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FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:05:00 - 00:00:07:05

And people, please return to their seats. Please.

00:00:34:09 - 00:00:41:13

Uh, the, uh, the hearing is, uh, is now resuming. Um, and the next speaker is Christopher Reeve.

00:00:49:15 - 00:01:19:18

Good evening, and thanks for the opportunity to speak tonight. There's a few things I'd like to touch on that perhaps other people haven't mentioned. Um, I would like to add, though, that I agree with 99% what other people have said, with the exception that I don't personally think the wind turbines, particularly the the modern ones that's ridiculously high, are a viable alternative to any of this. That's just my own personal opinion. Um, I am a resident of Bentworth. Um, I consider I've been particularly affected by these proposals.

00:01:20:05 - 00:01:51:16

I've lived most of my life in Glen Pwith. Um, and during that time it seems to have been a slow decline of the village way of life. Um, I went to the village school that's now closed. So children in the village growing up don't have that anymore. Our public transport is absolutely abysmal. Um, that means that all adults in the village have to have a motor vehicle. The bus service to Bentworth finishes at 6:00.

00:01:51:21 - 00:02:30:07

Last post from Lincoln. The post offices have closed in the villages. The village shops have closed. Banks in the small towns, they've all closed. Uh, we've now looks like we're having an illegal immigrant center, uh, imposed upon us, causing lots of anxiety and security fears. In the similar area. We've had a new oil well past that's going to be untold construction traffic we're going to have to put up with for that. Living in the countryside, we pay more for transport on badly maintained roads because the fuel in the rural or areas is significantly more expensive than in towns.

00:02:30:24 - 00:03:02:27

We pay more for housing. It rent not to buy. Houses are perceived as being more expensive, so we pay more in council tax. We have to put up with the poor internet service and mobile phone service. Generally speaking, costs financially in the countryside are significantly increased from living in towns. It feels like it's a constant battle to retain the countryside and the way of life it provides. You may wonder why people even bother to live in the countryside. It's for the wildlife and the open fields.

00:03:05:02 - 00:03:35:12

That are proposed to be decimated by these fields of ineffective giant solar panels. That's what we live there for. We don't want to lose it. We don't have many incentives to live in the countryside. This madness must stop. We're not asking for pubs, leisure centres, entertainment venues. We're just asking to stop this madness and decimating good quality farmland with an industrialization. That's all I would like to say.

00:03:37:27 - 00:03:38:17

I thank you.

00:03:40:18 - 00:03:41:18

William Rose.

00:03:53:18 - 00:04:09:06

Really. I haven't got a lot else to say that hasn't already been said. But being an old man and coming to the end of my years, I just think that it's completely wrong and it's the worst legacy that I can leave. But I don't come out against this.

00:04:10:28 - 00:04:20:02

So, um, if if we, if the legacy we are going to leave is 10,000 acres of solar panels. What good are you?

00:04:22:01 - 00:04:22:16

Thank you.

00:04:25:17 - 00:04:26:02

Thank you.

00:04:27:19 - 00:04:28:14

That Ronald Gore.

00:04:37:24 - 00:04:42:14

Um, is Ronald Gore still present? Oh, apologies. Apologies.

00:04:46:22 - 00:04:47:21

Cheryl. Felix.

00:05:09:00 - 00:05:40:22

Good evening. Um, this is a point of view of myself, a local resident who will be surrounded by these panels and who lives just a couple of hundred yards away from the proposed battery storage. This comment, um, addresses food security amidst our burgeoning population. We moved to the semi-rural village of Martin in 2015. Since then, despite much local opposition, 39 houses are being built on good arable land opposite us.

00:05:41:15 - 00:06:21:18

Despite the opposition, they were given permission to be built anyway, profit being the main factor. This is one example of the way our capacity to produce crops is being undermined. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The residents all said no, but they weren't listened to and it's been waved through anyway. This is an example of immigration having a huge impact on the country's exploding population. Both of these show how imperative it is that we need to produce more of our own food, instead of importing it and having to somehow counter the carbon impact of that.

00:06:22:15 - 00:06:56:10

Now, the applicants here want to put up to 10,000 acres worth of solar industrial panels over our lovely countryside and arable land. Apart from the sheer negative visual impact of this, its massive threat to our good, our food security. The residents loudly say no and give excellent reasons why these are not wanted, and these reasons have been admirably covered by previous speakers. I feel we are not being listened to. Given the massive opposition and the salient arguments given.

00:06:56:23 - 00:07:07:06

Why do the applicants still arrange meeting after meeting and push these monstrosities forwards? Can we have an assurance, please, that we are actually being listened to?

00:07:08:23 - 00:07:09:24
That's it. Thank you.

00:07:11:28 - 00:07:12:13
Thank you.

00:07:14:03 - 00:07:21:17
Just feel like. I'll give you that assurance. Now, you are certainly being listened to by me and Mr. Henley. Everyone who has spoken tonight will have their views taken into account.

00:07:24:05 - 00:07:25:10
Uh, soothing him, please.

00:07:45:03 - 00:07:45:18
A.

00:07:46:27 - 00:07:47:17
Good evening.

00:07:50:11 - 00:07:58:01
I'm representing a fourth generation family farm. Farming grade three land at Willingham Barstow.

00:08:00:20 - 00:08:07:10
This is yet another meeting, yet another applicant, yet another room full of angry, very worried people.

