into the impact of Deer fencing on open agricultural land. Deer have been free to roam for millennia, the high Deer fencing designed to keep Deer out of 10,000 acres of solar fields will have the opposite effect on farmland beyond them, effectively trapping them onto neighbouring farmland. We have expressed these concerns but as yet, they have been un answered.

In line with the Governments levelling up agenda, proper consideration and compensation should be given to those whose livelihoods will be affected and possibly lost should these schemes go ahead, and should at the very least, equal the compensation given to the absentee landowners whose lives and livelihoods remain unaffected and in fact, very likely improved by lucrative and secretive deals to deploy solar panels on their land. What is levelling up for if not to reduce such inequality in our society. We are concerned about the impact on those who rely on the countryside for their living, no one should lose their job or have their livelihood affected without financial compensation. Tenant farmers, like all farmers, are custodians of the countryside, there can be no comparable livelihood, surely it cannot be morally justified to terminate their contracts to make way for Solar Panels?.

We are not tenant farmers, but a small family farm. Some years ago, we took advice to diversify and invested money to create 2 holiday lets. They are very busy and our guests very happy with the peace and tranquility life in Broxholme offers. Guests comment on wonderful long views, open countryside and lovely country walks from the door and a real sense that they are indeed "Far from the madding crowd". There can be no doubt that if the proposals go ahead, eventually the visitors will stop coming along with this vital income, so we will be directly affected in a very real way, but when we asked about what plans there would be to compensate us for these losses should the applications be successful, we were told there were none, that they could not be anticipated or quantified. This is ironic when you consider the significant time and expense, let alone complicated mathematics it must have taken to convince the landowners that the solar lease fees would compensate them for lost farming profits for 40 years ahead!! How can it be possible to anticipate and quantify this?

As farmers, we greatly fear the future of this land. We fear that in 40 years time, when we are all long gone, promises made to return the land back to agriculture and safely decommission the toxic panels will be long forgotten. Governments and budgets will change and commitments filed away. We must protect Lincolnshire land and retain it for future growing generations. We won't be around to ensure this, few will, the prospect of abandoned fields and rusting panels being the legacy we are passing onto our children is chilling. Everyone in this room will know of an ex industrial site that should have been taken back to nature but in reality has been left to rot, so how will this be different as the driving force will remain the same. Profiteering!

Lastly, to turn up at village and Parish halls months after secret negotiations with absentee landowners and be told that despite local concerns, the siting of panels would not be negotiated, must contravene this very process. From that very first meeting, we felt like this was not a real consultation but insidious, albeit very polite, corporate bullying and the tone and wording of responses from the various interested parties simply serves to confirm our fears. Many residents simply cannot respond to their legal references and counter arguments, and even struggle to manage their timetables, those who would be affected do not have legal representation, so we look to you to ensure that we are represented, we look to you to ensure that a long term strategy for power capture protects our ability to react to changes over the next 40 years and our

national commitment to green energy is not handed to private offshore enterprises who care little about the environmental or human impact of those living in Lincolnshire.

In summary: We are not in opposition for opposition's sake here. This community has had to tolerate government scheme after government scheme, from Environment Agency enforced flood schemes on private farmland in order to protect urban environments, to the acquisition of historical airfields by the Home Office, robbing Lincolnshire of future investments and opportunities and now, plans for an unprecedented 10,000 acre loss of habitat. For the people living here, our livelihoods and lifestyles would change overnight and will have a huge impact on our individual sense of personal control and well being.

It cannot be right to ignore the potential of many other suitable sites and turn to the countryside for a last minute solution because the countryside is already battling against the onslaught of developers and the rather dubious methods deployed to circumnavigate environmental and local planning concerns. The Green Belt has disappeared and more and more agricultural land is being swept up for housing and warehousing.

Lincolnshire agricultural land, the bread-basket of the nation, should be seen as a priceless national resource well beyond the reaches of developers, whatever they want to develop it for.

Lets also not forget that we need our countryside and wide -open spaces and vistas, everyone does, they are integral to improved wellbeing. A walk in the countryside is officially socially prescribed by Doctors to help people manage their mental health and our countryside, and farmland in particular, should be viewed as a priceless resource, to be protected and nurtured, not exploited.

No offset by the solar companies can ever replace what would be lost.