

Cottam Solar Farm, my reference 20037128.

Request for oral evidence to be presented at hearing on Tuesday 5 September 2023

1. Cumulative Adverse Effect on the landscape character and visual amenity

1.1 The Examining Authority and Planning Inspectorate is clearly aware of the other nationally significant infrastructure projects that are being proposed for West Lindsey, as well as others in and around the county of Lincolnshire.

1.2 Island Green Power is the company behind both Cottam Solar and West Burton projects. The Planning Inspectorate, for expediency in administration, has facilitated meetings with both of the companies behind these projects. It has also had meetings where representatives from all four applicants have been present.

1.3 Pinsent Masons is representing all four applicants. At a meeting on 30 September 2022, they offered a submission to the Planning Inspectorate with suggestions about the management of the DCO examination process. One of the topics was the applicants' approach to written submissions to examination, suggesting 'all applicants work collaboratively where possible'. The rationale given, 'to ensure the responses are aligned, the same information is submitted into each examination and the risk for inconsistency is reduced'.

1.4 This applicant has worked with the other proposed solar projects to coordinate work in such areas as construction phasing, grid connections and start of operation. When Cottam Solar registered as an interested party (for Gate Burton) part of the rationale was "the commonality of certain stakeholders and the potential for similar or cumulative environmental effects and coordination of mitigation measures"

1.5 There is a clear interrelationship with the applicant and the other National Infrastructure Projects, yet Island Green Power has been able to make two separate submissions. All four proposals are to be examined by a different Examining Authority, who will only have responsibility for examining their own case.

1.6 In isolation, all of these projects may meet this requirement. However, should the proposals be given the green light this would result in many thousands of acres of agricultural and recreational land in West Lindsey being covered in millions of solar panels, the construction of Battery Energy Storage Systems and the reconfiguration of a landscape for at least 40 years. Reference has probably been made to the combined areas being the largest solar farm in Europe.

1.7 My objection is that the clear interrelationship between these projects and the cumulative impact of them all is not being considered as a whole.

1.8 Should these solar projects be approved, this would not simply be a case of the West-Lindsey area of Lincolnshire 'taking one for the team', in terms of our contribution to net zero, but apparently becoming the solar farm capital of the UK. In a representation produced by Solar Media Ltd (2022) entitled The UK solar (Non-LPA) site capacity under development, it shows of the planned 17 GWp-dc capacity by region, the East Midland has 5.3 GW. This is the biggest capacity hosted by any region in the United Kingdom. Much of this would seem to be in Lincolnshire. I believe this is a disproportionate burden the communities of West Lindsey would have to bear.

1.9 As referenced by Lincolnshire County Council in their initial response of 28 March 2023, state 'By reason of its mass and scale, the proposed development would lead to significant adverse effects upon landscape character and visual amenity. The development has the potential to transform the local landscape by altering the character on a large scale...'. LCC also expresses concerns about the impact on views within a rural landscape.

1.10 I believe that this would result in the industrialization of this rural landscape. The wide, open spaces of the current landscape, enjoyed by myself, other residents and visitors to the area would be lost to a sea of panels for 40+ years; hedging that over the years would be allowed to grow to 5 metres (to provide screening); fencing around areas that would cut off access to wildlife and restrict their movement; significant impact on views from the A1500 and B1398 Cliff Road, (an Area of Great Landscape Value). I have travelled the Cliff Road for many years and it is genuinely uplifting to be able to look out across the valley and see the landscape and skyline rolling away before you.

1.11 Cottam Solar, in an environment statement refer to Planning Practice Guidance³ (PPG) at paragraph 005 in which it states that, "Green infrastructure is a natural capital asset that provides multiple benefits, at a range of scales. For communities, these benefits can include enhanced wellbeing, outdoor recreation and access, enhanced biodiversity and landscapes, food and energy production, urban cooling, and the management of flood risk." This natural asset we have and the benefits it brings will not be enhanced by a significant period of construction and millions of solar panels.

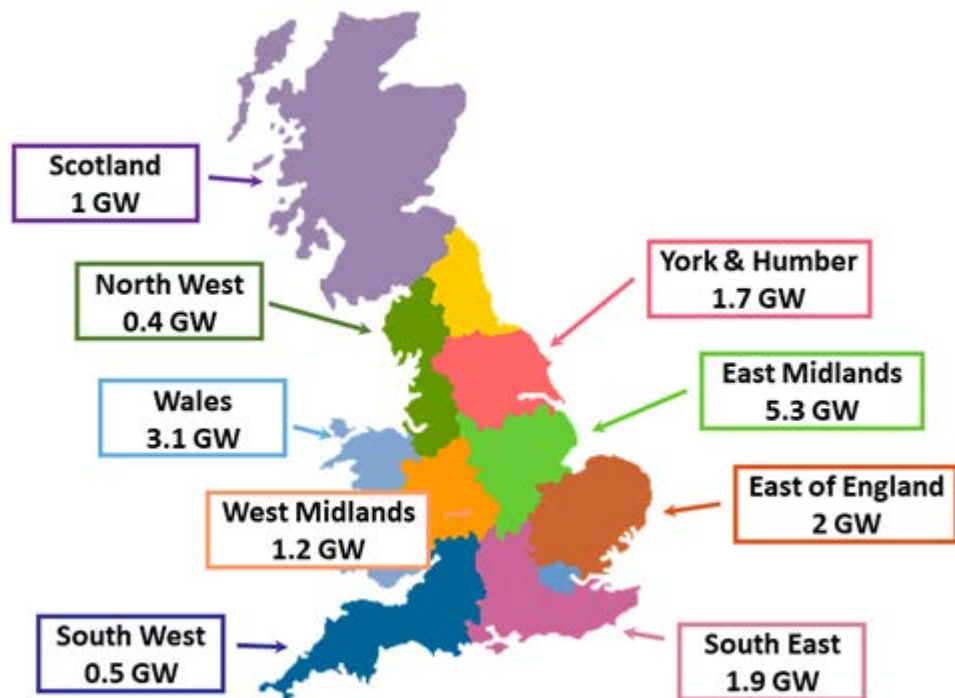
1.12 Cottam Solar has made the argument that many of their mitigation impacts will be beneficial. An example at Table 8.72: Nationally and Locally Designated Landscape – Cottam 1 Residual Operation (Year 15) Mitigation Measures "It is anticipated that the overall scheme of mitigation that will reinforce the landscape character where this has been lost or eroded in the last century to intensive arable farming. The new and enhanced hedgerows around the boundary of the Cottam 1 Site will help to define the historic field pattern and screen views towards the new panel areas from the adjoining Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLV)."

1.13 Residents enjoy and appreciate the landscape character as it presently is! The land is managed and cared for by farmers and families. Why do we need to define an historic field pattern? We live in the 21st century.

1.14 In the National Policy Statement EN-1 para 4.2.6 it states that the Secretary of State should consider how "accumulation of, and interrelationship between effects might affect the environment, economy or community as a whole, even though they may be acceptable when considered on an individual basis with mitigation measures in place." I hope the Secretary will do this in considering the impact of the four NSIP in West Lindsey.

UK Solar (Non-LPA) Site Capacity Under Development

Share of circa. 17 GWp-dc Planned by Region



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Source: *UK Large-Scale Solar Farms: The Post-Subsidy Prospect List*, July 2022 Release

Notes: Applications encompass TEC, NSIP, Scottish Government, Welsh Government & other early-stage credible plans