



Hearing Transcript

Project:	Lime Down Solar Farm Project
Hearing:	Transcript of Open floor hearing 1 (OFH1) - Part 2
Date:	21 April 2026

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FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:05:20 - 00:00:29:24

Um, so we'll just continue. Now with the hearing, I'm going to read out the first eight names to come to the table. So can we have Sarah Sorby, Andrew Greenhill, Matthew Hood, Charles Purkiss, Anna Kate Fuller, Freddie Bicknell, Hugh Roche and Emma Vaux. Please, to come to the table. All.

00:00:51:18 - 00:01:03:15

Right. Thank you. Can we just have some silence in the room, please? Thank you. Okay. Sarah Sorby. Um, over to you, please. Time starts now.

00:01:04:17 - 00:01:44:29

My name is Sarah Sorby. I live with my partner at Pound Farm Cottage, Rod Bourne. We would see and hear the development in area E from our cottage. We moved to Radburn nearly 40 years ago, choosing it especially as a quiet hamlet in unspoilt and beautiful countryside. Every day I walk the dog and ride my horse, enjoying the unspoilt bridleways in area E. Many people of all ages, including children and from all social backgrounds, use these routes regularly and have done so for centuries.

00:01:45:16 - 00:02:23:22

Bridleways have always been treasured as part of the fabric of the countryside and should not be discarded lightly. The bridleway from Rod Bourne to Stanton Saint Quintin That's Mal W 61 and 63 is said to be an ancient. Roadway. Indeed. An ancient drove way to market. Part of it runs alongside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, SSI. This bridleway would become the main access route for the applicant to reach fields to erect their solar panels.

00:02:24:00 - 00:03:01:18

There is no other access route over the railway and the stream. Robin Brook the bridleway alongside Bingham Wood towards Hanger Farm, Mal 59 would have little protection from construction work. The bridleway due west from where upon road Mal 60 would pass by the proposed substation and also be a main access route for infrastructure, infrastructure, vehicles. The bridleways would become unappealing, unsafe, unsafe, and most of all dangerous if the development is allowed to be constructed.

00:03:01:23 - 00:03:42:15

The noise from pile driving, dust and vibrations, and the amount of traffic during construction would make these poles unusable. Once constructed, high fencing and 4.5m panels would make the bridleways intimidating for any horse, let alone the effects of glint and glare and the noise of panels moving with the sun. There is bound to be vehicular movement, too, from servicing the solar panels. Even the applicant admits, and I quote, some significant adverse effects to users of PR and on surface roads in lime down E during construction cannot be mitigated further.

00:03:42:29 - 00:04:16:00

May I politely suggest and earnestly implore the applicant to find somewhere else that can be mitigated? Madam sirs, I am a pensioner in my 70s and have having access to the public right of way from my door is what gets me out of bed and keeps me sane and healthy. To be denied safe access would have a great impact on my well-being and to those others who use them, denying access would force those riders to the road.

00:04:16:02 - 00:04:24:07

Last sentence. This cherished countryside, so beautiful and safe to ride in will be ruined.

00:04:26:23 - 00:04:27:21

Thank you

00:04:29:18 - 00:04:48:25

again. Sorry, I'm just going to implore the crowd. I do appreciate the the sense of the strength of feeling about this, but the the issue with the clapping is it then sort of breaks up the opportunity to ask questions, etc.. I'm going to ask one question. I didn't get the reference number. The first, um, bridleway you referenced from Rod Bourne.

00:04:48:27 - 00:04:55:01

To Stanton Saint-Quentin in a LW 61, and then it becomes 63.

00:04:57:16 - 00:04:58:12

Thank you very much.

00:05:00:26 - 00:05:05:24

I will now ask Andrew Greenhill, please. Your three minutes starts now.

