

I would firstly like to comment on the statement from Mr Gareth Phillips, the solicitor representing the Applicant. He is wrong to say that Lincolnshire is historically a power producing county; that is Nottinghamshire the other side of the River Trent from us. The power cabling will have to go under the River Trent to connect to the old power stations.

Mr Phillips thinks our communities should make the sacrifices of losing our peaceful, rural lives for 'the greater good'. I would question who 'the greater good' is benefiting. I think it is for the huge profits linked to these projects. He states that Defra is not worried about food security and that golf courses account for the same amount of land as that being requisitioned for Solar. Golf courses are at least green areas where wildlife can live in harmony with that use. A harvest is never a certainty especially given the variability in weather patterns we are now seeing.

To say we are all in hoc to China already is quite frankly, condescending and patronising. If you're in a hole you stop digging. We should be stepping back from China in every aspect. In any event, this is disingenuous as we know this country uses coal power extensively, the shipping round the world of all the components and the heavy plant needed in construction renders these projects totally 'un green'.

My statement:

I'm representing a fourth generation family farm, farming grade 3 land.

As farmers we are expected by the Government to take care of the environment, look after hedgerows, plant trees and to produce food. And yet those principles can be totally disregarded by these solar schemes for the mass industrialisation of our countryside.

This is not green energy; this is profiteering off the backs of rural communities and the environment.

There is almost a sinister aspect to this attack on the bread basket of the country especially given the number of other solar industry applications in Lincolnshire. Obviously higher powers are making encouraging noises for these schemes 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. 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, roof tops, warehouses and new builds not on agricultural land and in rural areas.

The HS2 fiasco and abandonment of the northern line is an example of what to expect on these NSIPs. 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.

If these schemes are sold on to foreign investors will any of the safeguards be adhered to and who will police a 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 Stow 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. It would involve some land being compulsory purchased and other quiet country lanes being made wholly unsafe for locals to use. A battery storage and sub station is proposed quite close to the village which is a huge worry regarding fire risk and pollution. I was involved with a harvest field fire last year which was frightening. Local farmers, along with two fire engines, came together to stop the rapidly spreading fire. I doubt they could do that with a solar fire.

These solar panels will, no doubt, be mainly sourced from China and there is plenty to worry about with that. We should be distancing ourselves from this country as much as possible.

I understand there will 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 jiggered. But these solar industrial estates have a lifespan of 40 to 60 years so will they be obsolete before they are even finished?

I don't trust the data the Applicants have produced because it has been manipulated to hide true facts and make it more palatable. Photos taken for their reports have hidden vistas and important areas. Their names, 'low carbon' and green power' are worded to seem less threatening but the fact is this is sheer, greedy profiteering.

My grateful thanks are to the 7000 acres group without whom I would not have made any sense of this process but so many of our community have failed to engage with the process 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.

There will be a mental health crisis. Has any report been prepared on that? Rural communities are already being stretched to breaking point. The Lincolnshire Rural Support Network has reported an increase of 229 % in calls to their mental health and stress helpline over the past year. We all want to do our bit for the planet but I truly believe this is wrong on every single count and would be disastrous for our way of life, our communities and the environment.