00:08:08:29 - 00:08:13:23
I agree with Sir Edward Lee. He made some very good points.

00:08:15:15 - 00:08:25:03
Particularly that if this is an end. Sep. And I strongly dispute that it is. Any of the applicants.

00:08:26:18 - 00:08:34:29
There should be an independent, multifaceted investigation not directed by profit driven interests.

00:08:36:15 - 00:08:48:18
I agree with Michael Dover, who had some powerful points. Particularly, I would add that China are importing vast amounts of coal from Africa, where they already have a stronghold.

00:08:52:21 - 00:09:00:15
We are an island nation. There are new technologies appearing all the time. Um, wave power, for example.

00:09:04:01 - 00:09:08:06
I have read out this statement at previous.

00:09:10:02 - 00:09:11:03
Meetings.

00:09:13:04 - 00:09:22:13

I just think it's ridiculous that we have to keep coming out to these meetings on a night like this and repeating the same arguments over and over.

00:09:24:24 - 00:09:40:26

My grateful thanks to seven 7000 acres group because their skills, um, and the points they put across is amazing and beyond most of us residents.

00:09:42:15 - 00:09:43:20

To be able to do.

00:09:45:16 - 00:10:16:24

As farmers, we were expected by the government to take care of the environment, look after hedgerows, plant trees and I thought to produce food, although I am having doubts about that. And yet those principles can be totally disregarded by these solar schemes for the mass industrialization of our countryside. This is not green energy. This is profiteering off the backs of rural communities and the environment.

00:10:17:19 - 00:10:48:11

There is almost a sinister aspect to this attack on the breadbasket of the country, especially given the number of other solar industry applications in Lincolnshire. [REDACTED] otherwise the applicants would not be spending millions to further their plans. But there is no joined up energy plan. Land is a finite resource, and the demands on it are being felt like never before.

00:10:49:15 - 00:11:14:12

Food production has to be high on the list in these uncertain times. Everyone wants access and right to roam and wildlife and the environment is suffering. Solar has its uses and limitations. It belongs on brownfield sites, rooftops, warehouses and new builds, not on agricultural land and in rural areas.

00:11:16:06 - 00:11:42:01

The HS2 fiasco and abandonment of the northern line is an example of what to expect on on these intercepts. Lives and livelihoods have been ruined with land being compulsory purchased and there is no accountability or recompense. Be warned landowners who think this is an easy cash cow, although I quite understand it, is tempting many to give up farming in these testing times.

00:11:44:07 - 00:12:18:26

If these schemes are sold onto foreign investors, will any of the safeguards be adhered to? And who will police potential lifespan of 40 to 60 years? This whole area will be ruined for generations and may never be restored to farmland. I have no trust in the system at all. There are plans for my village of Willingham by Stowe to have an access route for heavy construction plant to come through along a quiet residential lane, which is used regularly by dog walkers, horse riders and children.

00:12:19:26 - 00:12:50:29

It would involve some land being compulsory, compulsory purchase, another quiet country, lanes being made wholly unsafe for locals to use. A battery storage and substation is proposed quite close to the village, which is a huge worry regarding fire risk and pollution. I was involved with the Harvest Field fire last year, which was frightening. Local farmers, along with two fire engines, came together to stop the rapidly spreading fire.

00:12:51:28 - 00:12:54:27

I doubt they could do that with a solar fire.

00:12:58:22 - 00:13:07:01

As referenced earlier, these solar panels will no doubt be mainly sourced from China. And it beggars belief that we should.

00:13:09:10 - 00:13:10:15

Dealing with them.

00:13:12:16 - 00:13:44:22

I understand there'll be 5 to 7 years of construction across the four schemes. So years of disruption and danger to come. And then what? We need a coherent energy plan which properly considers what finite resources we have. If we don't do that in the next decade, then we are jagged. But these solar industrial estates have a lifespan of 40 to 60 years, so they quite possibly will be obsolete before they are even finished.

00:13:47:06 - 00:14:08:02

[REDACTED]

00:14:14:26 - 00:14:51:20

Many people in our communities have failed to engage with the process because it is because it is complicated. They have already busy lives and the amount is overwhelming. Meetings are difficult to attend when they are in the working week, and there is a cynicism. I suspect that this is a done deal. And what chance do we have in fighting these faceless conglomerates? Do we have any human rights here? Our right to continue to live in our rural area, and not in the midst of a massive industrial estate.

00:14:54:18 - 00:15:22:07

There will be a mental health crisis. As any report being prepared on that as a doctor has already requested. Rural communities are already being stretched to breaking point. The Lincolnshire Rural Rural Support Network has reported an increase of 229% in calls to their mental health and stress helpline over the past year.

00:15:26:29 - 00:15:39:29

We need to do something for our planet. But I truly believe this is wrong on every single count and will be disastrous for our way of life, our communities, and the environment.

00:15:42:01 - 00:15:42:16

Okay.

00:15:44:22 - 00:15:45:10

Thank you.

00:15:47:12 - 00:15:47:27

And.

00:15:48:23 - 00:15:49:19

Peter O'Grady.

00:16:21:10 - 00:16:22:01

If you are ready.

00:16:23:17 - 00:16:30:27

Residents of filling in part of filling and parish meeting and also 7000 acres. I'm not sure you guys are far enough away, but there.

00:16:32:19 - 00:16:41:11

Um, I know the layout is a bit different to the ones we had here earlier in the week, isn't it? It does seem a little bit further. Mr. Gray, can I just check? Are you speaking on in your personal capacity?