00:05:06:04 - 00:05:35:24

Hi, my name is Andrew Greenhill. I'm a tenant farmer in the village of Woodbourne. Farming 185 acres, of which 150 are on a farm business tenancy. 85 acres of the tenanted land is included in the Lime Downs scheme. My family have been tenant farmers in Rob Bourne for more than 100 years, and over that time have played a central role in our agricultural village. The farmers employed countless individuals and supported many families along the way and continues to do so.

00:05:37:13 - 00:06:08:29

My late father and grandfather would be dismayed at what is being proposed. The 85 acres earmarked for solar panels just happened to be the most productive fields on the farm. The only grade to land in the whole scheme and bordering a triple C, and have proved time and time again to be the most productive and profitable. My grandfather cleared the gorse from the field margins and oversaw the drainage of the land. After the war, and with good management since then.

00:06:09:13 - 00:06:47:01

Fields are flat and the sandy soil over clay works down wonderfully. Just don't try to travel over the ground. In a wet winter you will sink. The importance of being able to grow your own cereals, to provide to provide both animal feed and straw for bedding on farm like ours cannot be

underestimated. If we had to buy in straw and feed from other sources, that would severely increase the costs of the cattle enterprises, bringing into question their viability. Any excess straw and grain that is produced goes to other farms in the village, so if we can't provide for them, they have to look further afield with an ever dwindling local supply.

00:06:47:16 - 00:07:18:09

The village as a whole is pretty much self-sufficient in what it needs to farm, and it's vital to the financial viability of these farms to be able to carry on the mixed farming traditions. From a landscape and environmental perspective, it is crucial that the fields of road borne are kept agricultural rather than industrial. Wildlife thrives in the farm landscape, with grass margins, interconnecting hedgerows and woodlands, creating the necessary habitats and corridors to support a wide range of species.

00:07:18:15 - 00:07:51:12

Corn buntings nest in the cereal fields each year, taking advantage of good cover at nesting time, with minimal disturbances from humans or dogs. Hares particularly appreciate the wide open fields and are seen in good numbers, with creeping industrialisation becoming more evident as a whole. It is vital that we maintain the green spaces we have now. We already have the M4 and the A4 two nine within sight or earshot and developments at junction 17 Edging ever closer.

00:07:51:18 - 00:08:00:16

Let's not allow our very special green lung to be compromised by a short sighted policy that will cause irreparable damage to both our community and landscape.

00:08:03:20 - 00:08:18:03

There is a new generation coming through, very keen to both farm and conserve if given the opportunity. Please don't deny them of that opportunity for the good of the community and country. Thank you.

00:08:18:27 - 00:08:19:20

Thank you.

00:08:27:13 - 00:08:40:16

Mr. Greenhill. You said that you were a tenant farmer, and you've referred to the 85 acres included in the scheme. Um, are you in the book of reference as affected by compulsory acquisition?

00:08:42:15 - 00:08:43:24

I'm not sure.

00:08:43:26 - 00:09:01:25

So the book of reference is the is the applicant's list of all parties whose land is potentially affected either by compulsory acquisition or temporary possession. I'm just trying to understand if you're if your land is being acquired for the solar panels or if it's the landowner because you're tenants from the land.

00:09:01:27 - 00:09:15:27

I'm tenancy from the landowner. Yeah. So it's on a farm business tenancy. And in my understanding that, um, it can be sort of reclaimed for industrial use with the years notice.

00:09:15:29 - 00:09:17:04

Okay. Thank you.

00:09:27:03 - 00:09:32:17

Okay. Thank you. I'll turn now to Matthew Hood. Your three minute starts now.

00:09:33:03 - 00:10:04:23

Hello, I'm Matthew Hood. I live in Rob Bowen. I'm a chartered engineer with over 40 years experience of safety critical systems in defence and rail. My concern is the lack of thorough safety, investigation of the bests and who will be held to account in the event of an incident. All lithium batteries can suffer thermal runaway. This creates toxic explosive gases. The fire modelling conducted by the applicant has assumed that a best fire will be restricted to a single container, with flames only four metres high.

