

CALUM MILLER MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Michael Shanks MP  
Minister of State for Energy  
Department for Energy, Security and Net Zero  
55 Whitehall  
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30 April 2026

Dear Michael,

**Botley West Solar Farm - participation in the decision-making process**

Thank you for your letter of 21 April, responding on behalf of Martin McCluskey to my correspondence of 27 March. I am grateful for the reply but write now on a more fundamental point: the basis on which my office, and by extension my constituents, is being enabled to participate in this process.

Your letter confirms that my correspondence will be "treated as a post-examination representation." I note however that on 14 April the Department wrote to the applicant and a defined list of interested parties setting out a request for further information. I was not included on that list. Neither was Layla Moran, whose constituents are similarly affected. That position is difficult to reconcile with the scale of this application and the level of engagement my office has sustained throughout the process.

It is worth setting out briefly the steps already taken, because they bear directly on the request I am now making.

- In Departmental Questions earlier this year I raised directly with you the concerns held locally around engagement, transparency, ownership and community benefit.
- At these Departmental Questions, you indicated a willingness to meet to discuss these issues. My office subsequently sought to arrange that meeting and was told it could not take place given the live status of the application.
- On 12 February, Layla Moran and I wrote jointly to the Secretary of State ahead of the Planning Inspectorate's recommendation, setting out those concerns in detail and asking for a meeting.
- On 27 March, following the written statement announcing the extension, I wrote to Martin McCluskey seeking clarity on three specific procedural questions. Your reply of 21 April does not address any of them directly, instead pointing to the Planning Inspectorate's "Get Updates" functionality.

I fully accept the constraints of the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial role. There is however a clear distinction between commenting on the merits of the application and ensuring that the MPs for the affected area, and the residents they represent, can participate meaningfully in the process. The 14 April letter is evidence that the Department is actively consulting 'interested parties' at this stage. To direct me and my constituents instead to a public webpage is not, on any reasonable view, a proportionate response to the scale of what is proposed.

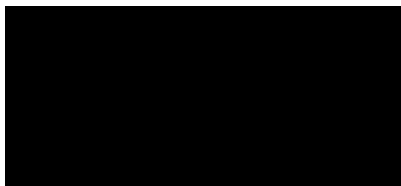
Botley West would be the largest solar development in the UK and one of the largest in Europe. It would cover almost 2,500 acres. Many of my constituents have engaged with this process in good faith, and many would reasonably value the opportunity to engage further now that the Department has sought additional information from the applicant and interested parties. If the developer is being given an opportunity to strengthen its case at this stage, affected residents must also have a clear and meaningful route to make further representations. Without that, there is a real risk that public confidence in the fairness of the decision-making process will be undermined.

I am therefore writing to ask the following:

1. I ask that the meeting you previously agreed to be reinstated and accepted as the formal route through which I, and ideally Layla Moran, make representations at this post-examination stage. That was the basis on which my office originally made the request. The 26 March written statement, which confirms further information will be sought and considered alongside other parties' views, removes the objection previously offered.
2. If the Department is not willing to meet, I ask that I be added formally to the list of interested parties notified by the Department, in line with those contacted on 14 April. An MP whose constituents are more directly affected by this application than almost any other group should not, in the normal course, be treated as a lesser participant than the statutory consultees, landowners and commercial entities on that list.
3. Please confirm what route is available to constituents who wish to make representations at this post-examination stage, and whether submissions channelled through my office will be considered alongside those of interested parties rather than sitting outside the process entirely.

I am copying this letter to Layla Moran and to the Secretary of State.

Yours sincerely,



**Calum Miller MP**



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May 2026

Dear Calum,

Thank you for your letter of 30 April, regarding Botley West Solar Farm and the process for handling requests for further information.

To avoid any further confusion on this matter I have tried to set out as clearly as possible what the current position is and how we are taking forward your representations. However I want to re-state at the outset that Ministers must engage in these discussions in line with the Planning Propriety Issues Guidance :[www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-propiety-issues-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/planning-propiety-issues-guidance) with particular reference to paragraphs 8, 20, 21, 55 and 56. It is in the interests of every party involved in this process that the guidance is followed in full.

As a registered interested party who submitted representations into the Examination, I would like to emphasise that engaging through the established process is the most effective and appropriate means of participating in the planning decision process. As the guidance highlights, all interested parties should receive equal treatment and transparency. As a result, your most recent letter to me will be treated as a post-examination representation and will be carefully considered alongside all matters that are relevant to the decision-making on the application for development consent in accordance with the Planning Act 2008.

With regard to meeting with you, I would note that I have met with you previously to discuss a number of issues and this project in general terms before. I listened to your views at that meeting but indicated that, because of the guidance I have provided above, I am not able to give a view or engage directly in the process. I remain willing to meet any MP who wishes to discuss any issue related to my portfolio, but given I am unable to speak about this project in any further detail I do not think a meeting is helpful or appropriate on this specific live planning application.

Turning to your other points, I would refer you to the clarification letter dated 28 April, published on the Planning Inspectorates project webpage: [national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN010147](http://national-infrastructure-consenting.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/projects/EN010147).

The clarification letter states that the Secretary of State's letter dated 14 April (re-issued 20 April and 28 April) constitutes a request for information only and that it does not replace an all interested parties consultation, where required, following the deadline for responses on Tuesday 9 June 2026.

Requests for further information are directed only to those parties from whom additional details are required. This ensures that the process remains focused and efficient, enabling the

Department to obtain information from those best placed to provide it. This is why you and other MPs interested in this proposal did not receive a further invitation for information.

The Secretary of State cannot pre-determine or pre-empt the outcome or nature of the responses it may receive from the information request. Therefore, a decision will be made on whether further comment from interested parties is required once the deadline for responses has passed and all responses have been considered. But should further comment from interested parties be considered necessary, then you, as an interested party, will be able to take part in that process.

Overall, this approach is intended to uphold the principles of fairness, transparency, consistency, and procedural integrity, supporting confidence in the robustness and impartiality of the decision-making process.

Any further requests for information or consultations will be published on the Planning Inspectorates project webpage. Interested parties are advised to use the 'Get Updates' functionality, which will enable them to be kept informed of any requests and consultations during the decision-making stage of the process, including information on the process to follow to submit a consultation response.

Given the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial role in taking decisions on applications for development consent for energy infrastructure proposals, it would not be appropriate for me to comment on specific matters related to the proposals, as this could be seen as prejudicing the decision-making process.

Following the usual process, any post examination representations that are not directly related to a consultation will be published on the Planning Inspectorates project webpage, and these will not be made public until the decision date. Only matters that are considered to be important and relevant will be considered in the Secretary of State's final decision. Your post-examination representation and this letter will be published alongside the responses to the further information request after the 9 June 2026 deadline.

Please find link below for further information on the decision stage of the planning process: [www.gov.uk/guidance/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-the-stages-of-the-nsip-process-and-how-you-can-have-your-say](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-the-stages-of-the-nsip-process-and-how-you-can-have-your-say).

Thank you again for writing. I trust that this information is helpful.

Best wishes,

**MICHAEL SHANKS MP**  
Minister of State for Energy