

Speaking Notes - Open Floor Hearing about the proposed Fosse Green Energy Solar Farm.

I'd like to declare that my husband is a farmer locally and an agricultural contractor.

As many are aware, Fosse Green Energy Solar Farm would cover 2400 acres. That would equal 1360 football pitches of farmland within the Sleaford and North Hykeham constituency. This application would be approximately one and a half times of the size of the town of Sleaford.

I have been long campaigning for large-scale solar farm applications within my constituency to be halted. With over 9,000 acres of live NSIP solar applications locally, the cumulative impact is deeply concerning, and I have been working closely with affected residents, parish councils and action groups to raise their many concerns about the site. I am grateful that many are here today and will be speaking later on to highlight the disastrous impact this application will have on them and our community.

I have attended and spoken at public meetings of the Cliff Villages Solar Action Group and I know how worried my constituents are about this application. We are clear that industrial-scale solar farms on productive farmland are not the right solution.

I am concerned that this application and others in my constituency will have a disastrous impact on the availability of BMV and agricultural land in the area.

According to the Fosse Green Energy Solar Farm 6.3 ES Appendix 12-B Agricultural Land Classification Report, the site is primarily made up of Grade 3a BMV land and Grade 3b, which remains good farmland. Lincolnshire is the breadbasket of the county and produces 30% of the country's vegetables. The land in the county is also more productive than the UK average; the wheat harvest in our county, over the difficult past five years, was 25% above the UK average, and it is much more productive than global averages. Agricultural land like this in Lincolnshire is the land we can least afford to lose.

Like the NPPF, the updated NPS EN-3 recommends that developers should try using poorer-quality instead of higher-quality agricultural land and avoid the use of BMV land where possible. In a written statement in May 2024, the previous Conservative government offered further guidance on the use of BMV land for solar farms instead of food production.

It explained how these "competing priorities" should be balanced, clarifying the policies set out in the NPS:

- The "starting position" for developers should be to minimise the impact on BMV land and use land in areas of poorer quality. There is "a greater onus" on developers to show the use of higher-quality land is necessary as land grade increases.

- Decision-makers should give “due weight” to the proposed use of BMV land when considering whether consent should be granted.
- The government added that decision-makers should not only consider the impacts of individual proposals but also cumulative impacts “where several proposals come forward in the same locality”.

2400 acres of agricultural land could produce 8,640 tonnes of wheat – over 6 million loaves of bread or 177 million Weetabix.

The application states that the land could be out of agricultural use for up to 60 years, far longer than the usual 40 year time limit in NPS EN-3. In this time, technology will have significantly advanced, and the soil underneath these outdated panels will have been deprived of light, rendering it much poorer quality for future generations -again creating long-term impacts for food security into the future.

Much of this land has been relied on for farming for centuries and forms an important part of the character of our area.

Furthermore, with regards to cumulative impact, we cannot view this application in isolation. Heckington Fen Solar Park (1300 acres) sitting in the neighbouring Grantham and Bourne Constituency was approved by the Government in January 2025. This sits within the same District as Fosse Green Energy Solar Farm - North Kesteven District – where the NSIP South Lincolnshire Reservoir proposal, plus the thousands of acres of other pending solar farm applications are proposed.

Due to the topography of the land, this site is highly visible and will impact a far greater area than prescriptively described. Within a radius of Navenby, and all within one small County Council Electoral Division, there are proposals for the Fosse Green Energy Solar Farm, BESS facilities, Navenby Substation and Leoda Solar Farm. Nearby also lies the the Springwell Solar Farm application to the East.

The cumulative impact of so many solar and associated infrastructure applications in one District, and in this application’s case, within an extremely small radius, is more than unreasonable for local people to bear and they are rightly worried and angry that they are being subjected to the possibility of severe industrialisation in our small part of Lincolnshire.

To highlight this further, my constituency is the second most affected constituency by solar proposals – with around 7% of it due to be covered by solar under existing applications alone.

There is a risk that at the end of use, these sites are no longer able to be returned to good agricultural land due to the impact they may have on the site. The most affected area of all is the neighbouring Newark constituency at 8.84% and the neighbouring Gainsborough constituency is also severely affected at 5% of land proposed to be

turned over to current pending or approved proposals. The cumulative impacts of this infrastructure and their impact on agricultural land in the district and wider area must be considered.

The impacts of these applications on local assets should be considered, with the loss of nature and biodiversity, impact on house prices and the mental health effects of the industrialisation in this area of open rural countryside.

There are many local RAF bases within the vicinity of this application, including RAF Waddington (home to the Red Arrows) RAF Digby and RAF Cranwell. Moreover, RAF Digby is the HQ of the Joint Cyber and Electromagnetic Activities Group. Any interference with these defence estates would cause significant harm.

There is also significant concern about BESS facilities linked to this application because of the potential fire risk of lithium-ion batteries. Lithium-ion batteries can catch fire because of thermal runaway. While individual batteries may have to adhere to product safety regulations, this does little to give reassurance in the context that there have been two documented incidents of a BESS fire in the UK in recent years and there are no laws that govern the safety of BESSs specifically. Recent incidents include a fire at a BESS site in Liverpool in September 2020 and a fire at a BESS project under construction in Essex in February 2025.

My constituents are also incredibly concerned that it is believed that Uyghur slave labour is being used in China for the production of solar panels.

Canadian Solar, which is behind the Fosse Green Energy Solar Farm application, is documented in the Sheffield Hallam Reports *In Broad Daylight* (2021) and *Over-Exposed* (2023).

The solar industry could be seen as particularly vulnerable to forced labour in the Uyghur region. 95% of solar modules rely on one primary material: solar-grade polysilicon. Polysilicon manufacturers in the Uyghur Region account for approximately 45% of the world's solar-grade polysilicon supply.

The Government must look into these serious allegations and reassure the public that any transition to net zero does not come at the expense of using slave labour.

I have conducted a survey in my constituency in the areas most affected by the large-scale NSIP applications in our area, including Fosse Green Energy Solar Farm. Letters were sent directly to thousands of households in Sleaford and North Hykeham, and I received over 2,000 handwritten responses.

Of the respondents, 90% were concerned about the enormous scale of the proposals, 68% were extremely concerned about the use of productive farmland, and 55% were extremely concerned about the visual impact.

Lincolnshire is the nation's breadbasket and produces 30% of the UK's vegetables. My constituents understand the importance of backing our farmers. This is why the most common response from my survey was that we must protect our prime agricultural land in the interests of food security.

I urge you to not recommend this application.