00:10:04:25 - 00:10:50:02

At 229, the spread of fire between best containers is well documented and has occurred on multiple occasions. It happens because thermal runaways cannot be extinguished, only cooled until they run out of chemical fuel. There have been over 120 serious fires involving best since 2021. Please will the examiners refer to the Electric Power Research Institute database of best incidents to challenge the applicant's assumption of limiting fire to a single container with over 5015 kilowatt hours of batteries in each container, equivalent to 100 Tesla model threes and over 270 containers.

00:10:50:04 - 00:11:25:16

There will be over 1.3 million lithium cells. Thermal runaway is therefore not unlikely during the 60 year life of the scheme. The Bess is only 85m from the main railway line, supplying South Wales four trains an hour past the site. Time for a cloud of explosive fumes to drift across the railway line, and for a passing train, potentially carrying 800 people to ignite it. The subsequent explosion could derail the train and cause a further hazard of an oncoming train colliding with the wreckage.

00:11:25:22 - 00:11:57:05

This is a credible hazard to consider in a safety case. I am concerned that IGP have provided you with insufficient and misleading information on this topic for you to examine. There is also the possibility of many residents being left with life changing inhalation injuries from smoke caused by a thermal runaway nickel, a key part of the battery cells, is widespread in the smoke and later the dust left behind. It's a known carcinogen that leads to death.

00:11:57:19 - 00:12:30:19

I personally struggle how I could construct a safety case for the proposed scheme with a clear conscience. Scientific guidance is that, for instance, likely to result in multiple deaths, a probability per year of 1 in 1,000,000. Would require intense scrutiny. Even a probability of 1 in 3,000,000 is likely to be unacceptable if the risk was for six or more deaths. This needs to be true across all 60 years of this scheme. Please will the examiners check whether they have.

00:12:31:01 - 00:12:36:06

His Majesty's Rail Inspectorate should also approve a safety case for this scheme.

00:12:44:00 - 00:13:18:19

Thank you very much. A couple of points from me there, please. You mentioned a safety database, and could I ask you to submit details of that in writing for deadline? One a and the second one is you mentioned, um, I think it was more of a general reference to scientific studies about the, the risk. Yeah. Um, could I ask you to submit some details of those as well, please? Certainly. That'd be ideal. Thank you very much. I'm now going to move on to Charles Perkins, please.

00:13:18:21 - 00:14:04:03

Your three minute starts now. Good afternoon. My name is Charles Perkins. I'm a resident in Rod Borne, and I've led a career in renewable energy. I'm not against solar, but I'm very against this scheme, which is totally inappropriate for the countryside in which I live. My family and I lived and have lived in the in the close knit community of Roebourne for 25 years, enjoying its unique rural charms, its beautiful rolling hills, its rich tapestry of hedgerow lined fields, the nature, the woodlands and enjoying the cycling and dog walking on the bridle ways, which is a daily routine for us and very, very important.

00:14:04:28 - 00:14:24:12

Roebourne is a very, very special place. It's heartbreaking to think of the destruction of this rural ideal to our lives and to our community, and future generations should line down. Proceed. I feel so very angry and frustrated at the proposals being presented.

00:14:26:05 - 00:15:00:28

Our community thrives through its agricultural fabric of tenant farms and its extensive local supply chain, ranging from vets feedstocks, seed merchants, mechanics to the butchers in Malmesbury and nearby farm shops which, along with local popular recreational activities such as cycling, horse riding and the growing tourism contribute so much to its identity and livelihood in this local rural economy. I worry that this agricultural fabric and its capability will be destroyed.

00:15:01:00 - 00:15:32:04

Should the line down go ahead. Damaging the rural economic, health and in turn, the mental health of our community. Once it's gone, it's gone. As a consultant in renewable energy, I find it particularly galling that this is all being sacrificed in the name of carbon emissions, when in fact there are better and faster ways to achieve carbon reduction, whilst also preserving the agricultural economy and current land use, for example, the growing of hemp.