00:16:41:13 - 00:16:43:23

In my personal capacity. Thank you.

00:16:45:17 - 00:17:17:23

I think one of the observations I have is how asymmetric this process is. I know we've talked about the written nature of the process, but it's how. Many resources the applicant has at their disposal. And the degree to which the volume of their material is independently scrutinized by experts. Now with the best will in the world. I know you guys will be experts in planning law.

00:17:18:00 - 00:17:32:06

But in terms of the technical aspects of things like energy or health, this is where a properly independent scrutiny of the evidence provided is essential.

00:17:34:01 - 00:17:48:25

Now, given the complete weight and mismatch in terms of the volume of resources and the volume of material provided by the applicant. Sometimes you have to do things a little differently and how you put things across.

00:17:51:01 - 00:18:08:01

So I'm going to talk a little bit this evening about the very recent change with regard to the national policy statements. And the tortuous journey that the critical national priority terminology has had. So if you just bear with me.

00:18:13:01 - 00:18:14:05

Once upon a time.

00:18:16:02 - 00:18:21:25

There was a very special little renewable energy called offshore wind.

00:18:24:00 - 00:18:31:27

Everyone on the island knew that she had great potential. Because the island was windy a lot of the time.

00:18:34:22 - 00:18:43:06

And with the right support, offshore wind would be able to power most of the power the country would need for the future.

00:18:45:10 - 00:18:56:29

The government of the day, understood how important she could be and decided to make her a special badge, which said she was a critical national priority.

00:19:00:00 - 00:19:12:11

Offshore wind would not only help the country. Power to help power the country, but she would help them find a way to net zero. The land of no carbon.

00:19:14:20 - 00:19:26:16

All the other renewable energies felt sad. Said it wasn't fair for offshore wind to get special treatment. Even though they knew in their hearts they could never be as special as offshore wind.

00:19:29:02 - 00:19:31:23

In the night. Some of the renewables made a plan.

00:19:33:27 - 00:19:39:27

Because the land of net zero wasn't the only prize, there was an even greener prize at stake.

00:19:40:18 - 00:19:41:13

Cash.

00:19:43:09 - 00:20:04:28

And they recognized that the government was weak and confused and busy with other problems. So they lobbied and they lobbied and they blew the government's plan down. So that everyone could have their own badge. That said, they were a critical national priority to.

00:20:06:15 - 00:20:39:01

All the renewable energies were happy. Wave and tidal were pleased because they knew that they should really be doing much better in the long run. Nuclear wasn't quite sure. She was hoping to avoid the attention because she'd been working hard without getting very far. And some were a bit confused. Such as geothermal. She had never asked for a special badge because they had long since accepted they were on the wrong island to be special.

00:20:40:26 - 00:20:50:00

Sola didn't want to believe she was on the wrong island to be special. So when she got her badge, solar beamed most of all.

00:20:52:04 - 00:21:08:08

She had made the most noise to the government and had some very large applications in front of the authorities for consideration. So she pointed proudly to her shiny new badge as she showed it off to the examining authority.

00:21:10:05 - 00:21:21:12

Except that now the badge was meaningless because when the examining authority looked around, everyone had a badge. So it meant that solar wasn't special at all.

00:21:23:25 - 00:21:53:29

The authorities knew the truth. Even without an issue. Specific hearing on energy. But the real critical national priority was still offshore wind. They knew because the National Audit Office. The Bays Committee and the UK Climate Committee had all written reports to tell them so. As well as 7000 acres. I'm sure there's a moral to this story. I'm just not sure it's been written yet.

00:21:55:05 - 00:21:57:08

And the jury's out on what it's going to be.

00:22:08:15 - 00:22:13:02

Have a completely separate submission. Which is a poem.

00:22:15:07 - 00:22:16:15

It is called the applicant.

00:22:19:16 - 00:22:20:14

By night.

00:22:20:16 - 00:22:25:24

Mr. O'Grady, I'm going to interrupt you that because I have a feeling that that might not be necessarily.

00:22:25:26 - 00:22:26:15

A submission.

00:22:26:17 - 00:22:27:14

In terms of.

00:22:27:29 - 00:22:29:04

This examination.

00:22:32:21 - 00:22:41:03

Okay. Is it relevant to what we're here to examine? If it's just a problem that criticises the applicant, I'm not sure that that's appropriate in this hearing.

00:22:49:07 - 00:22:50:08

Obviously this is one of.

00:22:51:07 - 00:22:55:20

How we get a message across in a way that is effective.

00:22:56:00 - 00:22:56:29

Well, I will allow it, but.

00:22:57:01 - 00:22:59:04

If it becomes offensive, I am going to interrupt you.

00:23:00:23 - 00:23:02:07

Sorry, I can't quite hear that, sir.

00:23:02:12 - 00:23:06:08

I said if if it if it becomes offensive, then I will interrupt you.

00:23:06:10 - 00:23:08:18

No, no it's not, it's not, it's not offensive. Okay.

00:23:10:24 - 00:23:25:00

By night. I dream of farming sheep. So if only I had somewhere to keep a woolly. An economic flock of hardly yet mischievous stock. But by day I talk of solar panels.

00:23:26:16 - 00:23:35:04

Spouting copious and partial flannel. Claiming claims of deepest green, a shade that says invest in me.

