

Hearing Transcript

Project:	Springwell Solar Farm
Hearing:	Open Floor Hearing 2 (OFH2) - Part 1
Date:	15 July 2025

Please note: This document is intended to assist Interested Parties.

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The video recording published on the Planning Inspectorate project page is the primary record of the hearing.

File Length: 01:02:43

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:04:22 - 00:00:38:03

Clock. So we are opening the open floor hearing. Thank you. Okay. I'd like to welcome you all to the second open floor hearing for the spring wave solar farm project. Uh, can I just check that everyone can hear me, particularly at the back. Yeah. Lovely. Thank you. Uh, and can I confirm with the case team that the live stream and recording of the event has commenced? Thumbs up. Fantastic. Thank you. Okay, well, my name is Jonathan Manning, and I'm a chartered planner. And I've been appointed by the secretary of state to lead, uh, the lead member of the panel to examine the application.

00:00:38:16 - 00:00:41:12

And I'll now ask the other panel member to introduce himself.

00:00:42:03 - 00:00:51:01

Good afternoon. My name is Ben Northover. I'm a chartered architect, and I've been appointed by the Secretary of State to be a member of the panel to examine this application.

00:00:52:05 - 00:01:27:09

Okay. Thank you. And together, we constitute the examining authority for the application. Okay. Just a couple of housekeeping matters for everyone attending. Can everyone have their devices and phones on? Silent, please? Uh, the toilets are back through the doors and downstairs on the left hand side as you go out of the doors. Uh, there are no fire drills planned in case of a fire alarm. Please exit through the doors behind you and follow the fire exit signage through the building. Uh, I'm told there will be hotel staff on each floor directing people to the emergency exits.

00:01:27:23 - 00:01:32:04

Uh, the meeting point is outside of the hotel. Uh, near Bradford. Cadets.

00:01:34:10 - 00:01:51:23

Okay. The hearing is being undertaken in a hybrid way. Meaning some of you are present with us at the venue today, and some of us are. Some of you are joining virtually, uh, using Microsoft Teams. Uh, we will make sure that however, uh, you decide to attend today, you will be given a fair opportunity to participate.

00:01:53:21 - 00:02:34:02

Uh, the recording of today's hearing will be made available on the Spring Solar Farm Project section of the National Infrastructure Planning web page as soon as practicable after the hearing is finished. With this in mind, please ensure that you speak clearly into the microphone stating your name and who you are representing each time before you speak. Um. The hearing recording allows any members of the public who have an interest in the application or the examination to find out what has been discussed, and as the recordings are retained and published, they form a public record and can contain personal information to which the UK General Data Protection Regulations applies.

00:02:34:14 - 00:03:13:12

Participants must do their best to avoid providing any information which should otherwise be kept private and confidential. If there is a need to refer to such information, it should be in written form. Uh, although this will also be published. Personal and private content can be redacted or removed before it is made publicly available. Uh, any person who is unclear on this point should ask the case team for guidance before they place personal and private information into the public domain. A link to the planning Inspector's privacy notes was provided in the notification for the hearing, and please speak to the case team if you have any questions about that.

00:03:14:13 - 00:03:44:15

Um, I understand that Sky news wish to film. Um, does anyone have any objections to that in the audience? No. Okay. Thank you. Okay. I briefly just explained the purpose of, um, the hearing today. Uh, open floor hearings are ultimately your opportunity to raise anything directly with the examining authority that is important and relevant, uh, that you think we should know about and consider. Uh, they are not about any particular location or topic.

00:03:44:17 - 00:03:48:15

Uh, and the topic that you wish to speak about is entirely up to yourself.

00:03:50:14 - 00:04:21:20

Uh, the order in which we'll invite people to speak will follow the list of speakers Because provided in annex A of the agenda published on the 10th of July. Although I do appreciate, I think a lot of the names are redacted, which means that it might not be particularly clear. Um, but, um, we will go through that nonetheless. Um, due to the larger number of parties wishing to speak, uh, we will be setting a time limit of five minutes per person or ten minutes if you're representing an organization or a group. Uh, the same as the last open floor hearing.

00:04:22:04 - 00:05:00:11

Uh, when you are speaking, we will indicate to you when you have about a minute left. Uh, there's also, I think, this time, a timer on the desk. Um, which will take down, just so you're aware throughout your presentation how long you have left. Um, I appreciate there are some strong feelings in the room. Uh, and, uh, you may agree with the representations being made, but we do ask that attendees refrain from applauding to ensure the smooth running and efficient running of the hearing. Uh, due to the number of attendees wishing to speak, um, it's probably unlikely that we'll ask you questions after your representation, just so that we can get through everybody and give everybody the chance to speak.

00:05:01:05 - 00:05:20:08

And we'll include any written questions. Um, at, uh, the second round of written questions, should we wish to clarify anything with you? Uh, finally, the applicant will be given the opportunity to respond to any matters raised once all speakers have been heard, either orally or it could be done in writing at deadline three.

00:05:24:22 - 00:05:26:03

Okay. Thank you.

00:05:28:24 - 00:05:37:09

Can I just quickly ask if there's anybody in the room who wishes to speak, who hasn't already notified us that you would like to?

00:05:39:18 - 00:05:50:17

So we just wait for the for the Raven mic to say for the recording so they can pick you up. It's okay. It's just for the digital recording. Otherwise they won't be able to hear you.

00:05:54:10 - 00:06:03:09

Hi, I'm Andrea Jenkins. I'm the mayor of Greater Lincolnshire. I didn't resubmit, but I've submitted at the desk to speak, so I'm told that I can still speak.

00:06:03:11 - 00:06:04:18

Okay. That's fine, thank you.

00:06:07:11 - 00:06:22:17

I didn't see any other hands, so we will move on. Thank you. Okay, so we'll now invite our first party to speak. Um, first on my list is Caroline Johnson MP, please. Who? I think we have virtually.

00:06:26:02 - 00:06:29:02

Thank you. Uh, you are muted at the moment. There we go.