00:15:33:05 - 00:16:03:24

This will not only sequester between 8 to 22 tonnes of carbon dioxide per hectare and rapidly grow and deliver more carbon savings than a rainforest growth. I've been told today, but along with facts and it can be used for building products, hemp create and construction materials, so decarbonizing the construction industry, thereby providing an agricultural based solution for our land that supports carbon reduction.

00:16:03:26 - 00:16:40:12

Safeguarding the readiness and flexibility for critical food security. Vast oversized schemes like Lime Down will be technically superseded before they're even built, and with an all the likelihood never delivered the tangible carbon benefit for the sake of our rural communities in Roebourne, perhaps three villages, please ditch this ghastly industrial confiscation of our land. We can come up with a lot less destructive alternatives to deliver carbon reduction in North Wiltshire and preserve our rural economy, not to mention our sanity.

00:16:46:17 - 00:16:48:22

Thank you. I'll now move on to Anna. Kate.

00:16:49:11 - 00:16:50:12

Over to you, please.

00:16:50:14 - 00:17:25:26

Good afternoon. My name is Anna Kate Fuller. Both my husband and I grew up in Churston and Norton. We chose to stay here because we love it, and we brought our family up here for our daughter. Being in this landscape, walking the fields, swimming in the river, cycling or riding down the Fosse Way and around the local villages has been and continues to be an important part of her recovery from mental illness. Industrializing this area with 4.5m panels, fencing, lighting, substations, battery storage and cabling will fundamentally change this landscape, soundscape and character forever.

00:17:26:00 - 00:17:57:06

The loss of that tranquility and sense of escape is something I am genuinely worried about. For families like ours. This is a place where at night we literally hear owls hooting, and beyond that there is silence. The applicant says there will be no significant impact, but that is based on a baseline, assumed level of existing noise that does not reflect the reality here. They have not clearly explained what noise levels will actually be at nearby homes, especially at night. I also want to speak about traffic.

00:17:57:08 - 00:18:34:12

I teach French at local primary schools, and my livelihood depends upon travelling reliably between villages on our lane. If a lorry comes through, everything stops. No one can pass. If I'm late, I have to refund the school which directly cost me money. This proposal would bring over 20,000 additional vehicle movements onto narrow lanes that are not designed for this volume or size of traffic. There is an absence of enough passing points, so this will mean blocked roads reversing with limited visibility, damage to verges and ancient hedgerows, and increased danger for cyclists and equestrians.

00:18:34:14 - 00:19:16:27

Just three weeks ago, a horse was killed on these roads, and I am genuinely frightened that there will be more accidents if this goes ahead. And this is not just construction traffic. There will be ongoing traffic for maintenance, repairs and the replacement of panels and batteries, meaning the impact on our roads will continue for decades. The applicant says traffic will be controlled, but what will prevent drivers using quicker routes coming off junctions 17 and going through villages like Stanton and Quintin Griffiths and Hal Harrington and Norton, who will monitor this and how will it be enforced? These roads are well-used cycling routes, including the Atherstone Pilgrim Way and the Wiltshire Cycle Route, which run through the scheme.

00:19:16:29 - 00:19:48:07

And our children have always loved cycling these routes year round because they are quiet and safe. On roads this narrow, there often isn't space for vehicles to pass. Cyclist safety and introducing heavy traffic will make these routes significantly more dangerous. The irony is that this proposal is not expected to be carbon neutral before 2050, the golden year, which must be considered when weighing its benefits, and it may never repay in clean energy terms, the carbon used to build and install it. We love this place.

00:19:48:09 - 00:19:54:27

We've built our life, our family and our work here and we are determined to fight to safeguard it. Thank you for listening.

00:19:59:09 - 00:20:00:07

Thank you.

00:20:00:25 - 00:20:03:09

And I'll move on to Freddy speaker.

00:20:03:11 - 00:20:04:09

Neil, please.

