



Hearing Transcript

Project:	Lime Down Solar Farm Project
Hearing:	Transcript of Open floor hearing 1 (OFH1) - Part 5
Date:	21 April 2026

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.

FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:09:23 - 00:00:14:15

Ladies and gentlemen, I make that ten. Part seven. Can we return to our seats, please?

00:00:32:29 - 00:00:42:09

We still have a number of virtual attendees to get through, so if I could please ask everyone to return to their seats and quieten down. Thank you.

00:00:49:27 - 00:01:03:12

Okay. Thank you very much. The time is 7:10 and we'll continue with the hearing. So we're now we're moving on to individuals and individuals representing groups who are speaking virtually.

00:01:05:24 - 00:01:27:07

For the benefit of those people who are speaking virtually, there is no requirement to turn your camera on. But if you do wish so, you are welcome to do so. Can I first call Dan Pike, uh, who is parish counselor representing understand Community Action, Whitley and Shaw and Melksham without parish council. Mister Pike, you have five minutes.

00:01:28:19 - 00:01:31:27

Thank you. So sorry. I'll just. I'll just start the timer.

00:01:31:29 - 00:01:34:13

Mr. Pike, and it's over to you. Thank you.

00:01:35:12 - 00:02:06:04

My name is Dan Pike. As I said, I am not a parish councillor. I am here speaking on behalf of Councillor Peter Richardson, who is unable to attend tonight. I am the secretary of the local residents group known as Community Action Whitley and Shaw, and I've also been asked to speak on behalf of Melksham Without Parish Council. Around our two small villages of Whitley and Shaw, there are the best part of 80 energy related schemes in various stages of planning and construction.

00:02:06:06 - 00:02:37:15

They include solar farms, battery storage substations and cable corridors. Most of them converge on a single point Melksham substation at acre, which lies on the edge of our parish. I ask you to imagine a map of our small villages and their immediate environment. Then try to picture that map with 80 pins on it. This is the setting into which this application arrives. The question that I wish to ask you tonight is procedural.

00:02:37:24 - 00:03:12:20

Please, would you require that the applicant assess and document the cumulative impacts properly before they receive consent to proceed? The applicant contends that the cumulative impacts from their project have been assessed. Our position is that the material they have presented to you is inadequate. In particular, their remarkable environmental statement assesses the impacts as if it were the only

project in the area. But it is not, and the risks of all of these projects are cumulative and capacity limited.

00:03:13:23 - 00:03:46:08

As I said, Whitley and Shaw are two small villages that sit at the foot of a headwater catchment. When several headwaters are disturbed during construction. The flow downstream includes both sediment and contaminants moving through connected drainage and into the wider basin. The effects are cumulative, yet that catchment has not been assessed as a catchment by the applicant. As it may seem obvious, I am an engineer both by education and by mindset.

00:03:46:19 - 00:04:17:28

This helps me to understand how large infrastructure projects can affect their surroundings. Often this is in ways that are difficult to anticipate unless you know the area Well, I have lived in Witley now for 16 years and I have experienced several floods in that time, including my house. I know it quite well. The proposed cable route has a wide working corridor stretching from north of the M4 over the fields, roads, a railway and onto Melksham substation.

00:04:18:15 - 00:04:49:02

The applicant asks us to accept that they will manage the project, but they do not define their construction methods in detail. Key elements of how it will be built are deferred to later stages, so the consequences cannot be predicted. Deferral does not remove risk. It is an attempt to avoid taking responsibility for it. Across the 80 schemes in our area. Battery storage is a repeating feature. The assessments of those schemes has been site by site.

00:04:49:04 - 00:05:19:27

Yet the risk is not. They all depend on a shared fire and rescue response. Yet there is no cumulative major accident assessment for all of these projects, and no clear evidence that Wiltshire Fire and Rescue have been asked to consider one. Please be assured that we are not against renewable energy in principle. I myself have solar panels and batteries in my house. We are, however, against making important decisions on incomplete information.

00:05:20:12 - 00:05:52:05

We are also not commenting on the abilities of the applicant to complete this project. Rather, we are questioning the quality of the information that they have published, especially as it relates to the management of environmental risks. I know it's been a long day for you all, so I'm not going to go on and on and on. I've just summarize it as key elements are missing. Others are fragmented. Critical matters are deferred. Whether a robust and lawful decision can be made in this case is a question only you can answer.

00:05:52:13 - 00:05:54:27

Thank you. Mm.

00:05:59:15 - 00:06:19:21

Thank you, Mr. Pike. Just one follow up from me, please. Could I ask you to submit that list of schemes that you consider should be or rather, cause and the parish council consider should be

assessed as part of the cumulative impact. You mentioned quite a I think you mentioned 80 schemes at one point.