00:06:31:05 - 00:06:32:14

Thank you. Should I start?

00:06:32:21 - 00:06:35:17

Yes, please. Your ten minutes will start when you're ready. Thank you.

00:06:36:00 - 00:07:10:07

Thank you. Well, first of all, thank you for inviting me to attend the second open hearing today about Springhill Solar Farm and to further represent my constituents as the MP. Um, I'm very grateful for the opportunity to also to appear online so that I could attend today, because I wouldn't have been able to otherwise do two to meetings. Um, I'd also like to make the declaration that my husband is a local farmer and an agricultural contractor. As we've gone through this application process, the concerns about Spring solar Farm and the cumulative effects generally of the applications in Lincolnshire just becomes greater and greater.

00:07:10:15 - 00:07:41:20

I address many issues to this particular application in my remarks at the first open hearing in May, and while I will add to these in my remarks today, I will add further context on what this application represents for Lincolnshire on a much larger scale and indeed further afield, because while the government says that 1% of UK land will be covered in solar panels, my constituency could see 7% of its farmland covered in panels under the existing applications alone, and the neighbouring constituencies of Newark and Gainsborough currently stand at 8.8, four and 5% respectively.

00:07:42:03 - 00:08:12:20

These applications, including spring, will cover thousands of acres, including large swathes of best and most versatile land. Given Lincolnshire role in producing 12% of the UK's food, with a wheat harvest that stands 25% above the UK average over the past five years. This is the land that we can least afford to use. Spring well is the largest application in my constituency. We're not talking here about a small amount of solar on brownfield or land of poor agricultural quality. This is thousands of acres of farmland.

00:08:12:24 - 00:08:52:03

And even by standards in this area is one of the largest Sipp applications we have. The combined size of the applications in Sleaford and North Hykeham is 9340 acres. And just for context, that could support grazing for more than 74,000 sheep, provide 23.5 million loaves of bread and more than 700 million Weetabix. A fifth project just outside my constituency. But in North Kesteven, where this project will be situated, has already been recently approved and research has been done by the CPI this week revealing that 59% of England's largest operational solar cell phones are located on productive farmland.

00:08:52:10 - 00:09:28:15

Why must almost a third, 31% of the area of the cover, is classified as the nation's best and most versatile agricultural land? The problem is so bad here that that Report Check's own name checks only one constituency in 18 pages of farmland a finding, sorry, which happens to be slightly further North Hykeham constituency regarding the cumulative impact. It says, and I quote, in addition to the rise in speculative applications for mega solar, the cumulative impact of multiple applications in the same landscape and often clustered around grid connections multiplies the visual, environmental and community impacts.

00:09:29:00 - 00:10:02:16

For example, a cluster of mega solar farm applications has risen on high quality farmland in eastern England, despite the solar roadmap estimating only 0.4% of UK land. Some parliamentary constituencies already have considerably more, such as Sleaford and North Hykeham, which has more than 7%, and this is likely to become more widespread with higher proportions of constituency land area covered by solar farms. Percentages of best and most versatile land across the Springvale site, calculated to date, show that 87.9% of the site is grade one, 2 or 3.

00:10:03:04 - 00:10:39:14

Grades one, two and three eight at land are best and most versatile land and grade B3B land is also good, productive farmland. But if we look further afield, applications of this size are cropping up everywhere and we're in a now in a situation whereby granting this application accentuates the cumulative effects and risks setting further precedent. I had a recent debate on large scale solar farms in Parliament on Thursday, the 15th of May. It was very well attended by fellow MPs in many parties wanting to highlight the impact in their constituencies, so much so that some MPs were not able to speak due to the time allocation.

00:10:39:19 - 00:11:17:10

This is not an issue affecting a handful of areas. It signifies a shift in land use that will alter thousands and thousands of acres up and down this country, I signed my name, along with other MPs, to a new clause 47 to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill seeking to prohibit solar development on high quality

land, and I urge the government to support it. Sadly, they did not. Last week, I also jointly signed a letter to the Prime Minister from 30 parliamentarians calling for the protection of our best and most versatile agricultural farmland from large scale solar development, calling for the inclusion of grade three B in the BMV category.

00:11:18:00 - 00:11:50:18

As I said in the first hearing, the amount of productive land taken out of production from this application will create, will create must be given due weight by the examining authority. The 2023 report for the Welsh Government on the impact of solar panels in agricultural land found that solar sites risk soiling, causing soil compaction and structural damage, which in some cases may be permanent. This means that the land and future of food production at the Springfield site will suffer long into the future, even after the initial proposed period time for these panels.

00:11:51:02 - 00:12:32:22

I urge the examining authority to acknowledge the detrimental impact of this. I know that local people who know the spring Well site and the soil types in the area very well have real fears that should this site go ahead, the land will never be as productive as it is now ever again. Moreover, given the lack of sunlight in most of the United Kingdom, I may not feel so this last few weeks. The power generated and flow into the grid from solar panels is minimal. Why would we sacrifice this important land for minimum gain? There are also questions around the modern slavery supply chain, concerns with the production of Solar panel, and the Journal of a journey of a panel for raw materials to installation is far from carbon neutral.

00:12:33:03 - 00:13:06:21

When the panels reach the end of their lifespan. Recycling should be the obvious answer. Yet they are notoriously difficult to recycle. A constituent of mine who dedicated their master's research to this issue found that the most solar panels when they finish their lifecycle cannot currently be effectively recycled. This is all while solar panels planned for fields today are already being superseded by cleaner, more efficient technology that doesn't need farmland. Finally, I know that constituents are concerned about the fire risk of these sites and the associated infrastructure, such as the B.S.

00:13:06:23 - 00:13:40:17

applications. They have highlighted the significant concerns of the fire risk to lithium ion batteries, which can also catch fire because of a process called thermal runaway. While individual batteries may have to adhere to product safety regulations, this does little to reassure my constituents in the context that there have been two documented incidents of a best fire in the UK in recent years, and there are no laws that govern the safety of specifically. Recent incidents include a fire at a best site in Liverpool in 2020, and one under construction in Essex in February 2025.