00:20:04:24 - 00:20:35:26

Good afternoon. My name is Freddy speaker, and I'm the owner of the Vine Tree pub in Norton. Um, the vine tree is not just a business to me. It's a historic village pub that has been part of the community for centuries. I've invested heavily, both financially and personally, to bring it back to life as the heart of the village. The pub is supported by locals and visitors who come to enjoy the countryside that surrounds us. But this proposed 2000 or 3000 acre solar development poses a very real threat to the future.

00:20:36:26 - 00:21:10:21

Our business depends heavily on visitors. People come here to walk through the countryside, to experience the beauty of the village, and to sit in our garden for a meal or a drink whilst enjoying the landscape. Under this proposal, every approach to the pub would pass large areas of industrial scale solar panels. The rural setting that attracts walkers, cyclists and tourists would be fundamentally altered. Wiltshire Council has already estimated a loss of £1.8 million in tourism and tourism income to the area.

00:21:11:01 - 00:21:47:10

From my perspective as someone running a rural hospitality business, I believe the true economic impact will be considerably higher. If visitor numbers drop, the pub becomes unviable and if the pub closes, the consequences extend beyond my business. I employ local people, many of whom rely on the pub for their first job or vital local employment. Losing the pub would mean losing those jobs, losing a key meeting place for the village and losing another rural pub at a time when so many have already disappeared.

00:21:48:10 - 00:22:24:07

There are also some serious practical concerns. The pub sits at the bottom of a hill in a known flash flood area. Covering upstream. Land with solar infrastructure risks increasing runoff and worsening flood risk during construction. Heavy goods vehicles are expected roughly every ten minutes, which would make it extremely difficult and frustrating for both staff and customers to reach us, and the noise and disruption during construction and from the battery storage systems afterwards would severely damage the peaceful setting that our customers value.

00:22:25:20 - 00:22:42:28

Whilst I support renewable energy, this proposal is the wrong scale in the wrong place. I urge you to refuse this application in order to protect local businesses. Local jobs. The character of this beautiful village and the future of the vine tree. Thank you.

00:22:46:06 - 00:22:47:03

Thank you.

00:22:47:12 - 00:22:51:16

And I'll just move on now to Hugh Roche, please.

00:22:51:28 - 00:23:25:00

Good afternoon, inspectors. Thank you for taking the time to visit the site of the proposed development in the last few weeks. As you now know for yourselves, the area proposed by the lime and solar Park is not empty or degraded land. It is a thriving, living, working landscape. It's farmland. It is community. It's the gateway to the southern Cotswolds and nationally protected landscape, recognised not just locally and nationally and internationally for its beauty and importance and for those of us who live here.

00:23:25:02 - 00:23:56:26

It's far more than that. It's home. And I'll say this somewhat wryly. We are in one sense grateful that this proposed land proposal landed here. But it's united, our community in a way few things ever have. Neighbors who barely knew each other and are working together. All nine affected villages and communities talking, organizing, standing side by side united against this scheme. Hundreds and hundreds of people setting up direct debits to contribute to a fighting fund to help protect our future.

00:23:56:28 - 00:24:28:24

Some as little as £1 a month. Thousands writing in their relevant representations. Everyone totally distraught at the thought of this countryside being covered in panels. The quietness lost to the hum of transformers and battery cooling systems. This landscape is not abstract. It is lived in, loved and woven into people's lives. As the world has become more urban, there is a tendency to look inwards to the center of our cities and towns. However, in the countryside it's the opposite. From our villages we look outward towards the countryside.

00:24:29:02 - 00:25:10:29

We have been asked to industrialize thousands of acres of this landscape to replace something timeless and natural with something temporary, functional and ultimately driven by commercial return. This scheme requires a cable stretching some 20km across largely untouched farmland to reach

the grid connection at Melksham 20km. That raises a very simple question if this is truly the right place for this development, why is the connection point so far away? Is it really credible to suggest that this is the most appropriate location, or is it simply the result of assembling enough willing or perhaps pressured landowners along a route that makes the scheme viable? On paper, this is not strategic planning.

