

I strongly object to the Tillbridge solar farm proposal. It is just 1 of many Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs) within a few miles of each other and together these would create the largest solar farm complex in Europe, amounting to some 13,000 acres in total within a 6 mile radius in West Lindsey. We must look at all of the proposals together rather than independently given the scale of the projects. The submission of all these projects together, the documentation involved and the timetables for them makes it impossible for the people affected by the plans to fight them all at once. Whilst I detail my objections below no doubt I am wasting my time (as the Planning Inspectorate probably is) since Mr Miliband will rubber stamp the proposal in 15 minutes.

The Tillbridge proposal, at over 3,459 acres, combined with the other proposals have a cumulative effect of at least 13,000 acres of farmland lost and the industrialisation of the area as a whole.

Food security is now a big issue and the government is changing its stance, wanting more productive farmland, not less (see the Government Food Strategy document June 2022). Over the previous 40 years we have gone from producing 78% of our own food down to 64% and the cost of importing food is increasing all the time. To lose 13,000 acres (in total) of good arable land is ridiculous. The Government is pushing to speed up planning permission for nuclear power plants and offshore (and inshore) wind to boost growth and bring down energy bills. In the UK, solar panels produce on average around 11% of their rated output – and they produce most of that power on sunny, summer days when we least need it. When demand is at its highest, on winter evenings, they produce nothing at all. The starting point for installation of solar panels should be on brownfield land, previously contaminated land and on industrial rooftops. If the Government were to require all new builds, both residential and commercial, to have solar panels installed the “need” for projects like this would disappear – not that there is a need as it seems to me that the driving force behind them is profit for the developers and profit for the farmers who are leasing their land.

The government has just approved Sizewell C . Nuclear is the only form of reliable, low carbon electricity generation which has been proven at scale and returns more than 100 times as much power as a solar site of the same size. This will increase civil nuclear power to up to 24GW by 2050 – 3 times more than now and representing up to 25% of projected electricity demand. The United Kingdom has been estimated to have over a third of Europe's total offshore wind resource, which is equivalent to three times the electricity needs of the nation at current rates of electricity consumption (In 2010 peak winter demand was 59.3 GW,[52] in summer it drops to about 45 GW). The government has committed to a major expansion of offshore capacity to 50 GW by 2030. By 2023, the UK had over 11 thousand wind turbines with a total installed capacity of 30 gigawatts (GW): 15 GW onshore and 15 GW offshore. New research published 13th February 2023 by RenewableUK's EnergyPulse data analysts shows that the UK's pipeline of offshore wind projects at all stages of development now stands at 99.8GW across 130 projects – an increase of 14GW over the past 12 months. This includes 13.7GW of fully operational capacity and a further 13.6GW under construction or with support secured for a route to market. Dogger Banks A, B and C which are active/being constructed will produce 3.6GW of electricity alone. We do not need this solar project. This does not take into account the new STEP project at West Burton and the electricity that will (perhaps) be produced there.

Solar farms will destroy agricultural jobs, skills and livelihoods and create very few new skilled jobs or replace livelihoods. Most of the equipment is likely to be manufactured in China and non-local labour used in construction. It is likely there will be a net reduction in employment, in an area with relatively few opportunities. Tourism to the area will be devastated and businesses ruined. There will not be any economic benefit to the communities affected. It seems to me that Lincolnshire has been chosen because it is one of the least populated counties and therefore fewer objections will be raised against projects like this and small rural villages and hamlets will be swamped by industrialisation – the county will be ruined forever. The detrimental effects, both physically and mentally, on the inhabitants of these villages and hamlets will be horrendous. Families will be consigned for generations to come to live in properties surrounded by solar panels since they are unlikely to be able to sell their houses.

No matter what precautions and assurances, it will not be possible to deliver and install millions of solar panels, pour thousands of tonnes of concrete, as well as containers with batteries and switchgear, all surrounded by miles of fencing, without damaging habitat. And this construction would take between 5 to 7 years to complete. Obviously construction vehicles will be electrically powered!! Also it is my understanding (from The Times) that the life span of solar panels is about 20 years so they will need replacing at least twice and the old ones will need recycling (by who?) or just scrapped (where?). When the 60 year project is completed how will all the panels be removed? How will the concrete be dug up and where will it all be dumped? Furthermore what miracle will have taken place such that the solar farms are no longer required in 60 years? Apart from the safety and environmental risks of large lithium battery storage facilities (which is well documented) how long will these batteries last and how efficient will they be over time. Again, how will these be disposed of or recycled and who will do this?

And what is the carbon footprint of the production/transportation and installation of these solar panels especially as the majority will come from China (which is heavily dependent on fossil fuels for production). It's all very well saying that the electricity produced in the UK is green but not if more carbon gasses have been emitted elsewhere than are saved in the UK. If the solar panels are anything like those that I buy from China via Amazon they'll be lucky to last 5 years.

Does anyone really believe that after 60 years the fields will be viable as agricultural food producing land - they will be lost for further generations to come. How can the applicant guarantee that the land will be as fertile as it is now and how will this be achieved? The bucolic images that the developers put forward of sheep grazing around the solar panels is farcical. How many sheep farmers are going to come forward when imports are cheaper and the costs of rearing sheep are too high (and 10 sheep per acre suggests 130,000 sheep!) Looking after the sheep, managing tugging, lambing and clearing dead lambs is not going to happen in a solar farm.

Much of the construction traffic will still be using single track country lanes which are already in a poor condition. It also raises concerns over the risks to pedestrians, cyclists, horses, wildlife and other traffic.

The cumulative scale of the development is unprecedented, and the impact of such a development would change the character and nature of the area for 60 years or more, such a change has the potential to have a significant detrimental impact on the general health and wellbeing of residents.

On this site alone there would be over 3,459 acres of solar panels which would change the landscape totally and would destroy the scenic beauty of the area.

I strongly urge that this proposal be rejected.