00:13:41:12 - 00:14:18:10

The links. This links into concerns the applications in question are located too close to a significant aquifer. In the event of fire, thermal runaway, mechanical damage, or even normal aging and corrosion, chemicals can leak from damaged battery cells. There are valid concerns about whether there be contamination and infiltration of the aquifer and groundwater system, damaging drinking water supplies in the local ecosystem. Chair, I'd like to thank you for listening to my concerns today,

which are in addition to those I highlighted already in May. As I have said previously, I strongly urge the examining authority to reject this application.

00:14:18:16 - 00:14:27:00

Listen to the concerns that I and my constituents share on the industrialization, widespread industrialization of this beautiful farmland.

00:14:34:02 - 00:14:48:20

Thank you very much for taking the time to come and speak to this this evening. Thank you. Thank you. Okay. Thank you very much. Um, we'll move on to our next speaker. I had Amelia Bailey, but I believe maybe someone's reading something on her behalf. Yeah. Thank you.

00:14:51:11 - 00:14:53:01

Um, you can choose.

00:14:59:24 - 00:15:04:00

If you just introduce yourself and your ten minutes will start when you're ready. Thank you.

00:15:05:15 - 00:15:12:23

Can you just turn the microphone on? Just the button at the bottom. Hello. My name is Sam Wigley.

00:15:13:00 - 00:15:13:18

I am the.

00:15:13:20 - 00:15:14:10

Branch.

00:15:14:12 - 00:15:23:19

Chairman for reform UK in Sleaford and North Hykeham. I'm here on behalf of Amelia Bailey uh, the reform councillor, uh district councillor at Ecde.

00:15:25:09 - 00:15:58:09

So imagine, if you will, a Britain free from the madness of net zero energy policy driven by fantasy rather than fact. A Britain where our government no longer bows at the altar of net zero and a Policy that is hurting local communities and our countryside. What's crippling households and draining businesses and driving industries abroad, all in the name of a false green virtue. A government that finally stops pretending that we are saving the planet.

00:15:58:11 - 00:16:34:03

What's important? Oil and gas from across the globe. Spewing more CO2 in transit than if we simply drill responsibly in our own North Sea. Right now we are paying energy companies not to generate power when it's too windy, or exporting it abroad when it is too sunny for more profit and showing no savings to the consumer. And yet, in the dead of winter or in the darkness of night, we risk blackouts. In January this year, we were whiskers away from blackouts, resulting in Nishio activating his blackout prevention system.

00:16:34:05 - 00:17:13:03

This isn't progress. It's insanity. Okay? At any given time, The UK is importing energy via the underground interconnectors just to meet the demand. Instead of scaling up traditional power generation. Again, exporting British money or money from the UK whilst pretending to be green. Now imagine a real shift, a real political shift, a government that's putting us first, that fights to bring down our bills, not inflate them with green levies and subsidies for unreliable tech.

00:17:14:07 - 00:18:03:03

No more this emperor's new clothes, no more blind faith in wind and solar that only works when the weather's cooperating. As we stand, we need that traditional power generation. We need gas. Not forever, but for now. And we need nuclear to build a truly green, secure future. Now, with the likelihood of a new government and the risk of the removal of subsidies. Will there be an appetite by Springvale to destroy our communities and our green and pleasant land, at the cost of millions of pounds, when the project is likely to be politically blocked? Now, even National Gas's own CEO is admitting that without fossil fuels, the UK faces blackouts.

00:18:03:12 - 00:18:06:20

That shows that green energy this

00:18:08:15 - 00:18:40:21

solar farms are not the option now. Reform UK will not stand by what this country sacrificed on the altar of the climate dogma. We believe in a clean future, but one that is built on truth, technology and trust in the local people, not in ideology. Now will the Planning Planning Inspectorate read the room the communities do not want this spring well is not wanted and it is not of benefit to Lincolnshire. Thank you very much.

00:18:45:07 - 00:18:48:19

Okay. Thank you much. Mr. Wigley, thank you very much for coming along this evening. Thank you.

00:18:50:23 - 00:18:56:17

Okay. Next on my list is Elizabeth Parker. Please, if you'd like to come forward.

00:19:09:15 - 00:19:12:09

Okay. Your five minutes will begin. When? When you're ready. Thank you.

00:19:12:21 - 00:19:43:01

Hello, I'm Elizabeth Parker. I'm a resident of Nathan Bay. Extremely concerned about the scale of this threatened industrialization of our agricultural land. The cumulative effect that's been talked about this morning is just so frightening. One of the things that really bothers me is that the grade of agricultural land is, as Nkechi has said, 42% best and most versatile land.

00:19:43:12 - 00:20:17:10

This land has grown crops, good crops, good harvests for years and years. And to cover it with industrialization, to my mind, is just totally short sighted. It's wrong. There are alternatives for providing decent energy which are more, uh, um, reliable than solar. As the gentleman before me said,

it's not much good at night and it's not much good in the winter. Um, food security, that's another thing, I think.

00:20:17:12 - 00:20:40:21

Um, we import approaching 50% of our food already. So here we are, suggesting that we cover the agricultural land with thousands of acres of solar panels, which is certainly not going to grow any food for us. So are we going to import the food that we would have a crown that's going to damage the climate further through transport. It's going to cost more.

00:20:42:16 - 00:21:13:03

Another point I'd like to make to make is I'm just asking about the provision in the application for an early warning system for the best. I know that's not what we're discussing, but it's associated infrastructure, and it concerns me greatly. Living only a few hundred meters from the proposed development, the thermal runaway. It threatens the very close residents of the village with possibility of poisonous fumes.