00:06:19:23 - 00:06:20:17

About I.

00:06:20:19 - 00:06:22:17

Think 78. Yes.

00:06:23:03 - 00:06:27:00

If you could please submit by by deadline one a would would be ideal for us.

00:06:27:11 - 00:06:28:22

That's May the 8th. Yeah.

00:06:29:11 - 00:06:30:09

Uh, yes.

00:06:30:26 - 00:06:31:23

Yeah. Okay.

00:06:31:28 - 00:06:32:13

No.

00:06:32:15 - 00:06:33:00

Thank you.

00:06:33:02 - 00:06:37:16

We have written extensively on it, but I'm not sure whether we've sent it to you directly. But I shall do.

00:06:39:08 - 00:06:40:06

Thank you sir.

00:06:41:06 - 00:06:41:27

Thank you.

00:06:43:02 - 00:07:01:25

Right on to the next speaker. So, Mr. Pike, you're welcome to turn your your camera off. And, yes, we'll, uh, we can now move on to John Buckley. I understand of Lockington and Alderton Parish Council. And you have five minutes. Mr. Buckley, over to you.

00:07:03:03 - 00:07:33:03

Thank you. I'm John Buckley, and I chair Lockington and Alderton Parish Council, which is situated at the western end of the Line Down area. These are the views of that parish council. I am also a graduate of Environmental Sciences, and I served for 30 years as a senior police officer in a local

police force. I specialised in commanding multi-agency response to major incidents, specifically adverse weather incidents such as flooding, and this included specialized training at both the National Police Staff College and the Emergency Planning College.

00:07:34:02 - 00:08:05:23

The rural area around Lockington and Alderton consists of a gentle rolling landscape with long distant views. The huge motorised solar panels, battery storage facilities and the associated substation installations cannot be effectively hidden or camouflaged within this landscape suggestions that in 60 years time, this land will be returned by the developer or the successors into something similar to the iconic landscape of the Cotswolds.

00:08:05:25 - 00:08:39:26

Today, we find, has no credibility whatsoever. The applicant's proposals have generated an almost universal condemnation within our local communities. They are resistant and it has caused a wholesale mobilisation of the residents, as you've seen today. It is unlike anything we have ever seen before. We all know that climate six climate change and its effects are easy to see. You can see them on a daily basis in our local area. It manifests in warmer, drier summers and wetter, more stormy winters.

00:08:40:00 - 00:09:12:07

Increasingly, we're seeing continuous high water table through the autumn and winter months. This is bringing increased surface water and river flooding, with more flooded roads damaged Carriage race. Disrupt and travel. Inaccessible. Waterlogged farmland. Property damage and very frequent discharges from all of our local treatment centers, which are overwhelmed by the floodwater they all discharge into the Bristol Avon. The large area which lined down Solar Park intends to cover is unusual.

00:09:12:09 - 00:09:44:29

It has specific sensitivities and vulnerabilities to contamination, subsoil disruptions, surface and river flooding. The whole northern area of the scheme sits above a deep sequence of limestone aquifers, which retain and allow the transfer of subterranean water over a very wide geographic area. The aquifer is vulnerable to contamination as it contains micro fissures and help these help water transfer to and through the aquifer an accelerated rate. The development could be a direct threat to the aquifer, which supplies drinking water to the West Country.

00:09:45:25 - 00:10:27:17

A network of permanent streams, seasonal surface and subterranean waterways and springs facilitate water flow into the Bristol Avon. This includes the proposed development area and areas well beyond its boundaries. The development site already suffers from significant standing and surface water problems. The areas immediately around it suffer from a high risk of flooding. As to the various conurbations further downstream, if the rate at which water falls on or moves across the development area is altered or increased, it is likely to release the result in increased flooding outside the development area and elsewhere downstream along the Bristol Avon.

00:10:28:05 - 00:10:59:27

This risk of offsite flooding has not been properly assessed by the developer in our view. We think that the developer has consistently underestimated the risks of their proposal to local communities and the drinking water supply. They offer inadequate countermeasures and have sought to dismiss or ignore this foreseeable risk. The Bristol Avon passes through our parish and already floods frequently alongside extensive surface water flooding from runoff and springs. This blocked roads affects local land property owners and isolates our communities.

00:10:59:29 - 00:11:37:18

We have no doubt that the line proposal down proposals will make this worse. The development area is also served by a network of mostly small single carriageway roads, which are unable to cope with the anticipated construction, operational replacement and decommissioning vehicles. The risks and disruption to all road users, including walkers, cyclists and horse riders, will inevitably increase. There are insufficient passing places planned for the volume of large goods vehicles and abnormal loads, which will have also been significantly underestimated and the countermeasures are inadequate and ineffective, lacking alternative routes.