00:23:36:26 - 00:24:10:00

Painting a world powered by light just gloss over what isn't right field beyond field of shining glass with insects, bees and waving grass. And while really it's a monstrous scar. It lures the dollars from afar. My legion of consultants sent deploy convoluted arguments. My process proves that black is white just won't power like power lights at night. And those NIMBYs with their awful wails, petty fogging, small minded scales weighing.

00:24:10:02 - 00:24:35:25

Teeny weeny consequence of landscape, miles of security fence. Lost crops and jobs and habitat well-being. Way of life over this and that. What can those trifling things imply? Such stuff must surely not deny my quest to cover miles of land for dollars, pounds, yen and rand. Well, that is why my scheme is green. It's the distant cache that can't be seen.

00:24:37:18 - 00:25:04:03

I know it won't decarbonise. For all its quite colossal size and for all the mirrors and the smoke, the cache it makes is not a joke. So I really must convince this lot. There's urgent need in the planet. Hot. Just don't scrutinize my solar plan. Or you might just recognize the scam. It's the scandal of the future. You might see it on TV, but I'll have long moved on from this. It's not a place for me.

00:25:05:19 - 00:25:22:03

No matter if you live near here, there's not a thing for you to fear. As panels emerge from the ground and strangle the villages they surround. There really is no need to weep. I will still let you farm my sheep.

00:25:28:11 - 00:25:29:17

Callum O'Grady, please.

00:25:48:10 - 00:25:48:25

This one.

00:25:50:06 - 00:26:21:21

So, um, just speaking as a resident. To be fair, um, just want to quickly back up with a few figures and stuff. So currently the UK has about, uh, 15.2GW of solar as a what is capacity? Um, today, uh, we had or currently now we have a breakdown of about 46% of renewables on the grid. Um, do you wanna hazard a guess of how much of that is solar?

00:26:23:14 - 00:26:35:00

Uh, it is about 0%. Uh, with most of it coming through with wind and hydroelectric. Uh, so 50. Uh, sorry. 45.8.

00:26:35:25 - 00:26:36:17

Percent went.

00:26:38:12 - 00:26:43:16

So today? Uh, about half. Yeah. Half. Three.

00:26:44:26 - 00:26:45:11

Um.

00:26:45:22 - 00:27:19:27

Out of that 15GW of solar, there was 0.005GW of solar on the grid. It was outstripped by coal coming in at just under a gig. Uh, biomass at three gigs. Um gas 22.7 gigs and wind at eight gigs. This was again at half three. Yeah. So just proving how useful solar is on winter days like this.

00:27:20:21 - 00:27:44:18

Um, again, speaking from different point of view to the majority of people here, I'm from a younger generation, so I'm will probably still be around and hopefully wanting to still live in a rural environment in that, uh, 40 odd years lifespan, that is, it's planned for this site and others along it. Um.

00:27:46:03 - 00:28:16:24

To be able to actually engage in this process and understand quite what's going on is difficult, to say the least. Um, for younger generations, such as myself, um, I wouldn't even be aware that this process was even taking place, uh, let alone being able to engage in it. It's only due to the fact that my parents are both involved in this, that I know that it's going on and I'm able to speak. Um, my generation are arguably the most affected, but also most missed.

00:28:16:26 - 00:28:47:18

If you look around the room, um, there are very few of us of my demographic and age and younger than me. So anyone under the age of 23, I don't think I hear, uh, say that. What you will. Um, but, yeah, I just kind of want to say on this kind of wonderful time of Christmas where people love to have heating on, lights on, um, adding to the increased demand in electricity at this, uh, this winter months.

00:28:48:00 - 00:29:00:29

Um, how much is the actual planned solar? Kind of mess going to be contributing to. To this at this current time. They're in mind. The figures are stated earlier.

00:29:05:12 - 00:29:06:05

I thank you.

00:29:07:23 - 00:29:24:06

Um. We'll see. The hearing has been taking place, so there's been two further requests. I've been away, been made aware of to speak. Um, they are Joseph Creswell and Martin Carswell. Um, so can Joseph Creswell please come to come forward to speak?

00:29:42:21 - 00:29:44:16

Sorry. Can you turn the microphone on, please?

00:29:46:28 - 00:29:53:21

My apologies, I have been. Um, supposed to speak but arrive late due to being late in London.

00:29:55:26 - 00:30:21:12

My name is Joseph Creswell. And I'm speaking as an individual member of the local population who lives in the District of West Lindsey. I wish to place on record or public record. In this open forum. My objection to the Cotton Solo project, along with other projects being proposed simultaneously.

00:30:27:23 - 00:30:42:01

I'm concerned that these proposed multiple solar projects will have a profoundly significant and irreversible impact on the lives of all who live in and around them.

00:30:44:10 - 00:30:50:01

More specifically, I would like to take a little bit of a historic perspective, if I may.

00:30:52:14 - 00:30:57:23

And without this being specifically aimed at you, this is more as a general comment and a viewpoint.

00:30:59:22 - 00:31:15:04

When my first point is evidence of planning mediocrity. Encouraged by central legislative mechanisms and the consequential impact of our towns, villages and rural landscape.

00:31:18:18 - 00:32:04:26

Over the past 2 to 3 decades. I've witnessed our towns and cities have been transformed. It's the same average range of central large scale retail outlets, mega warehouses supported by major industrial

construction companies. All of these organisations involved are part of the wider industrial complex. These companies wield total power over our governing, legislative and planning bodies and have impacted a wide variety of local small villages and farmers businesses who simply cannot afford to stand against the powerful scale and lobby.