00:21:13:14 - 00:21:51:07

So what's going to be the early warning system? Do we shut the doors and windows, or do we have a case packed and get out? It's just not sensible. Although we have predominantly westerly winds, there are quite a few, um, months of the year when we have north, east and easterly winds, Things, so that would just hit the whole village. The another point I'd like to make is the manufacturer of the solar panels. I'm wondering if the applicants can ensure that there are due processes in place to prevent slave labor being used.

00:21:51:09 - 00:22:03:18

I know that the Chinese government has guaranteed us that they won't be used making slave labor, but what are the processes and processes that are in place that will guarantee that for us?

00:22:05:14 - 00:22:37:18

Um, there are all kinds of problems associated with this application I've mentioned. One about the best. Another one is the high pressure, um, aviation fuel pipeline, which travels just, uh, just to the side of the substation and in between the substation. And the best I understand, it's 90cm below the surface of the land. It's extremely vulnerable to damage. And that provides a considerable amount of aviation fluid for the RAF for Heathrow.

00:22:38:02 - 00:22:41:22

It would just be a disaster. Thank you very much.

00:22:47:04 - 00:22:55:00

Thank you very much, Mr. Parker, for coming along this evening. Okay. Next I have Paul Frost, if you'd like to come forward.

00:23:06:24 - 00:23:09:19

Again, your five minutes will start when you begin. Thank you.

00:23:11:23 - 00:23:44:19

Okay, so I'm Paul Frost. I'm a resident of Scott, a member of Scott Parish Council and part of the Springvale Solar Action Group. Today I'm speaking on behalf of myself. Um, and I would like to touch on some of the considerations that I think should be taken into account when recommending upon this application. So start off with need. Has this really been identified? We're told we've become a net exporter of power. This must mean we will have a surplus. So clearly we don't need all the applications that are being made.

00:23:45:01 - 00:24:24:11

Other technologies like nuclear can provide much greater. Much more constant output without the need for less from a massively smaller footprint environment. There's many documents describing the effects on the environment in great detail, so I won't dwell here, but suffice to say that multiple years of construction, digging, piling concrete, pulling up hedges, underground cables, along with massive increase in traffic through what our small villages and small rural roads, can only have a very significant negative impact on the surrounding environment, as will the decommissioning process.

00:24:25:02 - 00:24:55:17

Food security best, most versatile land should not be used for solar The development much almost half of the spring well proposal is on BMV land according to their own classification. Significantly more is BMV. According to some other research. And also this is irrigated land, making it even more important. Best safety concerns. Many concerns have been raised about the safety or lack of it associated with the best installations.

00:24:56:02 - 00:25:16:08

How can the inspectorate be convinced that the installation will be safe when previous ones have not? And when crucial decisions like what type of batteries will be used are not specified, and when key safety documents like the emergency response plan haven't even been started, let alone submitted.

00:25:18:10 - 00:25:54:00

Alignment with the local needs that there's no benefits to locals of having the development. The power will not be used locally. There will not be a reduced rate. So all of the negatives with no benefits. The design and appearance. The proposed design will significantly alter the character of the local area. The cumulative effects of this and the many other developments. 11 are now registered with the National Grid for Navy. Should that be approved? Make the whole area feel like an industrial landscape rather than the rural one we enjoy today.

00:25:54:16 - 00:26:29:09

When I go for a walk in the future past the bribery community growing area onto the bribery improved surface of the footpath surrounded by mitigation hedges and more bribery footpaths, I will still be in the middle of an industrial development with fences, CCTV, construction compounds, collector stations, solar panels and best installations, some of which six meters tall. This is just so sad. It will totally spoil the enjoyment that I and many others get today and will have a major detrimental effect on mental health.

00:26:29:20 - 00:26:59:24

This whole planning process already is highway safety and traffic. Rural roads are narrow. Narrow passing is difficult in places. These roads are just not suitable for large scale construction traffic. The

traffic will come through the village of quick, past children's school bus stops that don't have crossings and through busy cross roads. The applicant's report state there will be 131% increase in HGV traffic through the village, which they wrongly deem insignificant.

00:27:00:12 - 00:27:35:13

There will be more accidents. It's clear to see noise and vibration, construction noise and traffic noise will be much higher than the noise levels of today. This will cause harm to mental well-being. Vibration from vehicles and mining will cause damage to the fragile local drainage system. Democracy. The whole democracy democratic process does not appear to be taken into account. It's clear that the vast majority of the local public are against solar installations and based on quality farmland, many of the public are so against it.

00:27:35:15 - 00:27:56:24

They formed action groups to campaign to get these applications stocked. Hundreds have made representations on this planning process. Many of the public have approached their local parish councils with their concerns. Parish councils have done their own due diligence and subsequently objected on behalf of their parishioners. The District Council have raised many objections are against the development.

00:27:59:13 - 00:28:16:04

Local district councillors are against the scheme. So much so they've come forward and spoken at these hearings. County Council have raised many objections against the development. The leader of the county council is against the development. Other county councillors have spoken at these proceedings.

00:28:16:08 - 00:28:18:22

Okay, Mr. Frost, that is your time up. If you'd like.

00:28:19:09 - 00:28:46:22

One more sentence. If that's okay, please. Our local MPs are against the proposal. And despite being busy people, even they found the time to attend these meetings and give the reasons why the development should not go ahead. So unless I've missed anyone, that's the entire democracy of this county are against the development. Please will the inspector give this overwhelming democratic view along with other points raised? The weight they deserve in its deliberations? Thank you.

00:28:50:05 - 00:29:00:17

Thank you very much, Mr.. For your contribution. Um, I've had a message to say that I think Miss Jenkins has time constraints. So would you like to come forward now? Thank you.

00:29:08:14 - 00:29:12:14

Okay. Your ten minutes will begin when, uh, when you start and you're ready. Thank you.

00:29:20:08 - 00:29:55:17

Oh, there we go. There we go. Mr.. Best line there, up, sir. Mr. chairman, I urge you to be a hero. Central government. The Prime Minister, our Energy Secretary, are not listening to the people. People here in this room, people across our county, our country do not want these mass solar farms.