00:11:37:20 - 00:12:12:05

Traffic risks on poor narrow roads will be increased, and we feel that the developer has significantly underestimated the number of vehicle movements involved. Despite the obvious community impact and disruption the projects of this scale will cause, the developers appear to view this as a project that will be inflicted on, rather than developed with, the local community. Nothing is offered by the application applicant in mitigation, and this is an area with many residents, significant visitor numbers and a variety of local businesses.

00:12:13:02 - 00:12:16:18

Many of these depend on those visitors for their livelihoods.

00:12:17:02 - 00:12:19:27

Sorry your five minutes has run. If you could draw to a

00:12:19:29 - 00:12:20:14

Close.

00:12:20:16 - 00:12:45:08

Very close to the end. If you had to walk or cycle across the road and rolling landscape, and you end up going through 4.5m high, visually confined footpaths with tunnels with no views, which would you choose? We would ask that the Planning Inspectorate support the overwhelming community resistance to this proposal, and please recommend that this application for a DCO be refused. Thank you.

00:12:53:01 - 00:13:07:00

Thank you, Mr. Buckley. Can I now ask John Atkins, please? I understand, councillor representing by Brook Ward. Mr. Buckley, you're welcome to turn your camera off. Thank you.

00:13:09:10 - 00:13:17:13

Mr.. I'll just ask for the timer to be reset before bringing you in, just to make sure you've got the full five minutes. Uh, so. Yeah. Over to you, please, sir.

00:13:19:00 - 00:13:50:16

Thank you sir. My name is John Atkinson. I'm the Wiltshire councillor for Brooke Division, speaking on behalf of residents of Lavington, Littleton and other Brook communities who would be so badly affected if this scheme were ever to go ahead. My relevant representation is responded to by the applicant at table 4.34, beginning on page 1399. In the time of available, I want to focus on just one essential point.

00:13:50:18 - 00:14:24:04

Drawing on two aspects of my submission to explain it. That point is simple. When the full scale of harm is weighed against what this scheme actually delivers, it's not worth it in this place. My original representation set out a wide and interconnected range of impacts landscape harm, industrialization of a deeply rural area, effects on amenity and well-being, safety concerns, and long term resilience.

00:14:24:18 - 00:15:02:01

The applicant doesn't deny these impacts. They acknowledge them and seek to justify them. One element of the scheme, the proposed battery energy storage system, illustrates the issue clearly. I'm referring to it not because it's unique, but because it's emblematic of the proposal as a whole. In responding to me, the applicant accepts that a yes carries real risk of fire, emergency response and potential environmental consequences.

00:15:02:10 - 00:15:32:29

They rely on outline management plans and future approvals to address that risk. That doesn't negate the concern. It confirms that local communities are being asked to accept a substantial industrial hazard in a rural setting for decades, with the consequences of any failure born locally, and it sits alongside many other harms already identified and accepted as significant.

00:15:33:21 - 00:16:11:07

So the question that matters and that residents keep asking is this what is all this harm for? The applicant's answer is climate benefit. That's the foundation on which their case rests. As an accountant by profession, I'm very familiar with breakeven analysis. So I approach this in a straightforward and transparent way, using only the applicant's own figures from their environmental environmental statement.

00:16:11:14 - 00:16:29:13

On that basis, carbon breakeven is not reached until 2058. That's more than 30 years away. Well beyond the UK's legally binding net zero target of 2050.

00:16:33:01 - 00:17:14:05

So until then, the scheme is a net contributor to atmospheric carbon because of the very substantial emissions in its early years. In their response to Wiltshire Council, the applicant suggests that breakeven isn't a helpful concept with respect. Timing is absolutely critical. Emissions released in the 2020s and 2030s can't meaningfully be justified by savings that may arise decades later, beyond the period when national policy says emissions must already be at zero.

00:17:15:09 - 00:17:47:02

This leaves a very stark planning balance. On the one side, our real, immediate and enduring harms to landscape, to communities, to amenity and through risks that require active management for generations. On the other side is a theoretical carbon benefit, which on the applicant's own evidence, doesn't materialize until long after the net zero deadline has passed.

00:17:47:04 - 00:18:23:19

When these two sides are weighed together, the justification simply does not hold. The harms are certain and long lasting. The claimed benefits are delayed to the point of being practically meaningless, sir. This is not a marginal proposal affecting a marginal place. It would fundamentally alter communities I represent. When you ask the most basic question, is it worth it? The applicant's own figures points to a clear answer.

00:18:23:24 - 00:18:25:07

Thank you for listening.

00:18:33:01 - 00:18:52:01

Thank you. Mr.. You mentioned your calculations that arrived at a carbon break even point of 2058. Could I ask you to submit the detail of your calculations? Um, at deadline one a, which is the 8th of May.