00:32:08:21 - 00:32:35:07

We are now witnessing the very same industrial approach through relaxed, sorry, the relaxation of planning laws in the housing sector. The current blight of medium and large scale housing estates being erected on greenfield land, on the edges of our towns and villages across our county and other counties across the nation. I note as a trouble round.

00:32:38:07 - 00:32:50:09

Why is such practice acceptable today, when it has been strongly resisted over the previous decades? Question I'd ask.

00:32:54:00 - 00:33:21:00

And as if this is not. Impact enough. These powerful companies, through lobbying, are proposing that we move the attention from the towns and villages to the surrounding farmland, further accelerating the destruction of landscape, which has remained a constant for millennia. From the end of the last Ice Age and the Bronze Age.

00:33:22:19 - 00:33:29:17

Our ancestors through numerous occupations of the Vikings, the Romans and the Normans.

00:33:31:17 - 00:33:41:25

Throughout all of these generations, there has been an understanding and a respect of the landscape and protection of the natural environment.

00:33:44:19 - 00:33:59:16

Yet, even through all of these great historical events, we will not witness such a wanton destruction of our beautiful landscape in these proposed solar projects if they're allowed to go ahead.

00:34:04:11 - 00:34:33:04

This destruction will also impact our wildlife. And I know this has been said, I'm going to repeat it. And hedgerows, habitats limited limiting movement and destructive destroying habitats for deer, foxes, badgers, owls, numerous small bird species dependent on our hedgerows and open landscapes. We cannot ignore the impact and consequences of our natural habitats and dependent wildlife.

00:34:37:22 - 00:35:08:27

There's also the moral and questionable decision. To industrialize perfectly good food production land. A question I pose is, do we really want to limit our ability to produce food in these times of global instability, or an entire local spar the other night to buy some apples? The first pack I picked up were packed in Poland. The second pack I packed up were packed in Estonia.

00:35:09:18 - 00:35:12:02

I couldn't find a British pack anywhere in the store.

00:35:14:04 - 00:35:17:25

What happens when that stops? We can't produce.

00:35:20:00 - 00:35:24:15

Some might say this is the inevitable consequence of progress.

00:35:27:15 - 00:35:45:11

The first game. And put to this forum that the gain will be for the large landowners and major industrial companies seeking financial gain at the expense of our quality of life. All in the so-called name of progress.

00:35:49:15 - 00:35:50:24

Can I finish by saying?

00:35:52:18 - 00:35:59:18

But as you have heard tonight, there are many intelligent reasons why these projects should be stopped.

00:36:03:06 - 00:36:06:25

And history will be the witness of that.

00:36:08:27 - 00:36:22:05

But I'm asking that we make the right decision based on wisdom. In honor of our ancestors, and for the sake and the future generations who are watching.

00:36:24:01 - 00:36:26:28

As we make this decision. Thank you.

00:36:29:21 - 00:36:32:23

And thank you. Um, Martin Caswell, please.

00:36:44:20 - 00:37:21:08

Good evening, gentlemen. At two specific points to this project. Firstly, the soil classification. Oh, my name is Martin Caswell, local farmer. Within this solar project, we've had nobody, as far as I'm aware, from the solar people doing an up to date soil classification on our farm and our fields, and I don't know any farmer who has. They're not supposed to put these panels on grade one, two, three, but they seem to be bulldozing these rules aside and ignoring it until later and up to date soil classification on every field where they want to put the panels.

00:37:21:18 - 00:37:54:27

I fail to see how they can get granted permission, so they seem to be just ignoring the soil classification side of it. Secondly, these panels are going to be where they're hoping to put them in a rural area where the roads are very narrow country lanes. It's not the M1, and the amount of construction traffic involved will totally destroy these country roads where we live and work. I've heard nothing from older people as to what they're going to do about the road damage they're going to do about lanes.

00:37:56:27 - 00:38:15:22

Thirdly, solar, the same as wind. The electricity is now cheaper because it's all based on the international market price. It's a rigged market, so we get no benefit by cheaper electricity by living in the middle of solar panels.

00:38:17:07 - 00:38:17:27

Fourthly.

00:38:19:14 - 00:38:39:00

Solar panels are fine. On brownfield sites and factory roofs. But to put them on good farmland when we already have to import food. It's fundamentally wrong. And I think getting some of that argument looking forwards, you can't eat electricity. Thank you.

00:38:42:15 - 00:38:43:00

Okay.

00:38:46:15 - 00:38:56:08

Um, but that's the last speaker in terms of, um, that I have in terms of in terms of a list. Um, but is anyone else in the room wishes to raise anything within the scope of this open floor hearing?

00:39:01:08 - 00:39:02:05

I didn't come forward.

00:39:16:09 - 00:39:23:28

But what? Can I please take your name first, please. Or you can put the microphone on. Press the button. It'll come. It'll come up. Okay.

00:39:24:12 - 00:39:24:28

Victoria.

00:39:25:00 - 00:39:25:15

White.

00:39:30:24 - 00:39:31:10

Okay. Thank you.

00:39:31:24 - 00:40:16:18

Okay. I'm a local resident and I've lived most of my life in the countryside, both in Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire. So these solar panels do directly impact me. I've listened to all the comments and the well-thought-out speeches by the audience tonight, and I can say I wholeheartedly agree with them. I believe that to even suggest putting solar farms, solar panels on such a vast area which are not proved to be efficient, and the many detrimental impacts they will have on the local community and the supply to the food source.