Politicians will not have to live with the thousands of acres of solar farms on their doorstep. So please be a hero. Give the people a voice. Give them hope and a promise that our amazing rural landscape will be there for future generations to enjoy.

00:29:55:23 - 00:30:32:10

We must preserve our rural way of life and our communities. And let's not forget, it is this county that feeds Britain. As I've said previously, during the recent election campaign, I held a petition to call for an immediate halt of large scale industrial solar farm developments on Lincolnshire prime agricultural land. Now, within a short space of time, I gathered over 5000 signatures and I'm now over 7000 signatures. I found there to be real anger on the doorstep against the Labour government's plan to desecrate our farmland with mass solar farms.

00:30:32:17 - 00:31:03:14

Now, as the mayor of Greater Lincolnshire, I stand as a voice for these thousands of people of Lincolnshire who are opposed to these mass solar farms. Now, in addition to my petition, Lancashire County Council recently held a consultation. Now, the results show that a massive 83% of respondents were concerned or very concerned about the impact of large scale developments of solar. Mr. chairman, our great county has some of the country's finest fertile agricultural land.

00:31:03:20 - 00:31:35:17

We are the breadbasket that feeds Britain, as I already mentioned. But I ask why. Why any government would put our country's food security in jeopardy at the altar of this net zero zealotry. So I ask you today to consider the food security aspect. There's already massive pressure on our farming community with a recent government family farm tax. But I also ask you to consider the abhorrent aspect that the Chinese slavery, um, is used to make solar panels.

00:31:35:21 - 00:32:07:12

Now, only recently, as mayor, in a meeting, I opposed Chinese bought solar panels being put on government building roofs, and I strongly oppose the battery operated systems and the dangers that surround it. These battery operated systems are dangerous. Three have gone up in flames this year out of 130 in operation, and these flames cannot be put out. They are a danger if you want to push solar. If the government wants to push solar, put them on roofs, not on our farmland.

00:32:08:16 - 00:32:40:06

Evermore solar electricity is more weak, electricity increasing the risk of intermittency and blackouts, as we've seen in Spain only recently. Now solar like all renewables, depend on subsidies by the taxpayer and lead to higher, not lower, bills. I'm opposed to the taxpayer paying this net zero bill just so that Miliband can grandstand on the global stage. I've also said that none of my mayoral funds will go on this net zero two.

00:32:41:19 - 00:33:13:16

I want to shift the dial to a more balanced economy and not put all our eggs in one basket. Now the further points. Um, Mr. Chairman, I'd ask you to consider solar only generates on average, 10% of its rated or installed capacity. It does not do what it says on the tin. A 500 megawatt solar farm needs a massive 2500 acres of land, with an electrical contribution to the nation of just 0.15%. That is minuscule in comparison.

00:33:13:18 - 00:33:47:23

Hinkley point C nuclear power station will have a generation capacity of 200MW, which amounts to 7% of the UK's electricity need, and will cover an area approximately 400 acres. Like Sizewell C. It will choose 3002MW, 3200MW, covering an area of 170 acres. Now, this energy produced by these stations will be reliable, consistent and in contrast, solar energy is intermittent, unreliable and produces very little in winter.

00:33:48:01 - 00:34:24:00

When we've caused need it the most. The UK could lose 600,000 acres of land to solar farm, which is twice the size of Greater Manchester. Just imagine that this represents 4% of the nation's crop arable farmland. Now, ironically, we have 600,000 acres of unused industrial rooftops, much of which is suitable for solar panels. Ineffective solar panels are part of the multi-billion pound plan to decarbonise the electricity Tricity sector, which had only reduced our, um, 1% of global CO2 emissions by one fifth.

00:34:24:07 - 00:35:01:08

That's if you believe that. Anyway. Now, to be the. To me, this is a con and it's a money making racket. And I think we need to follow where the money is and see who is making money from this net zero bandwagon. The backup gas, power stations, they're needed at night and on dull days and would demand higher prices to remain available to generate. It's interesting that transient fluctuations in gas prices, for whatever reason, are picked up by the zealots energy insecurities that we must free ourselves from this forever, only to be burdened by the daily uncertainties of Mother Nature.

00:35:01:10 - 00:35:32:24

Mr. chairman, the truth is that there is no energy security from renewables, just the expense from excessive installed capacity in an attempt to avoid blackouts. We have many days of dull and still weather in the UK. that gas and nuclear prop up, so this cannot be ignored. The one thing that is, however certain from solar is that during the 60 years that they occupy the farmland of Britain, they will produce precisely nothing. All night, every night from dusk till dawn.

00:35:33:01 - 00:36:00:14

And that's nothing. Solar generations profile is at best unremarkable. This inefficiency on the grandest scale. This ideological madness has to stop. We must protect our farmland and consider. Consider the energy security of Britain. So I urge you, Mr. Chairman, please listen to the people of Greater Lancashire. Listen to people in this room. Mr. chairman, I ask you, please be a hero. Thank you.

00:36:06:08 - 00:36:09:15

Okay. Thank you for coming to speak to us this evening. Thank you.

00:36:11:06 - 00:36:14:15

Okay. Next we have Charles Kerrigan, please.

00:36:25:07 - 00:36:28:01

Okay. Your five minutes will begin when you're ready. Thank you.

00:36:29:01 - 00:36:48:14

Sir. My name is Charles Curry and I'm a member of Scott Kirby Green Parish Council. My piece on soil contamination. I've asked I've been asked by the team to shift it till tomorrow. So this is what I'm going to read out for a member of the team who couldn't be here today. I'm Michael, mister John Money. So with your permission, I'll read out his statement.

00:36:48:16 - 00:36:50:02

Absolutely. Fine. Thank you.

00:36:53:09 - 00:37:27:17

The applicant has stated in justification of need, that his sold application will provide electrical power for 180,000 homes in this country. And that is how they've established their fundamental planning need. Will the applicant assure the inspectors that none of the electrical power is It's surplus or not be diverted to travel down the Viking link from Bickerton substation to Jutland, Denmark, to power continental industries or homes on the continent.