00:18:52:23 - 00:18:53:29

It will be a pleasure.

00:18:54:12 - 00:18:55:07

Thank you.

00:19:01:05 - 00:19:14:05

Thank you. Okay. Thank you. Mr.. Uh, moving on now. I have an hensher from the Campaign to Protect Rural England. Um, miss Henshaw. Uh, are you online?

00:19:14:15 - 00:19:15:29

Uh, well, can you hear me, sir?

00:19:17:19 - 00:19:19:22

It's quite muted, I'm afraid.

00:19:20:00 - 00:19:27:00

Oh, I'm not sure if I can get it any better. I don't live in a I live in an area which has very bad reception. Is that any better?

00:19:27:02 - 00:19:29:18

Oh. Hang on. No, that does sound better now. Thank you. Yes.

00:19:29:20 - 00:19:30:12

Right. Okay.

00:19:30:14 - 00:19:33:13

Right. Okay, I'll give you your five minutes over to you. Thank you.

00:19:33:15 - 00:20:05:21

All right. Thank you. Uh, CBRE Wiltshire is not opposed to net zero. We support the transition to energy, but only when it's delivered with integrity. Strategic foresight and genuine respect for communities and landscapes. We advocate for a balanced approach, one that will protect food security, rural livelihoods and the character of the Wiltshire countryside while still enabling innovation and energy generation. However, what we are currently witnessing is not balanced across Wiltshire.

00:20:05:23 - 00:20:38:14

A patchwork of industrialisation is spreading through the countryside. Each individual proposal was presented as isolated and capable of mitigation, but collectively they are causing a creeping and cumulative transformation of the rural landscape. This proposal is a clear example. It results in substantial, widespread and long term harm to a highly sensitive area. We do not accept that a 60 year consent represent anything other than a permanent loss of countryside.

00:20:38:27 - 00:20:54:09

There is a fundamental inconsistency in how the sensitivity and significance of the landscape, particularly in combination with heritage assets, has been assessed. This is most evident in the overreliance on mitigation through screening. The.

00:20:56:18 - 00:21:06:00

Iterative design process, while framed as following the mitigation hierarchy, ultimately depends heavily on existing and proposed vegetation to screen.

00:21:08:04 - 00:21:38:06

Landscape buffers are not neutral. They change the landscape itself. That harm is significantly underplayed. Screening takes time, typically up to 15 years to establish, and even then full effectiveness is uncertain. If planting fails or underperform, the level of visual and landscape harm at year 15 could be greater than predicted, meaning the overall adverse effects have been underestimated.

00:21:38:21 - 00:22:19:00

There is also a deeper issue. The historic environment and the surrounding landscape are not separate. They are historically and culturally entwined. The suggestion that this relationship can be broken for 60 years and then restored is simply not credible. There is no evidence anywhere in the country that such restoration of landscape, character and heritage context has been successfully achieved after development on this scale. Turning to policy, the recently published Land Use Framework states that by 2030, communities will have a greater say in the stewardship of the landscape they value.

00:22:19:08 - 00:22:54:04

That is only four years away, and if this is to apply to all land uses, that includes large scale solar development. The framework also emphasizes the rural communities should have meaningful input into local plans and strategies. In doing that, heritage infrastructure, and the history of essentially the landscape as a whole are properly reflected. Yet representations made today clearly demonstrate the rural communities do not feel their input is being reflected in decision making.

00:22:54:19 - 00:23:26:29

And why should they have confidence in what the framework promises? When community friendly, plan based planning policies are already being overridden on energy need? Research conducted by University College London for the Campaign to Protect Rural England in 2023 indicates that the UK's 70 gigawatt solar target could ultimately be met through urban and brownfield deployment alone. This would allow for the gradual phasing out of greenfield solar after 2030.

00:23:27:10 - 00:24:15:07

The real barriers lie not in land availability but in policy. These could be addressed through stronger planning measures, fiscal incentives and by accelerating rooftop solar deployment while also reducing overall energy demand. In addition, data from the NSO, the National Energy System Operator, shows that renewable energy projects totaling around 760 gigawatt are currently awaiting connection. This is far in excess of the government's 2030 target of 150 to 225GW, suggesting that this proposed development is not only unnecessary but contribute to an already unsustainable pipeline.

00:24:16:03 - 00:24:48:27

While some ground mines may be required in the short term, there is significant untapped potential elsewhere. Installing solar panels on new buildings, existing warehouse rooftops and car parks could deliver between 40 and 50GW of low carbon electricity. More than half of the UK's 2035 So that finally, the broader context, uh, CBRE describes developments of this scale as part of a market driven bubble fueled by international investors.

