

Botley West, if approved, will generate clean energy and significant profits for investors. Yet local communities are being offered far too little community benefit.

When Botley West was announced in the Autumn of 2022, the size and location quickly led to loud local opposition, and local politicians found it difficult to do anything other than oppose or remain neutral. With a focus by many on opposing the proposal during the 2023/24 consultations, there is a genuine risk that discussion and negotiation on community benefit may have been seriously overlooked.

While community benefits are well established for renewable energy projects, there is no legal requirement in England for developers to offer a community fund and so communities have to rely on voluntary offers from developers, PVDP in this case.

Negotiations for community benefit for Botley West have been a new experience for MPs, councillors and officers at all levels and we are concerned this may lead to the acceptance of the current offer of £440,000 per annum. PVDP's offer isn't even close to reflecting the scale or impact of Botley West. A much fairer community benefit could offer an opportunity to support people and the places they live during a transition to clean energy.

The recent Government Working Paper 'Community Benefits and Shared Ownership for Low Carbon Infrastructure' compares with other projects and proposes a figure based on £5000 per MW (for Botley West 840 MW) - this would be the equivalent of £4.2 million per annum). Consequently, settling for £440,000 per annum would mean that local communities may miss out on millions of £s over the 40year lifetime of the project. A fair amount based on other projects and the level of impact would be £4.2million per annum. It is possible that PVDP are looking 'to slip this unfair offer under the wire' while the Government continues to develop a process of funding in England?

Comparing with many other projects, PVDP's community fund isn't proportionate and it isn't fair - it should be about 10 times more i.e., £4.2 million per annum. Over 40 years, this equates to £168 million compared to just £17.6 million on offer from PVDP.

We are asking everyone to do everything in their power to campaign and negotiate on behalf of Oxfordshire communities to ensure a fair community benefit is offered by PVDP - an offer that reflects the scale, impact and profits of the Botley West project.