00:40:17:26 - 00:40:50:03

I would like to thank everybody for their, um, contributions tonight. And once again, I ask you to listen to our voices and not see this as a problem, that we can kick down the road for future generations to have to solve. And I would like to say that, um, I absolutely believe. From where I've worked in both, um, food manufacture and in the, um, pharmaceutical industry.

00:40:50:14 - 00:41:31:15

So I've got quite a varied background within the UK, always work within the UK, and I do know that the impact and the fear of these people is very real. And I ask that you listen to our voices tonight and consider this. And we, at the minimum we need is a complete report. Listing all the benefits which I cannot see any apart from for the developers and the landowners. And all the detrimental impacts so that the community who's going to be impacted by this can see this and where your decision comes from.

00:41:31:17 - 00:41:40:04

And the wider community will then feel involved and not get a shock if this goes through and not being heard. Thank you.

00:41:42:26 - 00:41:48:28

Thank you. Um, is there anyone else in the room who would wish to raise anything in the scope of this open floor hearing?

00:41:52:13 - 00:41:59:06

Okay. Thank you. And similarly, anyone else taking part via Microsoft teams wishes to raise anything within the scope of this open floor hearing.

00:42:03:04 - 00:42:17:19

Okay. Thank you. Um, so I'm now going to move on to agenda item five, which is the response, um, by the applicant. Um, does the applicant, uh, wish to respond at this stage or does intend to put the points in writing in due course?

00:42:20:05 - 00:42:25:09

To Phillips, I understand that you have the microphone, so we're happy for you to do it from there or to come to the front, whichever you prefer.

00:42:44:12 - 00:43:25:03

Uh. Good evening. Uh, my name is Gareth Phillips. I'm a solicitor and partner with the law firm Pinsent Masons. And I'm representing the applicant this evening. Uh, before starting, I hope this has taken, uh, with the sense that it's given, but it isn't underestimated by this particular applicant or any other that promotes development like this. The courage it takes for individuals to come to a forum like this, to sit ten metres away from from your good selves as the examining authority, uh, and, and to actually speak with the eloquence they have, the confidence they have and the passion.

00:43:25:05 - 00:43:58:14

And it isn't lost. We're all human beings here. Uh, it's suggested that some applicants are driven by money. I can assure you that every professional working on this project, and every renewable project I've worked on for the last 15 years, has been committed to the cause of renewable energy, decarbonisation and climate change. Yes, we're paid to do it. It's our job, but we do it because we believe in it. And there's been a lot of talk about legacy and the legacy that we're working towards is one about decarbonisation, improved air quality for the future.

00:43:58:25 - 00:44:37:17

Um, and essentially doing the best we can to abate the climate change that that, as a matter of fact, is occurring all around us and that climate change has its own impacts on the environment, both at the macro level and at the micro level. There's been some talk of misinformation and half truths and all the rest of it. To some degree that has been perpetuated by, um, some of the politicians that the residents have turned to for guidance, and they haven't been entirely clear about what is said in the public in a forum like this, albeit not in the room.

00:44:37:19 - 00:45:13:09

And what is said when they return to base, uh, in government and what he said when policy is driven forward. So there has been no rash rush to change policy for the benefit of solar. There have been calls over the last decade to review the national policy statements with which these projects are to be determined, and it has taken the best part of that decade to achieve it. Over the last five years alone, the current government has been asked to update the policy and it has taken that time to do it.

00:45:13:27 - 00:45:43:27

Solar, both ground mounted and rooftop solar, has been a part of this country's energy mix policy from at least December 2020, when the Energy White Paper was published by this government, it set out that both offshore wind and solar had a part to play in the future of our energy supply and security. This is long before Ukraine and the current issues of energy security came along.

00:45:45:09 - 00:45:59:18

There was then a court case that was brought to try and persuade the government to carry on with the review, and the review came about. The first we saw of that was September 2021. That's over two years ago.

00:46:01:11 - 00:46:38:05

In that policy N3. That's the policy document that deals with renewable energy. Was updated to include a new chapter specifically dealing with solar, both rooftop and ground mounted. Those policy documents were consulted upon for many months. And they went. And then there was challenge to the government to hurry up and get the new policy documents out. And in that time, the Ukraine war started. And immediately, in response to the Ukraine war, we had a new policy document, British Energy Security Strategy.

00:46:38:18 - 00:47:19:08

That strategy is where the 70 gigawatt target originates from. Again, national policy by this government, the government that Sir Edward Lee is part of. So that set out the target for solar. Following that, we then had the revised the revisions published to the national policy statements. Those came around in March last year. This year. I beg your pardon? Those focused. Again, there were very few changes to the solar chapter in that, but the new definition of critical national priority did appear, and everybody in this room is correct.

00:47:19:10 - 00:48:06:12

He said it that that applied to offshore wind only at that time. But what didn't happen was some huge lobby by the by by the by the solar industry. What happened was a lot of people pointing to reports, independent reports produced by the Committee for Climate Change, the National Infrastructure Committee and several others. That all said. If we are only to rely on offshore wind. Given the time it takes to deploy offshore wind and the time it might take to deploy nuclear, which is another alternative that we've heard this evening, we will not make significant progress towards the policy targets and the law and the legal targets that have been set out by this government.