00:24:48:29 - 00:25:05:29

The proposal offers no meaningful local energy benefit to the people of Wiltshire. It is not a public utility. It is a commercial venture. At its core, it represents the exploitation of the countryside, making the local environment poorer while making overseas.

00:25:06:01 - 00:25:08:21

Sorry, I will need to ask you to bring this to a close.

00:25:09:06 - 00:25:23:06

Overseas investors richer. The proposal will cause lasting harm to landscape heritage and community confidence. For these reasons, CBRE Wiltshire strongly object to the proposal. Thank you sir.

00:25:29:06 - 00:25:33:07

Thank you for that. Now I could hear you quite clearly, but.

00:25:33:27 - 00:25:34:12

Sorry about.

00:25:34:14 - 00:26:04:14

That. Can I ask you to submit your representation. Your oral representation in writing is well pleased, just due to the potential sound issues. And what I do not want to happen is that things get lost with respect to the transcript and with the recording. So if you could submit what you've just just said in writing for deadline, one A, that would be I would really appreciate that. You also referred to some research by CBRE in 2023. Could I ask you to submit that for a deadline one day as well, please?

00:26:04:20 - 00:26:08:13

UCL yeah, I will. Yes, sir. Indeed.

00:26:14:03 - 00:26:28:22

Okay. Thank you very much. Uh, moving on then. Uh, to interested parties. Um, the next group have three minutes each. We have a mr. John Eaves, I believe, online. Mr. Eavis?

00:26:29:28 - 00:26:31:08

Yeah. Miss me?

00:26:31:25 - 00:26:35:13

Fantastic. Mr. Eavis, over to you. Your three minute starts now. Thank you.

00:26:36:15 - 00:27:18:10

My name is Johnny. This and I farm with my wife soon. Published. Excuse me at Manor Farm. Clawson and I have done so for 63 years. The impact on my farm business and our family is significant and includes one. The area of land affected by compulsory purchase acquisition proposals, which extends to almost 90 acres of our best farmland and includes the ability to create construction compounds, car parks, office and welfare facilities in addition to the installation of cables and haul routes.

00:27:18:15 - 00:27:49:20

These rates are disproportionate for a scheme of this nature, and we do not believe that IGP or their agents have adequately engaged or consulted on these requirements that should be clearly identified and we choose from present plans to the impact on drainage and flood risk is huge. But you are no doubt aware of the flooding of Causton in recent years. To date, we have seen no water management plans.

00:27:50:03 - 00:28:20:25

This must be addressed if there is a significant stream on road ditches running through the village. The proposed access road will definitely affect the field runoff and water flow from our own farm fields. Three the proposal includes taking a charge over 90 acres of our land, which will affect the future value of our farm and is completely detrimental to sentimental to our operational, nature based way of farming.

00:28:21:00 - 00:29:15:01

It impacts on many public rights of way in the area where they wish to locate their roadway and cable for our sustainable farming scheme will be destroyed. The lying down solar park scheme is totally antagonistic to a UK government environmental scheme. Five the A42 nine is now regarded

nationally as the main artery from the Midlands to the south coast, and a gateway to the Cotswolds. It is a single carriageway, and is it adequate for the delivery of tons of infrastructure, which will be required in terms of daily traffic throughout construction and the management required to access the road site? I do not believe that these large roads will be able to get under the railway bridges, and so will have to be brought to the site over our land.

00:29:15:19 - 00:29:46:28

Six our health is clearly impacted by the stress that this proposed scheme is being, which is incalculable. The inaccurate information at present, lack of clarity, the concern about what our business will look like before and after it. If this scheme is allowed is unfair and unreasonable. Thank you for your time, and we urge you to also consider the human impact of this ill thought scheme, which is being pushed on us as a family farm.

00:29:55:25 - 00:29:57:04

Thank you, Mr. Eavis.

00:29:59:13 - 00:30:04:24

Uh, moving on now to, uh, I have Rodney Seymour Williams.

00:30:09:00 - 00:30:14:16

Do we have Robert Roddy? Seymour Williams online? Yes we do. Your three minutes starts now, sir.

00:30:15:14 - 00:30:48:29

Good evening, and thank you very much for the chance to speak this evening. My name is Roddy SIM Williams. I've lived at Farley's Farm at the centre of the scheme at site C since I was one years old, and subsequently most of my life. I'm speaking in a personal capacity today and would like to speak in opposition to this scheme, and I've already seen the negative impact that this proposed project has had on close friends and family and people who have spoken today. My opposition to the plan comes from spending many, many years outdoors in the local area, walking, biking and horse riding regularly around the lanes of Norton, Churston and Lavington.