00:37:28:10 - 00:37:29:01

Thank you.

00:37:33:10 - 00:37:35:18

Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Kerry.

00:37:37:20 - 00:37:47:04

Okay. Next we have, uh, Mark Williams, please. Um, and first off, if you could speak on behalf of the parish council. Thank you.

00:38:08:20 - 00:38:12:18

That's okay. I think you're the next three slots, so definitely grab a glass of water. So.

00:38:36:11 - 00:38:39:14

Okay. You'll have ten minutes for the parish council now. Thank you.

00:38:40:21 - 00:39:17:13

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Mark Williams. I'm representing Scott Parish Council. I will keep this slightly short because there is a degree of repetition which I'm very aware of. Um, we formally express our total opposition to Springhill, the Springhill solar application. While we recognize the importance of reliable energy sources and the need to address the climate, that the climate is continually changing. However, as a parish, we fundamentally disagree with the applicant's approach and disregard for the impact this development will have on the rural community.

00:39:18:08 - 00:39:48:24

We don't want to resist revisit points already covered in previous submissions, however, we want to highlight various key points. There is undeniably an impact on the local environment. The proposed site for this solar factory is located in an area of significant natural beauty and ecological importance. This is the best farmland in the country which has the benefit of irrigation, something the applicant conveniently ignores.

00:39:49:14 - 00:40:18:03

The provision of irrigation is also benefiting some other local farms in the area, who are able to borrow water from the estate. The estate should not be permitted to essentially take out such quality land from the production of important crops, now and into the future. If we are to believe that climate change is real. Then, as a country, we should ensure that the UK can produce a significant amount of its own food.

00:40:27:12 - 00:40:59:19

I want to look at visual and aesthetic impact. The installation of a large scale solar farm will alter the rural character of our community. The visual impact on the landscape, which is cherished by residents and visitors alike, cannot be overlooked. Even though the applicant is endeavouring to do so. The proposed development would be visible from several key viewpoints, detracting from the natural beauty of the area. Let's let's consider 3.5m panels.

00:41:00:00 - 00:41:34:22

1.5 million panels. Six meter collector compounds. Vehicle compounds. As we learned today, Hoardings down the A50 to disguise panels. High security fencing, CCTV cameras. Watching everyone's movement and lighting. The applicant cannot mitigate this and keeps talking about ten years in their application. This is an extremely long period to wait for all this stuff to be hidden by planting.

00:41:35:16 - 00:41:45:09

As we're aware from our previous discussions. We're going to have to have some super duper fertiliser to get plants growing anywhere near

00:41:47:06 - 00:41:53:08

tall enough to cover these monstrosities in the period of time that the applicant is proposing.

00:41:55:00 - 00:42:32:09

Let's look at agricultural land use. The land designated for the solar farm is currently used for agricultural purposes. Transitioning this land to an industrial use could have or will have long term implications for local food production and the agricultural economy. We believe that preserving agricultural land is crucial for maintaining food security and supporting local farmers and connected industries. The grading of the land is highly questionable, and we do not do not believe there has been any independent oversight in these large scale insects.

00:42:32:11 - 00:42:41:20

The applicant should be compelled to provide the ability of interested parties to to access the samples and to test it independently.

00:42:44:02 - 00:43:24:15

In our previous submissions, we have already discussed the significant potential impact of flooding caused by the destruction of under soiled the drainage in the field. We've already mentioned the real and realistic impact of best fires and the contamination of link of the Lincolnshire Aquifer. We already

have our water providers talking about restrictions on water use. Can you imagine if the Lincolnshire Aquifer was polluted and we also had a drought? The impact to us locally would be devastating.

00:43:30:13 - 00:44:05:20

I also want to address a community consultation. We have always raised concerns about the lack of meaningful consultation with the local, with the local community. As we've heard today, there are so many aspects of this application that still are not clearly defined. As a consequence, we are discussing so many, so many elements that are not clear that that we we won't actually have clarification until final submission. Many residents feel that their voices have not really been heard and that there is strong sentiment against the proposed development.

00:44:06:07 - 00:44:14:05

We still have not been able to facilitate an event that is within the community, where everyone is able to access the inspectorate team.

00:44:16:06 - 00:44:51:09

We've also been really clear from day one that there are alternative solutions. We have always encouraged the exploration of alternative sites and solutions that would have less impact on the environment and the community. There may be other locations more suitable for solar development, but that do not compromise valuable agricultural land or natural habitats. In conclusion, while we support the transition to a more efficient energy source, we believe that spring was the spring water application, as it stands, is not in the best interests of our community.

00:44:51:16 - 00:45:04:18

There are much more reliant, reliant, reliable and efficient means of generating energy now and into the future. We urge the planning authorities to consider our concerns and reject this application Outright.

00:45:08:11 - 00:45:09:03

Thank you.

00:45:12:05 - 00:45:18:07

Thank you very much, Mr. Williams. Would you now like to ten minutes for the Soda Action Group?

00:45:30:01 - 00:46:01:15

Good evening, Inspector team. Thanks for giving spring. Well, soul action group. The opportunity to speak tonight. We sit here before you as a group opposed to. Not opposed to renewable energy. Far from it. But as a group deeply concerned about the scale, the location and the consequences of this proposed 3500 solar factory and its accompanying Bess. Let's start with one simple truth. Not all green energy is good energy.

00:46:02:01 - 00:46:35:18

Not when it comes at the wrong place, in the wrong scale, and at the wrong cost to our community. The application is a real threat to our community's identity. 3500 acres. That's over five square miles, a footprint larger than many UK small towns. We are talking about industrializing our rural landscape,

blanketing thousands of acres of open space, best farmland and sensitive habitats with solar panels and battery containers.

00:46:36:17 - 00:46:53:21

This is not a small project tucked away into the remote area. It is a massive land use transformation with permanent consequences. This will scar undoubtedly scar our community for at least 40 years. What do we actually lose?