00:25:11:01 - 00:25:45:07

It is opportunistic development. And once again, it is the countryside and the communities within it that bear the cost. We are told this is necessary, but is it really necessary to sacrifice that nationally important landscapes like this, when there are so many more appropriate alternatives. The Cotswolds, the Fosse Way are part of our national landscape, something we are entrusted to protect not just for ourselves but for future generations. So I urge you to reject the scheme and protect this internationally important Cotswold landscape.

00:25:50:09 - 00:25:54:06

Thank you and Emma for please. Over to you.

00:25:55:19 - 00:26:27:12

My name is Doctor Emma Fawkes and I live at Grain Store Barn in Pig Lane. My objection is not solar in principle. In fact, I'm an expert in sustainable healthcare. My objection is to the siting, scale and wholly disproportionate impact of this particular scheme on my home, my family and the surrounding environment. Firstly, grain store barn was not properly recognised in the applicant's original plans as a domestic dwelling, let alone comprising four separate family homes.

00:26:27:14 - 00:26:59:06

We did not exist in the original plans, and that's not a minor detail. It means the true residential impact of this location was not properly understood from the outset. We're not simply near this proposal. You can see from the plans that we are engulfed by it. The proposed solar arrays and associated infrastructure would enclose our homes with panels, access routes, battery storage, fencing and operational equipment. That's not a marginal effect at the edge of a development.

00:26:59:08 - 00:27:30:14

It's a direct and sustained industrialization of the place where we live. Secondly, during a site visit, the project manager will throttle told us that because of the intensity of the construction period, we may effectively be advised to leave our home for months due to the noise and disruption. And that's deeply troubling. That's not a case of temporary inconvenience. It is evidence that many months of development are fundamentally incompatible with residential occupation.

00:27:30:16 - 00:28:15:20

During that period, let alone for wildlife, skylarks, horses and farming stock. The impact of four homes has been described by the applicant as major and adverse, and the proposed mitigation is wholly unconvincing. At the site visit, we were told mitigation would be a section of trees in a subsequent email only hedgerows. How can hedgerows possibly mitigate the visual dominance, construction noise, traffic, operational noise and cumulative impact for utility scale solar farm surrounding four family homes that were told that only by year 15 the impacts would start to reduce.

00:28:16:05 - 00:28:49:09

That's an omission that harm remains for many, many years. Thirdly, our water safety. My family and others rely on a borehole for our drinking water. The line down scheme involves extensive piling, trenching, ground disturbance and the installation of battery storage that creates a real risk to our groundwater. That damage isn't temporary. It may be irreversible. Clean drinking water is not something that can be replaced by landscaping or offset by promises of mitigation.

00:28:49:11 - 00:28:57:23

I therefore respectfully ask that substantial weight to be given to these harms and the application be refused. Thank you.

00:29:04:28 - 00:29:19:06

Doctor. Can I just ask in terms of the green stool? Can you tell me how many properties are there called the grain store? Because I've seen in the representations and some of the applicant's documents. Number two. Number three.

00:29:19:12 - 00:29:22:25

Yes. there's four homes. One, two, three, four grain store.

00:29:22:27 - 00:29:27:21

Oh, so this is straightforward. They're numbered one, two, three, four. And are they clustered together?

00:29:27:23 - 00:29:39:26

So it's a new development that was built in 2020. Um, and it comprises. So it's a very big barn that's in four sections. Yes.

00:29:40:04 - 00:29:41:15

Okay. Thank you very much.

00:29:45:04 - 00:30:05:16

Thank you very much. So that concludes the first eight speakers for this session. I will now ask Jonathan Seymore Williams, Stephanie Dabney, Rosie Clark, Stuart Dobson, Richard Jeffcoat, Laurence Copeland, Elizabeth Maxwell, and Leslie Bennett to come forward, please.

