

Dear Madam

Application by West Burton Solar Project Limited

The 7000 Acres Group write to submit the following issues in relation to the agenda items for the Preliminary Meeting dated 8th November 2023 as requested in the Examining Authority's rule 6 letter, dated 11th October 2023.

- Agenda Item 2

Consideration of the draft Examination Timetable (refer to Annex B)

(Please note that this Agenda item refers to Annex B in the rule 6 letter, however, the draft Examination Timetable is listed under Annex C. Therefore, we surmise that the agenda item should refer to Annex C).

- It is sincerely appreciated by members of our group that the Examining Authority postponed the Preliminary on 7th September to prevent 'creating challenges for those seeking to participate in these separate Examinations.' The Examining Authority then explained that the 'challenges could, in turn, impact on the requirement for the ExA to receive timely, adequate, and informed submissions, and therefore our ability to conduct an efficient and effective Examination.'
- The revised draft Examination Timetable as set out in the rule 6 letter, dated 11th October, does not allay our concerns, in that there are multiple clashes with existing timetables for the Gate Burton and Cottam Examinations as before. For instance:
- On the 20th November responses are required to the ExA's further written questions (ExQ3, if required) plus other comments for the Gate Burton Project. On the 21st November, Deadline 2 occurs for the Cottam Solar Project, with requirements for comments,

responses to ExA first questions plus other information and on the 24th November, Deadline 1 occurs for the West Burton Project.

- The next week, on the 1st December, the First Written Questions (if required) for the West Burton Project by the ExA will be published. On this same day, the ExA for the Gate Burton Project will provide commentary on and schedule of changes to the draft DCO (if required). On the 4th December several days of Hearings commence for the Cottam Solar Project, potentially finishing on the 7th December. Also, on the 7th December, Deadline 1A for the West Burton Examination occurs where Written Representations are required to be submitted along with any summaries for WRs over 1500 words.

These clashes in the timetable are not manageable for Interested Parties.

- The next week, within 5 days there are 3 deadlines. On the 14th December, Deadline 6 for the Gate Burton Examination occurs. On the 15th, it's Deadline 2 for the West Burton Examination and on the 19th, Deadline 3 for the Cottam Examination is timetabled.
- Directly after the Christmas break on the 3rd January 2024, two deadlines are a day apart. Deadline 3 for West Burton will occur and on the 3rd January and Deadline 7 for the Gate Burton is timetabled for the 4th. In reality, this means Interested Parties will need to work on their submissions for these projects over the Christmas break, following continuous months of endless deadlines and events.
- The week commencing the 22nd January is reserved for Hearings for the West Burton Examination and directly after this week, on the 30th January, Deadline 4 for the Cottam Solar Project is timetabled. It is clear that there is no time allocated between the project deadlines for all concerned.

- On the 13th February, the ExA for the Cottam Solar Project will publish the schedule of changes to the draft DCO, a day after, on the 14th, Deadline 4 for the West Burton Project occurs.
- Again, the concurrent nature of the timetables continues with the publication of the ExA's second set of questions (if required) for the West Burton Project being released on the 21st February and Deadline 5 for the Cottam Solar Project Examination occurring on the 27th February.
- The difficulties continue with, Deadline 6, for the Cottam Solar Project on the 5th March and a week later Deadline 5 for the West Burton Project Examination on the 13th March.
- All the above examples clearly show the different Examination timetables (draft and finalised) do not provide adequate time between deadlines for Residents and Interested Parties.
- Examining Authorities state that the written processes will be the principle means used by the ExA's to gather information, evidence, and views about an application. It is therefore imperative that reasonable time is available to meet these requirements.
- From our perspective, with the unreasonably close, overlapping and clashing timetables for these projects, our members can only draw the conclusion that in reality they are excluded from the processes. If it becomes so impossible for Interested Parties to meet these deadlines, then in effect that is exactly what is happening.
- These clashes prevent Interested Parties from being able to submit informed, reasoned responses to the Examining Authority for the

West Burton Project Examination and as such the ExA's recommendations to the Secretary of State will be compromised in this regard. It can also be argued, that this lack of accommodation of the draft Examination Timetable to meet Interested Parties needs to represent their views in full, is in itself discriminatory.

- For Interested Parties and residents to truly become part of this process and Examinations, it is necessary for the draft timelines to be amended to give more time between deadlines and requirements to assist IP's in making their full and honest submissions. We have heard many residents say that 'it's all a done deal'. We believe the overlapping, clashes and little time between these draft Examination timetables only corroborates this viewpoint.
- It must also be considered that most residents do not have the experience or expertise in these types of projects. The process, terminology and timetable are tailored for professionals within this line of work or realm of understanding. Residents and the general public need more time to understand and discuss the requirements with other interested parties so that they can then make their personal submissions.
- Lastly, the Tillbridge Solar Project is expected to be submitted in the winter of 2023. As this project has been accepted onto the Early Adaptors Programme it is credible that this Examination will gather pace and potentially clash with the West Burton Project Examination as well as the Cottam Solar Project Examination.

- Agenda Item 3

Any other matters

- The Examining Authority needs to be aware that for many residents, the current venue in Lincoln for the Preliminary Meeting, the Open Floor Meeting and the Issue Specific Hearing presents barriers for many Interested Parties to attend. Due to the demographics of the area, certain groups of residents will find it very difficult to be at the Meeting and Hearings.
- In addition to the above, Lincoln is the City to the region and as such has a very different character and identity to the rural district of West Lindsey. The current venue is not in the area of the effected District and farmland. Therefore, it is not representative of the area and its people.
- The Examining Authority needs to be aware that for many residents and Interested Parties it is very difficult to participate in events held during the working week and during working hours. Also, many people in the region are not able to utilise the videoconferencing facility provided. Broadband coverage is often slow and irregular in this rural area.

Signed J Allan

On behalf of 7000 Acres

www.7000acres.co.uk