00:30:49:03 - 00:31:21:01

The combination of the visual impact, the noise of the transformers and the security perimeters for lime down means that these areas are unlikely to ever be the same again. Clearly, this is not just land in isolation, it's a shared rural space that we all participate in, whether it's walking, horse riding, doing business or socialising. Over the past many years, I've spent many afternoons walking or cycling down, appreciating the historical significance of the Fosse Way, which clearly will no longer reflect anything like its Roman heritage. With the industrial sites running alongside it.

00:31:21:13 - 00:31:53:18

Local pubs, cafes and other businesses are part of the impact as well. They're the natural endpoint of walks and part of how people use and enjoy the beauty of this area, as we've heard today, there's likely to be a significant financial impact to those businesses and the wider local economy. Given the visual impact to an area of natural beauty and the footpaths within it, the setting of those places matter. They rely on being part of a countryside that feels open, protected and unchanged rather than dominated by

large scale infrastructure for intermittent electricity generation, with the costs accruing mainly to local people.

00:31:54:28 - 00:32:42:00

Solar developments are described as temporary, but in practice that still means many decades, with continued risks to land quality and wildlife. For an electricity source that only typically generates at 10% of its potential capacity. Given our country's daylight hours and weather, I have significant concern over what happens at the end of the lifespan of this project. It's unlikely that the land could be restored, restored to its prior quality, and will most likely be claimed as brownfield and subject to further industrialization. Disposal and recycling processes of these panels may be said to exist, but they're still nascent and unproven, and it's not always clear how consistent or effective they are at the industrial scale that this project proposes, or what the long term residual waste streams are likely to be.

00:32:42:22 - 00:33:12:25

Without clear and enforceable arrangements, there's a risk that the long term burden doesn't sit with the original developers and that the costs, both environmental and social, are only borne by local and often younger people. I'm 31 years old and concerned with what this area will look like over the next few decades, not just the next few years. I'd hope to bring up any children I might be lucky to have in this landscape. I was fortunate enough to grow up in. Yet the proposed scheme will mean that that landscape has taken away from future generations.

00:33:12:27 - 00:33:24:27

Clearly, the local community will be poorer for this scheme, with a permanent impact to heritage and community, while others benefit financially. Thank you for the time and I urge the inspectorate to reject this scheme.

00:33:32:19 - 00:33:45:00

Thank you and we'll move on to the next person, please. I have Peter Phillips. Is Mr. Phillips on line, please? Yes, I see. See Mr. Phillips. Mr. Phillips, over to you, sir. When you're ready.

00:33:45:14 - 00:34:15:16

Thank you very much indeed. Um, can I thank you for giving me the opportunity to raise a concern regarding the Island Green power planning application. I appreciate you've heard a lot of submissions. I'll try and be concise, accurate, and, more importantly, relevant. My name is Peter Phillips, and I own a small parcel of land which is required for the cable route, travelling from the power generating site by the motorway to the substation at acre. Over the past 2 or 3 years I've had frequent meetings.

00:34:15:18 - 00:34:51:07

Some of them open them and some close with representatives of Island Green Power. Those meetings have always been very amicable but unfortunately unproductive Throughout this whole 2 to 3 year period, I have consistently and repeatedly told Island Green Party representatives of the plans I have to develop the land at Whitley House. I have let them know when planning applications were to be submitted when they were passed. And at our last meeting towards the end of 2025, I even gave them copies of the approved consent.

00:34:51:09 - 00:35:26:20

They seemed surprised. Works approved by the planning permissions granted have now been completed and resulted in significant alterations at the site. The changes at the site are obvious to see as they include significant highway alterations. I've been open, honest and frank at all times with Ireland Green Power regarding these plans. The plan of my field has been presented to you as part of this application is wrong, it's inaccurate and doesn't represent the correct situation.

00:35:27:03 - 00:36:00:27

If on your way home, you drive down Corsham Road. For outside Melksham, you cannot fail to see the significant errors in the drawing that you've been given. Now, I assume that when you make your decision, you will need to be sure that the information you have been given is correct. Well, sure. Means in the context of this inquiry, I don't know. In this small part of a very large scheme, those drawings of the ladder house that you've been given are wrong and I presume will need to be altered.

00:36:01:18 - 00:36:32:27

I would ask you that you look very carefully at all the drawings and information you've been given. Most will relate to land areas far more important than mine. I would suggest that you need to be sure that the errors present on the plan of the land at Witley House represent a one off error, a mistake, and they're not an example of substandard or poor preparation by Island green Power and their representatives that runs through the entire application.

00:36:33:28 - 00:37:01:16

My purpose of wanting to speak to you today was to make you aware what has happened in one part of the proposed scheme. I hope that by understanding my experience, it will help you to look critically at information you've been given by Island Green Power and their representatives, and perhaps make you less confident in accepting information you've been given by Island Green Power at its face value. That's all I wish to say. Thank you.