00:30:44:20 - 00:30:52:06

I'm just going to start with the order that I read people out. So. Jonathan Seymour Williams, please. Over to you.

00:30:59:17 - 00:31:39:13

Good afternoon. I am Jonathan Seymour Williams, uh, trained as a forester, chartered accountant and have been an investor all my life. I live at Farley's Farm, which is right in the center of the western crux of the lime down development. I speak obviously as a resident, but also as the perhaps initiator of much of the controversy that surrounds this development.

00:31:40:17 - 00:31:53:25

Uh, my particular concerns are water and the total outside planning of the matter.

00:31:55:23 - 00:32:27:06

The starting point, or my starting point, is that this proposal conflicts with both national and local and personal development of the area through its natural agricultural Process. The site sits alongside the Fosse Way, an ancient Roman route in parts pre-Roman, so it forms part of the historic fabric of Britain.

00:32:28:25 - 00:32:59:08

It's not simply a road, it's a landscape feature with real archaeological, logical, cultural and physical importance. Today, that wide open setting still matters. It's used by walkers, cyclists, riders. It's part of how people experience the whole area. That setting isn't incidental. It's what gives the Fosse Way its meaning. National policy supports rural diversification, but only where appropriate in scale and setting.

00:32:59:16 - 00:33:32:02

The Local Plan is there to protect the landscape. Like this. This matter has been referred to earlier this afternoon in by reference to historic buildings and listed buildings, of which Foley's Farm is one and important in its landscape. This proposal does nothing to protect the landscape. It breaks the relationship between the Fosse Way and surrounding landscape, and once that relationship is lost, it cannot be regained.

00:33:33:22 - 00:33:57:16

My concern isn't abstract. I've lived at Follies for over 30 years and been associated with this area for 60. I've seen it change, but I've also seen it come together, and over time I've put a great deal into maintaining the property. It's setting in line with the responsibilities for a listed building and the wider landscape.

00:33:59:24 - 00:34:13:23

I want to deal with much more, but I leave you with the central point. The Follies lies in the center of this development, and I have not as yet been consulted at all

00:34:15:18 - 00:34:16:25

by the applicant.

00:34:20:00 - 00:34:26:03

Thank you. I'll pass on to Steffi, please.

00:34:28:19 - 00:35:06:23

Good afternoon. My name is Steffi. I'm a chartered performance psychologist and I live in Farley's. The benefits of fresh air and appreciating your surroundings have been widely publicized since the inception of psychology. However, recently, the need to help our nervous systems reset in an increasingly busy and technology driven world have become more and more important. When working with my performance psychology clients, we often focus on their environment and the impact this has on their mental well-being. The UK Sports Institute, who are responsible for the majority of Olympic and Paralympic athletes, place wellbeing at the very core of high performance.

00:35:07:08 - 00:35:38:07

If it is important for these athletes, we can readily assume that it is vital for all performance and indeed living. We are now more contactable than ever, and the need to switch off is a vital skill to prevent burnout, anxiety, stress and depression. One of the most common exercises I use with my clients is the notice five things exercise. This is a mindfulness exercise with the aim of reducing stress and anxiety by encouraging your senses to focus on the present. This practice calms your nervous system by anchoring your attention to your immediate surroundings.

00:35:38:24 - 00:36:10:12

Access to uninterrupted natural scenery facilitates the attention, restoration theory, and exposure to industrial scale solar arrays in previously pristine areas increases cognitive load and cortisol levels, directly impairing executive function and emotional resilience. This is known as the neurobiology of the countryside. The preservation of our countryside is not merely an aesthetic preference, it is a physiological and psychological necessity for residents and visitors. Rural landscape acts as a primary tool for the regulation of the autonomic nervous system.

