

Response to Hearings Botley West 8-10 October 2025.

- Size of BWSF - it is clear that the world needs the installation of large-scale solar projects to generate clean electricity that is increasingly required to keep our current way of life but without the burning of fossil fuels. Does Botley West have to be so large? PVDP and Blenheim have continually stressed that the National Grid require 840 MW in order to build their substation at Botley. From the focussed hearings held on 8th -10th October this year (I attended 9th and 10th), it was not clear to me what had been agreed between the applicant and the National Grid. For such a key point I was surprised, and surprised the National Grid were not present. As the inspectors noted this is key to the whole application. It also raises the question of what size can the project be? I have spoken to many local residents about this – the Stop campaigners generally do not have a position other than Stop. Other folk would like to see it smaller – including Oxfordshire County Council. This would go some way to satisfying several objections including proximity to housing, use of green belt and use of good agricultural land. Panels have just been removed from land near Bladon and land near the airport. This does not seem to have made an impact on what the developers are offering the National Grid.
 - Consultation - it was also clear from the hearings that the developers are leaning heavily on the DESNEZ guidelines that the climate crisis outweighs many of the existing planning guidelines. I believe that due diligence still needs to be carried out, especially with regard to proximity to homes and talking to residents that are impacted. This was very disappointing and questions the consultation process. This had been highlighted from the start of the project and only now were some concessions being made. Similarly with the airport – why are panels being removed now instead of before?
 - Battery Storage – this was mentioned at the hearings but acknowledged as a separate application. It does raise the point about storage though and this would be feedback to the DESNEZ. Due to the very nature of solar power, to have a large battery facility linked to BWSF would make the project far more efficient, providing power for Oxford during the summer nights.
 - Community Benefit – I appreciate that this is not part of the DCO, as is the applicant who made no offer at the beginning of the consultation. I would like to thank the inspectors for their patience allowing community benefit to be presented and discussed on several occasions during the hearings. I hope this will be a useful contribution to the Government's working paper on community benefit, setting a fair level for renewable energy installations. The suggestion of £500/installed MW made by the forum of local parishes and then by Oxfordshire County Council is still far too low in my opinion. Due to the size of the project, the proximity to houses, the use of green belt and good arable land, I think this figure should be £1000/MW. As the project is expected to have an income of £50-100 million per annum this would represent between 1-2% of income and make a huge contribution to the local areas.
- Thank you