00:37:08:00 - 00:37:17:16

Thank you, Mr. Phillips. Can I ask for deadline one a you please submit details of those planning permissions you referenced and copies of the approved plans.

00:37:17:27 - 00:37:25:02

I can I can of course Island Green power have these already but I can certainly for them to you under one a.

00:37:25:24 - 00:37:44:21

If you could please. It's actually for the examining authorities benefit not not the applicant. So that'd be ideal. Thank you. Um, I would also invite you to attend a compulsory acquisition hearing. Uh, I'd also invite you to register for a compulsory acquisition hearing, which you can do. So contacting our case team.

00:37:45:00 - 00:37:46:05

Thank you very much indeed.

00:37:49:12 - 00:38:02:08

Thank you. Moving on. Then we have Willa Gibb. Do we have Willa Gibb online? Yes. Yes we do. Thank you. Your three minute starts now.

00:38:02:26 - 00:38:36:02

Good afternoon. Thank you for allowing me to speak today. My name is Willa Gibb, and I'm a 22 year old Charleston resident and a Great Britain athlete. My objection to the lime lime down solar proposals is based on my direct daily use of the landscape. I'm here to speak specifically about the footpaths, the public rights of way and the bridleways the criss cross this proposed site. I want to make it clear that I understand the need for renewable energy. However, the way this development is being proposed treats our public access to the countryside as an afterthought.

00:38:36:06 - 00:39:07:03

For me, this isn't just about a leisurely Sunday stroll. These paths are my training ground and therefore my place of work. I'm deeply worried about the immediate disruption during the construction phase, but my deeper concern and the reason I submitted my representation is what happens after the construction is finished. The developers proposed to restore the land. However, restoration and reinstatement are not the same thing. While they might plant new hedgerows or sow grass seeds, they cannot restore the character of the footpaths.

00:39:07:05 - 00:39:48:17

They cannot restore the solitude. Right now, I can run along these paths and feel immersed in a rural landscape. I can look over the fields and see the horizon if this project goes ahead. Those same views will be of metal frames and solar panels, waist high or higher, stretching for miles. The footpaths will still be there on the map, but the experience of using them will be gone forever. We are told these are temporary structures with a 60 year lifespan, but for the footpaths, 60 years is permanent. For a young athlete starting out today, by the time these panels are decommissioned, their entire career from junior level to potentially retirement will have been spent running through an industrial site rather than the countryside.

00:39:49:00 - 00:40:21:00

This is a generation of users who will lose their connection to this landscape. This is what I mean when I say I'm worried. Worried for footpaths that they might be changed forever. It's the loss of the open, rural character that defines them as public rights of way, rather than simply public rites of passage. Finally, I would like to ask the panel to consider the hierarchy of land use. This area is designated as being of high landscape sensitivity. Our nation is currently facing crises in physical and mental health.

00:40:21:10 - 00:40:52:16

We're constantly being told to get outside, to exercise and to use our green spaces. Places like this freely accessible, open and beautiful are a public health asset. By covering them in solar arrays. We are effectively choosing industrial energy generation over public recreation. We are choosing to prioritize one national need electricity while sacrificing, sacrificing another public health and access to nature. In conclusion, my objection is not a Nimby objection to green energy.

00:40:52:18 - 00:41:12:14

It is an objection to the permanent industrialization of our public recreational space. I urge the planning authority to recognize that our rights of way are not just lines on a map, to be diverted and restored. They are the arteries of rural life and rural sport. Once their character is gone, we will never get it back. Thank you for your time.

00:41:22:05 - 00:41:28:12

Thank you. Moving on to John Bailey, please. Do we have John Bailey online?

00:41:31:08 - 00:41:32:15

Yes. Can you hear me?

00:41:32:23 - 00:41:36:20

Yes we can. Thank you, Mr. Bailey. Your three minutes starts now.

00:41:37:15 - 00:42:11:09

I own and farmland at Kirsten. I am affected because the project requires my land for an underground cable. Between the laying down E and the transformer substation at lying down D, I have completed all maps and surveys required by line down, and have allowed them without restriction, to carry out all their surveys, including geophysics, wildlife and environmental. But I have tried and failed to be able to view the results of their wildlife survey so that I can ensure they have correctly identified the badger sets and other wildlife habitats in my land.

00:42:12:11 - 00:42:53:29

They still have not produced the heads of terms that is acceptable to my land agent, and to date, there are still fundamental commercial terms that have not been agreed. And to my knowledge, no landowner has signed up to any cable access heads of terms, despite, I believe, the claims that deals are all nearly completed. In my case, they want to have access to over 65% of my land for five years. And the heads of Thames Agreement, despite the fact that they already know the route of the cable and it only requires a 30 meter wide strip during the construction period, and this reduces to a 15 meter strip when the compensation amount an offer is calculated.