00:46:55:18 - 00:47:11:03

A huge amount of productive land that feeds people and supports jobs, wildlife corridors, Pollinators and ecosystems, our local identity, our character, our landscape, and the rural quality of life. We all come here to preserve.

00:47:12:22 - 00:47:49:21

This isn't just land. It's heritage, habitat and homes. The applicants expert from RSC seem to dismiss this all as from the air conditioned office spaces in cities where they don't experience the pleasure that we do from the countryside. When you look at this application, this is environmental irony. Green energy, brown impact the applicant through glossy pictures and very questionable sampling will try and convince the inspector that this application is green energy.

00:47:50:06 - 00:48:23:03

But environmentalism is more than just electricity generation. The inspector needs to consider the following. Construction will involve massive land clearing, grading, soil erosion, and significant damage to drainage. The panels themselves contain rare earth metals and toxic materials that are difficult and costly to recycle, and produced in China in the most environmentally inefficient and polluting way, contaminating a significant amount of land and air.

00:48:24:02 - 00:48:57:00

The real risk of significant damage to the Lincoln Aquifer has been dismissed. The best systems contain lithium ion batteries known to catch fire or explode, releasing hazardous chemicals and gases. These are not hypothetical risks. Just look at the recent fires in California, Australia and in the UK. The environmental environmental impact in mining. These minerals are not factored into any of the models. The cumulative destruction of thousands of acres need to be addressed.

00:48:57:18 - 00:49:30:04

We should also be very clear that the majority of the panels will need to be replaced at least once, and the batteries at least twice. If the applicant denies this, essentially there will be an industrial complex abandoned in about 20 years. If this project goes through, we are replacing biodiversity and farmland with an industrial danger zone. Is that the future we want? Let's look at some of the risks. Let's talk about the battery energy storage systems.

00:49:31:01 - 00:50:03:11

These are not benign boxes. They store massive, massive amounts of energy in a confined space. When something goes wrong, it goes wrong. Overheating. A puncture. A system failure. This will result in catastrophic issues. In a study conducted by CEA on a significant number of best facilities. I

have this, and I'll make sure you get a copy of this 26% had quality issues relating to fire suppression systems.

00:50:04:01 - 00:50:08:00

18% had issues relating to thermal management systems.

00:50:09:16 - 00:50:41:04

I'd like to pose a point to you, Mr.. Mr.. Inspector, if we share statistics like this for the aerospace industry. Then all aeroplanes would be grounded. No one would dare get on an aeroplane if you thought 26% could fail. Best fires are known for being extremely difficult to extinguish, releasing toxic fumes into including hydrogen fluoride, causing thermal runaway where one cell ignites another in a deadly chain reaction.

00:50:42:02 - 00:51:17:14

If such fire occur, occurred. We know Lincolnshire fire departments are ill equipped to handle them. There are only three fully manned stations in the area, and they are approximately 15 minutes away from the planned site. You cannot build the scale of risk into a community and call it clean. In our first set of meetings, the applicant's legal representation pushed back on our groups, questioning the competency of some of the applicant's experts. It is interesting to see in the Springville Solar Farm Environmental Statement appendix 1.1 Statement of Competencies.

00:51:17:16 - 00:51:56:01

There is no mention of the expertise in bat and fire risk. We highlighted the detailed best concern raised by Doctor Edmund Fordham, fellow of the Institute of Physics. Doctor Wayne Allison, Professor of Physics, Fellow of Keble College, Oxford University, and Professor Sir David Melville CBE, Professor of Physics, former Vice Chancellor, University of Kent. As you will note, not a single business development degree in sight from these three experts. We need to record that there is not one independent expert being called upon by the applicant.

00:51:56:04 - 00:51:57:03

These are all

00:51:59:02 - 00:52:35:00

experts that are on the payroll. Over the next few days, the inspector will hear from people in this area who know this land are and are basing their outputs on knowledge and not classroom based studies. Who benefits from this project? Not local. No one locally benefits, but plenty of burden. The power will go straight out of the region and most likely out of the country. The jobs are mostly mostly temporary, and if we consider IDF's record on other UK sites, EDF wants us to believe they do not.

00:52:36:00 - 00:53:10:00

That they do everything by the book. Well, clearly they didn't. In Anglesey, in North Wales, the company reaps the the benefits and profits while we shoulder the consequences. Meanwhile, our community deal with the destruction of the beautiful landscape, Traffic, construction and maintenance issues, constant hums, glints and security lights. The psychological toll of watching our open land become fenced off industrial zones, potentially increased insurance premiums and declining property values.

00:53:10:13 - 00:53:34:19

Is this really progress or is it exploitation? The reality is, nothing submitted by the applicant is worth a paper. It is written on the submission of best safety is laughable. The detail on traffic management is just fantasy with zero consequences. We know there will be a significant increase in traffic, and we know this traffic will use any means available to reach the various sites.

00:53:37:08 - 00:54:12:02

There will be zero policing and zero financial impact or penalties if they breach. Therefore, just be honest and say it's a pencil exercise designed to tick a box and yet again take the community for idiots. years. There are alternatives. Better alternatives. Let's be clear. We are not saying no to solar energy. We are saying no to the scale of this project, in this location, at this scale. And the cumulative, cumulative impact on the developments in Navy coal and other areas.

00:54:12:12 - 00:54:55:13

There are sensible solutions that need implementing long before we destroy the best irrigated farmland in Britain. Rooftop solar on homes and businesses. Brownfield solar on already disturbed and contaminated land remaining. Let's put renewables on the right land. Not the most convenient or the cheapest for a developer. There is no accountability and long term risk mitigation as we see in so many of these applications, the ownership will quickly change hands. What really happens in 40 years when the site is meant to be decommissioned? Who pays for decommissioning? Who restores the land? Where will there be a bond in place to cover dismantling costs? We all know how businesses are structured to avoid liabilities.

