

The Living reality of large scale solar- 7000 Acre Group

The applications of large scale solar are a project yet to be realised and many statements made by the developer are supposition and cannot be fact as they have of course not yet been developed.

The 7000 Acre Group have spoken to a knowledgeable resident of the village of Graveney that abuts the Cleve Hill Solar Park. Cleve Hill is the first development of size approx. 900 acres. The local residents of West Lindsey will have this x 11. So these unacceptable issues on the public are going to be ten fold.

Below is a written statement from Lut Stewart resident of Graveney who have given permission for us to submit to the Tillbridge Solar Project Examination.

“We are now living with the reality of the construction of the solar park. The current developers are Quinbrook. They bought this from Hive and Wirsoll. The first developers --- who were incredibly rude and dismissive of anything the villagers raised.

The current developers are more polite but I personally say that if they give information then it is not true or only partially true –and they can tell you this with a smile on their face.

The development started some 2 years ago and is likely to complete the end of 2025. This is giving a great number of challenges for the villagers. The road through the village is a rural road and the continuous HGV movements make it look as if a bomb has hit it. The verges are decimated, loads of mud, hollows, potholes,..This is required to be addressed by the developers but they appear not able to deal with issues at all/ very late.

In addition, we experience regular road works because of gas and water leaks. These were rare before the development started but are now a regular occurrence – the developers say it has nothing to do with them....however we are getting convoys of up to 6 HGVs on a small rural road...

The HGV convoys give rise to cracking in some of the houses on the road. We requested a vibration assessment before the start of the development—which they promised to carry out but it is only now taken seriously.

Some 17 years ago a substation for then world’s biggest windfarm also required HGV movements but to a far lesser degree and any damage to houses was immediately addressed – unlike now.

Villagers complain regularly that their cars get damaged as they are pushed into the verge and the hedges because they are faced too late with a convoy of HGVs (the escort vehicle is supposed to give some warning but regularly does not.)

Getting in and out of the village is difficult at peak times because in most parts the road is very narrow.

We insisted on fortnightly transport meetings of which addresses speeding, eating, mobile use, driving into hedges, fences, private driveways, dustbins, village green areas, too many lorries....This can get very frustrating as, after 2 years, we still have a list of “offences” to go through.

I am a qualified and experienced counsellor and whilst I do not work in a professional capacity with local people, it is very clear to see how completely downtrodden they feel. They say they feel powerless, that they are viewed as cannon fodder, collateral damage, insignificant, this is something that is done to them, they have no say, it is a done deal, no one really takes much notice, a depressing and hopeless situation.

Many people feel that everything has been taken from them : nature, wildlife, birds (all the owls, geese, marsh harriers, kites which were so abounded appear to have largely disappeared), recreational space, agriculture/farming, productive land, culture, heritage, the whole of the marshes and its unique landscape, peace and quiet.

Their question is : why does the greater good always take precedent over our well-being and interest?

Personally, I see this as a kind of bereavement – a loss.

The very large 880 000 solar panels are now very visible and some of the residents can not avoid seeing them all the time which they find stressful. Many of the residents say that they cannot even look at the now industrial landscape, the sea of glass which they see as soul less.

Added stress comes from the continuous drilling, reversing of equipment and metallic noises from fitting the panels. The marshes carry the sound all through the village and of course the workday is 7 to 7 and 7 to 1 on Saturdays. Whilst the developers are not breaching sound level, the continuous low-level noise gets to you and can give headaches and is a constant reminder of what is being destroyed.

Some of the residents say that the village is not what it was – it has lost its heart.

We have had to deal with a stream of planners, many of whom were consultants, for what is a very complicated and technical application – there have been 5 so far and no-one seems to get to grips with the intricacies. A scheme like this needs a dedicated professional so that actions can be enforced.

One such was lighting and that was taken seriously when residents from a village miles away complained about the light pollution, red , green and white intrusive lighting.

When the developer ignored the Golden Hours (2 hours –1 am and 1 pm) the villagers took direct action and stopped the HGVs and then they rescinded – as per the traffic management plan.

Because of the flooding on the marshes, the working conditions are poor and we have witnessed the workers getting rid of polluted water on 2 occasions.

A 150 M contract was given to Greece and many of the workers are from here and other countries.

The local workforce is minimal and is mostly about HGVs and materials.

Some of the local gardens are now flooding and have never flooded before.