

I strongly object to the Cottam solar farm proposal. It is just 1 of 4 Solar, 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 10,000 acres in total. We must look at all 4 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.

The Cottam Solar proposal, at over 3,000 acres, combined with the other 3 proposals have a cumulative effect of 10,000 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 10,000 acres (in total) of good arable land is ridiculous. Rishi Sunak says those fields should be bulging with “fantastic produce” and we must “not lose swathes of our best farmland to solar farms”. Jeremy Hunt is pushing to speed up planning permission for nuclear power plants and offshore 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 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 likely 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.

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. 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 bases be dug up and where will it all be dumped?

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.

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?

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 3,000 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.