00:54:55:15 - 00:55:25:22

EDF Group are not putting parental guarantees in place. In reality, EDF won't own this site. In 20 years it will have been traded. We've seen this story before. Industry comes in, profits are made and when the infrastructure infrastructure fails or the money dries up, the community pays the price. Spring or solar is not inevitable. The planning inspector has a choice. Please use it wisely when in conclusion, this project has nothing to do with megawatts.

00:55:25:24 - 00:55:58:13

It is more about mega millions of pounds going to a few vested groups. Ed Miliband says we are. We are being listened to. Where is he? Rural communities are being ignored and our communities are simply dumping grounds for this green gold rush. We can do better. We must do better. So I urge the planning inspector and everyone listening to stand with our community and dismiss the application. Say no to solar factories and this best say yes to protecting our land, our safety and our future.

00:56:05:13 - 00:56:18:00

Okay. Thank you, Mr. Andrew, for those representations on behalf of the Solar Action Group. If you'd now like to have five minutes, if you'd like to say anything on a personal level, then your five minutes will start when you begin. Thank you.

00:56:20:09 - 00:56:56:14

Mark Williams, representing myself. Um, a resident of Scott Wick. It is no surprise that I strongly object to the spring while Solar Factory and Associated Press. If this application is given consent, it

will turn prime irrigated farmland into an industrial wasteland. Let me be clear. This project is unwanted, unsafe, and completely out of step with the needs and desires of the local community. There will also. This will also set in motion a slew of further applications, turning the area around Nathan into a 10,000 acre industrial complex.

00:56:56:22 - 00:57:30:17

Let's think of the reality of the real gravity of this. The Sunday Times rated November as one of the top rural locations in Britain in which to live. First, let's talk about land use. Prime agricultural land is being sacrificed for industrial scale energy production. That's right. Industrial. The applicant can dress it up with green energy language all they want. But this is a massive industrial operation being shoved into a rural community. I have real concerns that the land classifications don't accurately reflect the land that is being chosen.

00:57:31:18 - 00:58:08:07

The sense is that the applicant, along with their not so independent RSC, are manipulating the results to get the outcomes that they desire. Where is the sense in bulldozing fertile fields to install millions of glass panels throughout? They'll install thousands of miles of industrial cabling and lithium filled containers. What happens to feeds? Food security? What happens when we need the land back? Good quality irrigated land is the most valuable land possible. The current estate owners lack the competency or enthusiasm to continue to provide husbandry to the land.

00:58:08:09 - 00:58:39:05

They should sell it on to someone who would continue the work and ensure the estate continues to be a success into the future. The best is a ticking time bomb. These systems have documented history of catching fire, releasing toxic fumes and endangering nearby homes. Who pays when one of these blows up? Who is accountable when fire fighters can't put up a lithium blaze? The results are very real and the safety assurances from the applicant are woeful.

00:58:39:10 - 00:59:03:14

The applicant is treating this community with utter contempt. The insurance sector have real concerns with BIS and in fact, Factor factor in the realistic likelihood of a fire. There is absolutely no way the applicant can bunker the entire site to prevent contaminated water accessing the Lincolnshire Aquifer. This will result in pollution and primary and a primary source of drinking water contaminated.

00:59:05:11 - 00:59:25:15

The Lincolnshire Fire Service is under-resourced. As we know, there are only a handful of fully manned stations and the majority of stations are manned by retained part time crews. The vast majority of the crews in Lincolnshire have no experience of dealing with the best fire. The gold standard for operating a fire appliance is five crew.

00:59:27:15 - 01:00:00:10

A significant number of the fire shells do not achieve the gold standard, which means tackling fires under resourced. I spent much of my childhood in Africa and China, the son of a miner. I've seen the impact of large scale opencast mines on communities, areas ripped to pieces in order to extract my minerals that are needed to in electronics, batteries and solar panels. In many of these countries,

particularly in China, where geologists locate minerals, communities are forcibly removed from the land.

01:00:00:17 - 01:00:23:16

This typically happens in countries run by dictators. We see and hear about this on the news and express our utter revulsion. Wait a minute. This is what is happening in Britain in 2025. We have a Secretary of State that, across the whole of the UK, is ignoring the wishes of the communities and actually seemed to take great pleasure in doing so.

01:00:23:18 - 01:00:24:08

One minute.

01:00:24:10 - 01:01:01:03

Let's not pretend this is being done for our community. This is being done to the community. No one has asked for 3500 acres of solar panels and battery units with restricted public access fences, security lights and surveillance. Where is the. Where is the democratic process? Why are our voices, the local communities being ignored. I've had to fight for two years against so many in our community who have said this consultation process is meaningless when the outcome is predetermined, and the public opposition is not ignored at this time.

01:01:01:05 - 01:01:33:16

I've at various times I felt the same way. However, I feel the tide is turning and there is a sense that net zero, rather than helping our lives, is more likely to destroy it. Over the last few days, there have been several leading news articles questioning the madness being pursued by Ed Miliband. The applicant has utter contempt for our community. There is no benefit whatsoever for this community. EDF has suggested there will be local jobs. I would like to draw the planning inspector's attention to Porth Wen solar factory in Anglesey.

01:01:33:18 - 01:01:38:05

Okay. You are out of time, Mr. Williams. If you'd like to conclude now, that would be great.

01:01:38:07 - 01:01:52:17

Thank you. Another community. Another community that was that has been blighted by EDF. This site was raided by immigration officers in March 20th 20th, 2025. 16 workers were arrested on suspicion of working without proper documentation.

01:01:55:05 - 01:02:04:05

I urge the planning inspector to reject this application with no amendments, no conditions, just a big no thank you on my behalf.

01:02:09:12 - 01:02:29:00

Thank you, Mr. Williams, for those three representations. Um, I think we're roughly about halfway through, so I propose to have a 15 minute break now. Um, so we'll resume, um, at 6:20. Thank you. Um, I should just say, next up, I've got Cheryl Johnson, if you'd like to get yourself ready over the break. Thank you.