00:48:07:00 - 00:48:40:04

So the reason for broadening that definition of critical national priority was not just to support solar, but to accept that if we are to make a meaningful impact on decarbonisation, we have to prioritise all forms of low carbon infrastructure. So that does include the wave, the tidal, the nuclear and everything else that's been mentioned this evening. But nowhere in this new definition of, of of CMP does it dilute the importance of offshore wind.

00:48:40:06 - 00:49:14:19

That is still important. And nowhere in this definition of CMP does it say that solar, specifically ground mounted solar, is the only solution. This applicant isn't saying solar. Ground mounted solar is the only solution, nor does any one of their solar applicants I work with. The entire industry accepts that it's not just one solution that fixes decarbonisation. Decarbonisation is fixed by a number of things a number of low carbon technologies producing energy, yes, at different times of the day.

00:49:15:21 - 00:49:29:12

And demand management is another side of it. But essentially there is a multifaceted solution to deliver decarbonization. And solar, we accept is part of that.

00:49:31:01 - 00:50:05:09

But with the new policies with us, what we can safely say is that there's been no rash judgment in formulating this policy. At the very least, it has been a carefully considered change of policy since 2020. That's been subject to public scrutiny at least twice over several months. And it's the product of this government. So a lot of the issues that have been raised this evening were actually directed at policy, not necessarily this project. That's not to say I'm discounting the ones that were said about this project.

00:50:06:07 - 00:50:37:14

We've also heard about the food security. This government has also looked at food security and whether there is a food crisis in the UK and what Ukraine means for the UK in terms of food supplies and Defra. This government's department that is responsible for this has confirmed that there is no food crisis. They have also confirmed that they're not concerned by the loss of land to solar. And here's why.

00:50:38:26 - 00:51:02:06

Solar in the UK. If you were to deploy every single solar park above and below 50MW that's currently designated or in the pipeline, you end up with a whopping figure of 0.1% of the of the land in the UK being used as solar. So let's put that in context. As others have said this evening.

00:51:04:05 - 00:51:47:12

Twice that. That amount of land is currently in use as golf courses. So twice the amount of land currently planned for all solar projects in the UK is used for golf courses. The amount of agricultural land available is five times the amount of land proposed for all the solar projects in the UK, taking us up to the 70 gigawatt target. So that is why this government again, one that Sir Edward Lee is part of, has confirmed that they don't have a concern in this regard because the solar proposed is one fifth of the equivalent of that available for agriculture.

00:51:48:13 - 00:52:19:28

There is another assumption that's made as well, that every single square mile of agricultural land is going to be used for agriculture. Not so. There is no compelling power on, on, on farmers to use every square meter of their land for solar production. In fact, there have been a number of other policies, whether it's rewilding, set aside policies, etc., which have actually taken land out of agricultural use. Where was the objection then? But now we try to use this land for decarbonization purposes.

00:52:20:17 - 00:52:22:04

There is an outcry about it.

00:52:23:21 - 00:52:58:05

It's not a balanced argument. Sir Edward Lee also talked about the bread basket at this part of the world is known for. The evidence around you also shows that this part of the world, this part of the country, Lincolnshire, has always been a power base. Lots of cooling towers give that game away. So whilst yes, there has been a history of agriculture and food production in this, in in the county and in the region, there has also been a significant history of power production.

00:52:58:16 - 00:54:01:07

And so what is now proposed in terms of the solar projects and any others that come along in the same area, is in keeping with that historic use of this part of the country. Turning to China, macroeconomic issues go a bit beyond planning and the scope of this examining authority, but it's worth bearing something in mind. How many times do individuals, when they buy their flat screen TVs, ask themselves how many, how much child labour was involved in producing that flat screen, and all the others that are brought in from around the world when they use their iPhones or other smart devices, do they ask what what labor was used in creating this? If they decide to go and buy an electric vehicle, are they asking themselves who actually dug the materials out of the ground in order to do that? When they check the labels in their sports goods that they wear, do they actually look to see where those, those those products were manufactured? Because many of them will be in China.

00:54:02:01 - 00:54:34:27

So if our government is asked to stop the use or purchase of solar supply from China, it has a much bigger question to ask itself. And that is, do we trade with China whatsoever? And that's the difficulty

with this point. It's not just about solar bringing it back to the project though. Whilst I cannot control what where people buy their goods, what I have been able to control is the plan we talked about yesterday.

00:54:35:15 - 00:55:07:07

The skills plan, which has the essentially ethical procurement policies in it. I drafted that plan years ago for the Cleeve Hill project. I developed it in compact in coordination with Solar Energy UK, the industry body, in order to ensure that there were controls in that plan that would be imposed upon developers of solar projects, whether they're above or below 50MW. And the answer to who will police this are the local planning authorities.

00:55:07:09 - 00:55:35:12

We talked about this in the hearing yesterday, and the plan will be updated in accordance with some of the points discussed, but that is the control measure. So for this project, there will be a legally binding control on whoever owns this project in the future that they will have to demonstrate to the local planning authorities that have appeared before this examining authority and the residents behind me, that that this has all been ethically sourced.

00:55:38:08 - 00:56:08:22

Turning to the local policy we we heard mentioned earlier, it's simply not fair or accurate to inform the people in this room that policy will be will be adopted, that will prioritize agricultural over solar, or to say that the best and most versatile land will include freebie. That's not the way the process works. It's a cascade system. Anyone in local authorities who are familiar with the planning process know this.