00:42:55:06 - 00:43:27:12

Some of my landings continue through a solar farm field to reach the ditch outlet, and to date, they have offered no written reassurances that when the construction destroys these drains, they will still maintain my drainage rates. I have acted in good faith, but I feel they have not, and I suspect they wish to use compulsory purchase powers to avoid proper negotiation and proper compensation. This would destroy my small farm unit and leave several land parcels landlocked with no access.

00:43:28:09 - 00:44:06:08

They have also not been amenable to suggested small changes to the cable route, which would massively reduce the impact on my land. I am 72 years old and possibly looking to scale back my farming activities, but with the majority of my land being covered by the proposed heads of terms and the construction extending over the next five years, it is impossible to do any planning for my future. I do not expect to make a profit from this project, but I feel my farming will be adversely affected and my land devalued, and the proposed compensation does not reflect the losses involved.

00:44:07:03 - 00:44:37:23

The farms, which are having the cable group forced upon them are essential to this project, but we are the ones receiving no benefit while additionally having all of farming assets greatly devalued. The worry of this is affecting my health, and even just preparing for this meeting has adversely affected my sleep and blood pressure. So I hate to think when the actual construction begins and the resultant destruction of my small farm unit, what that will do to my health. Thank you.

00:44:48:09 - 00:44:55:02

Thank you very much. Mr. Bailey, can I ask, can I invite you to register for the compulsory acquisition hearing, please?

00:44:55:15 - 00:44:56:09

Yes.

00:44:57:06 - 00:45:07:14

And again, you can do that just by contacting the case team. Thank you very much. Okay. Um. Moving on. Do we have Kim Morgan?

00:45:20:21 - 00:45:40:15

Okay, we shall move on. So we've heard from everyone who registered to speak in this session. Um, and is there anyone here who has not spoken and would wish to be heard and is registered? Sorry. Anyone who is registered and has not already spoken. Sorry. It's been one day.

00:45:42:26 - 00:45:46:27

Okay, I think I can now pass on to, um, Miss Lever.

00:45:48:24 - 00:46:23:26

Thank you everyone. Um, I just want to run through the list of names we had for actions arising. I won't run through the actions in all the words for the actions we will be publishing in actions list, but just the name of the people that we recorded actions against. And these were people who referenced documents such as, um, mental health reports. Um, There was a report about traffic numbers and so on. So we're submitters had said if there were certain things they were referring to, we would like them submit it into evidence.

00:46:23:28 - 00:47:08:14

So the names of those people were put my glasses on. Rachel Hamblin, Darren Rawlings, Andrew Coles Bank, Matthew Hood, Steffi dampness, Fiona gypsy councillor, Martin Smith, Tracey Worcester, Paul Simmons, Sarah Sorby, um, Mr. Pike for cause, John Atkins and Henshaw and Peter Phillips. But I also want to issue an action for the applicant. Um, and that is to provide the examining authority with an update in relation to negotiations with all affected parties who spoke today about the CAA process and have referenced, um, lack of negotiations and so forth.

00:47:08:16 - 00:47:43:05

We would like a response to those representations at deadline one a from the applicant. So I come now to the close of the hearing. Um, it has been a long day, but we sincerely thank everybody who came today, particularly those who've sat through this morning and the whole afternoon and evening.

Um, it's extremely important that we hear your views, and I'm so grateful, as my fellow panel members, for your participation and your very calm nature throughout, for what is a rather sensitive application.

00:47:43:07 - 00:48:24:12

Um, and we do understand that if you wish to submit what you spoke about today in writing, um, irrespective of the names that I gave actions for, we would like for those oral submissions to be put in at deadline one A and then the applicant will provide a response, um, as well. So thank you in the room to everyone for attending and for participating. We thank all those online for everybody who's been patient speaking at the end. And I would like to send a special thank you to our GDPR speaker who spoke so well, um, at such a young age and who came after school, so much appreciated to her as well.

00:48:24:29 - 00:48:46:21

So for those returning tomorrow for issue specific hearing one, it is mostly a situation where we will be asking the applicant certain questions. It isn't so interactive with members of the public, but obviously you're all welcome to participate and there may be opportunities to speak on the on those items. But if you are here tomorrow, we will open again at 10 a.m..

00:48:48:11 - 00:48:56:05

Number four, I close as anybody have any final comments to make in relation to the procedure going forward?

00:48:58:12 - 00:49:07:04

Not seeing any hands. Okay. So thank you very much. The hearing is now closed. It is 1959. Thank you.