

Tillbridge Solar Open Forum : Wednesday 16th October 2024

My name is Carol Montgomery [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The village sits on the slope of the Lincolnshire Edge, or The Cliff as it's known, and has open, expansive views out across the Till Vale to the west as you drive along the B1398 top road. As you will know, these views are designated as an 'Area of Great Landscape Value', the value of course being to the people who both live and work here, and who travel through the area. This view is specifically identified within our Neighbourhood Plan as being of great importance to residents of the Parish.

One of a number of reasons I choose to live in the countryside is because [REDACTED] and pollution makes my symptoms more severe. Other reasons are for the enjoyment and feeling of wellbeing that I get from being surrounded by open space, the lack of noise, fresh air and nature. Many people choose to live in the city because they love the hustle and bustle, the noise, the access to facilities and services, and wouldn't want to live anywhere else. Then there are people like me who couldn't abide living in a city, who hate noise and built-up areas, and choose to make sacrifices to live in the countryside. We don't have access to super-fast broadband, we don't have easy access to shops, theatres and restaurants, nor to trains and buses. In fact, I think we have 1 bus a day that goes by on the top road, the B1398. But we make those sacrifices because we value the benefits we get from living in open green space.

Every time I drive along the B1398, either to Kirton Lindsey or into Lincoln, I take in the views. Wherever you are along the road, you can see for miles, swinging from the north, to the west, and to the south, and it's calming, and relaxing. And you know what.... when I drive along there now, I get choked up at the thought that it could all be lost. At the moment my husband and I go for bike rides and walk the dogs around the local country lanes and feel relatively safe due to the low amount of traffic. On summer days it's so quiet, if you just stop and take a minute, you can hear the sky larks, black birds, robins and all the other birds we have, singing around you. And in our garden at night, we can hear the racket of the hundreds of geese on Northlands Road reservoir as they

settle in for the night. The same reservoir that will only have a single-track lane to separate it from where the 4.5m high solar panels are planned to be.

This Tillbridge Solar project as we all know is the largest of 4 that are being planned for the arable land between Lincoln and Gainsborough, 2 of which have already been approved. If you could see a full mock-up of the view from the B1398 once these solar installations are in place, the whole landscape that is currently fields and hedges and woodland would be solar panels. The only 2 places in the world at the moment that have such vast densities of solar on this scale are China and India, and they are out in the deserts in unpopulated areas. These 4 proposals for West Lindsey are within a 6 mile radius on productive farmland which is home to hundreds, if not thousands of people in 32 village communities and farms. As far as I can gather, the solution provided by the solar companies to screening this horrendous damage to the landscape is to block the views altogether...!!! The solution proposed to minimise the visual impact of taking 13,000 acres of beautiful arable land with amazing views that change through the seasons, and replacing it with a landscape of glass and metal, is to plant fast growing hedges along the B1398 to totally block the views, so we won't have to look at it... we won't be able to see anything at all ... REALLY.....!!? That's their answer...??

I also want to ask what impact assessment has been done on the harms to people's health and well-being, and how was it assessed? Before this all started, I could sleep for England and [REDACTED]. For months now though, when I go to bed, I lay awake in the dark and think about this threat that's over our heads, and how we can fight it, what can we say or do.... going over and over what I could say today that would make any difference. I get butterflies in my stomach [REDACTED] I feel. And I struggle to sleep. Then I wake up about 4 or 5 in the morning and the thoughts and the worry start all over again... And it's the same every night and it's exhausting. I've started having to use my asthma inhaler that I haven't used for years, and I'm taking paracetamol most mornings when I wake up with a headache.

In one of Kier Starmer's speeches I heard last week, he said that his government's plans are to **'serve the interests of the people'** and that

he would ***'tread lightly on people's lives'***. How can replacing such vast areas of food producing land with the most inefficient method of producing energy be in the interests of the people? How is imposing such massive, ugly, damaging changes to the environment and use of land "treading lightly on our lives"? And a *direct quote from a spokesperson from the Dept for Energy Security & Net Zero* was that ***"Securing Britain's clean energy future will require improving infrastructure to get renewable electricity on the grid. Where communities live nearby this infrastructure, it is right they should benefit directly from it"***. I want someone to explain to me how any of us will benefit "directly" from this industrialisation of our communities? Please...tell me...!! The only winners here are the solar companies and those working with them who'll make obscene profits from the subsidies they'll receive, funded by the taxpayer. And when the construction starts, they walk away. They don't live here and won't have to live with the consequences. Where they have everything to gain and nothing to lose, we have nothing to gain but everything to lose. There is no positive in this for us. We are the collateral damage in a badly planned experiment. We won't be able to walk away. No-one will want to buy a house that's in the middle of a construction site the likes of which hasn't been seen before in this country. We'll have to live through years of construction noise and pollution, of traffic congestion as construction and delivery lorries block up the roads, for it to be unsafe to go for a local bike ride or a walk due to the size and amount of construction vehicles on our lanes, to be surrounded by security fencing and lighting, to live with the threat of battery fires giving off poisonous gases, and to live with the knowledge that this is it for the rest of my life and beyond...and I know that applies to many of us. How does someone cope with that...? Can you imagine the toll it will take on people's mental health? On top of this we have the highest energy bills in the world due to the huge levy we all have to pay for this suicidal race to net zero. And what about the animals and birds? We all know how sensitive they are to noise and vibration. And has consideration been given to the impact of the glare from the panels on the migrating geese at the reservoir? The area will be a wildlife wasteland. And please don't insult us by suggestion that the small token areas for bio-diversity will even begin to compensate for the loss of their habitat. I know that the processes for planning applications are strictly laid out and followed, with pages and pages of tick-boxes. But

how many tick-boxes are there regarding the ethics of a project, assessing the human cost, asking whether the project is morally right or not?

And if this isn't enough to deal with, the iGas oil drilling site, which is on the western side of Glentworth and within the proposed site of the Tillbridge solar farm, was given planning permission for expansion last year. This will mean construction traffic through the village day and night, the creation of a new pipeline, and the movement of up to 100 HGV tankers per day during 5 of the 7 phases of the project. Production is expected to be for up to 21 years. Surely the cumulative impact of these projects must be taken into account when considering the Tillbridge Solar application.

We're constantly told, quite rightly, that the number one priority for the government is food security. There are places in the world today where people do live without electricity, but nobody can live without food. We've seen over the last 4 years how quickly the world can change, with disease and war closing down population movement, and threatening energy and food supplies. We must protect our food producing land and our ability to feed ourselves.

And finally, I just have to say that since the decisions for these projects now lie into the hands of Ed Miliband, regardless of the recommendations of the Planning Inspectorate as we saw with the Sunnica Solar farm, I have lost all faith in the consultation process. We obviously don't matter...our futures don't matter.... our views and objections, however valid they are, don't matter, and our health and wellbeing don't matter, if one man on a mission could swipe it all aside and approve every application that comes his way.

My last comment is that it's my understanding that this open forum is held specifically for local residents to come and have their say face to face with the Inspector. Written submissions may say the words, but they don't portray the emotion and the feeling. So why has this meeting been organised for 10am on a week day when there are many people who can't attend due to work commitments? It may be convenient for you, but not for many of those that it was actually organised for.