00:56:08:24 - 00:56:40:02

Their local planning documents have to be in accordance with the national documents. The national policy documents, not just the national policy statements that we've been talking about, um, but the national planning framework that also applies to to other forms of development. So. This is my point that there are some mistruths that have been said in some of these hearings, but unfortunately, some of those who claim to represent the local community are actually not doing them any favours.

00:56:40:14 - 00:57:12:19

And they could do more to explain why solar ground mounted solar is needed in the context of this country's decarbonisation. Why it's not good enough to just say, well, let's carry on using gas because China chuck out more, more carbon emissions than anyone else. Why? We're holding ourselves to account as being a better nation than that. We are leading the way as a nation on decarbonisation. And that point is made clear in Cop 28 this week.

00:57:13:03 - 00:57:47:08

You would have also seen in Cop 28 this week, a number of oil and gas super majors reconfirming their commitment to renewable energy, and particularly in the UK. So there is a much wider context for this project, but bringing it back to this project. It's the purpose of it will be to generate around 500MW of clean power. I'm paraphrasing there. Depending on how you measure it, you can come out slightly differently, I accept that.

00:57:48:01 - 00:58:35:17

But it is a good use of the available connection at Cottam and West Burton. So too are all the other projects that are coming forward. We don't have the luxury to turn back to a coal fired plant or a gas fired plants, or nuclear, certainly within the next ten years, as an alternative to decarbonizing. Now, if you want to talk about legacy, about the children who will be on this planet long after all of us have gone, then that legacy is about giving them a decarbonized energy future that they can be proud of, and they will look to us and see that some sacrifices were made at the local level, but that was for the greater good of a decarbonised power for their future.

00:58:36:11 - 00:58:39:01

I think I'd like to end there. Thank you very much for your time.

00:58:41:13 - 00:58:51:06

And just a quick point on what you've just said. You mentioned 500MW. Um, yeah. As I understand it, your grid connection 600MW. And I just wanted to clarify that point with you.

00:58:52:09 - 00:59:25:10

I paraphrased, we can confirm it in writing, but it's already in the evidence before the examining authority. Um, there was one last other point I wanted to just mention. There was there was understandable some concerns about mental health and well-being earlier, and that the claim was made that we haven't done and don't intend to, to do a health impact assessment. It's correct to say there isn't one document with health impact assessment written on the front of it, and I think that's been the point of other, other representations. But a health impact assessment has been undertaken in the chat in relevant chapters within the environmental statement.

00:59:25:12 - 00:59:56:21

And if one turns to chapter 21 of that statement, it's signposts where those assessments are carried out. But I understand it's a request from the examining authority to consider how how better presented that particular assessment could be done. But as a matter of fact, it has been done. We did commit to it, and we are looking now at how best, uh, to, to to arrange things. And the last point was there's a concern of people not being listened to. I know for a fact that the examining authority will be listening to all of this.

00:59:56:27 - 01:00:27:03

I know for a fact that the examining authority, regardless of only having one project in front of them, will be able to consider the others through the assessment of cumulative impact. So it doesn't matter if it's one project or four. Um, and we have listened. We have listened in this hearing and all the others. And the connection I'm able to provide to the other applicants means that information that we hear at each hearing does get back to other applicants. They are separate. I'm the link for good or bad.

01:00:27:14 - 01:01:01:16

Uh, but the good side of it is that I am able to provide information across the separate projects. You wouldn't necessarily get that if this was for housing schemes, for supermarket schemes, etc.. The unusual fact is that these projects can be coordinated to a degree, because we we have listened to the feedback in for offshore wind and the the Offshore Transmission Network review, and we've listened to the requirement for coordination across projects, and that best practice from the offshore wind industry has been deployed for these four projects.

01:01:02:14 - 01:01:05:09

Now, I will still thank you very much for the extra time.

01:01:08:08 - 01:01:08:23

Thank you.

01:01:10:13 - 01:01:22:00

And that that is the end of the submission of pride. Um, everyone's always had an opportunity to speak. That gets an opportunity to then at the end, uh, speak afterwards. Um, so now I'm going to move to, to close the hearing.

01:01:23:19 - 01:02:00:07

Firstly, can I thank everyone who has spoken today and for taking time to come along and speak to us. Um, I want to finish today by giving you all the reassurance, which is my colleagues already said that we will take all the views expressed into account when we come to consider the application and making our recommendation. If you have spoken, today will help us. If you can, please cover the points that you've made in writing, um, which would wish to be submitted by choosing the 19th of December 2023. So as you see an examination timetable, that is deadline three, the recording of this hearing will be published on the project web page as soon as it is practical.

01:02:00:21 - 01:02:05:15

Um, please contact the member of the case team. If you don't know how to find the project web page.

01:02:09:28 - 01:02:41:19

Um issue specific here in five regarding the draft development consent order will start at 10 a.m. tomorrow. Um, seating will be available at 9:30 a.m. as well as the virtual registration. And again, that will take place in this venue. Um, the draft consent order itself is the order which Secretary of State would make if it decided to grant consent for the application. By that issue. Pacific herring five will be the technical nature or based on the specific wording of the Draft Development Consent Order and the explanatory memorandum.

01:02:43:03 - 01:02:48:06

At the time is now a 8:15, and this open floor hearing is now closed. Thank you.