00:36:10:22 - 00:36:43:11

Industrializing 2000 acres of open land replaces soft fascination environments, which allow the prefrontal cortex to rest with the hard fascination of industrial infrastructure known to exacerbate nervous system dysregulation. This dysregulation is a state of imbalance where the body's stress response system fails to return to calm, leaving it's stuck in fight, flight, or freeze modes even without immediate danger. It is essentially chronic long term stress dysfunction leading to physical pain, fatigue, intense anxiety, sleep disruption, and emotional instability.

00:36:44:01 - 00:37:21:25

Natural landscapes are also critical for the stabilization of the circadian rhythm. Our internal biological clock this regulates sleep wake cycles, hormone release, digestion, and body temperature. The transition from natural greenery to sea of glass and steel creates significant albedo shifts and alters the local local microclimate. From a performance psychology perspective, the psychological anchor of rural scenery is a potent stressor. Losing this visual access triggers the chronic, low level sympathetic fight or flight response, which is clinically proven to inhibit the production of melatonin, leading to fragmented sleep and diminished systemic well-being.

00:37:22:23 - 00:37:44:15

To replace 2000 acres of therapeutic landscape with the industrial utility is to remove a vital public health asset. The nervous system requires the expansive organic geometry of the countryside to recover from the hyper stimulation of modern life. Protecting this landscape is an essential intervention for community mental health, sleep hygiene, and the long term psychological performance of the local population.

00:37:46:14 - 00:37:56:05

Thank you. Question from me or other request the studies you referenced there. Could you submit those at deadline one day please? Yes. Will do. Thank you.

00:37:58:14 - 00:38:05:13

I will now call Rosie Clark. Your three minute starts. No, please.

00:38:05:17 - 00:38:36:27

Good afternoon, Rosie Clark. I live in Farley's, which is within the proposed development. I'm here today to raise serious concerns about the impact on my private water supply, and on the health of my two young sons. We live over a mile away from the nearest mains water supply, so I rely entirely on a private borehole for all of my water for drinking, cooking, and bathing. I am acutely aware of the fragility of our water source. In times of high rainfall, the water turns brown with sediment and we were without any water for ten weeks when the water table dropped beneath the level of the borehole.

00:38:37:12 - 00:39:09:25

Many rural residents are dependent on private supplies. My borehole sits in close proximity to the panels and substation in area C, and it lies within a source protection zone as designated by the Environment Agency. Crucially, the aquifer it draws from has been assessed as having high vulnerability to pollution. The presence of the borehole itself generates its own source protection zone. These are not minor technical footnotes. They are formal designations that exist Precisely to safeguard supplies from exactly this kind of development.

00:39:10:09 - 00:39:45:18

I am extremely concerned about the contamination this scheme would create. The depth of filing for supports is well documented to disturb aquifer geology and create pathways for pollutants to migrate into aquifers. Pollutants include chemicals used during construction, herbicides to suppress vegetation, chemicals used to clean panels. The panels contain significant quantities of heavy metals. While panels are in good condition, they may present lower leaching risks, but this is a 60 year infrastructure project. As panels age, develop micro cracks and degrade under weathering, those metals become increasingly mobile.

00:39:45:29 - 00:40:19:03

Storm damage could accelerate this dramatically, and without warning, these contaminants will filter through to the aquifers beneath the panels, which so many rely on for our water. I must also raise the matter of evidence base, or rather the lack of one. There has been no study anywhere in the world into the long term aquifer impact of large industrial solar farms, nor the human health consequences of ingesting water contaminated from solar panel infrastructures. This means the absence of evidence is not the same as evidence of absence.

00:40:19:24 - 00:40:55:25

We are being asked to accept an unknown and unquantifiable risk to our health from drinking this water for decades with no baseline monitoring in place, no long term study to draw on, and no remedy if contamination occurs. Macquarie's infamous track record prioritizes profits over public health. Britain has a long list, from Philip amide to the infected blood scandal, where public health has not been protected by regulators and authorities. I do not want any of us to be added to that list. The precautionary principle exists for exactly this situation where the potential harm is serious.

00:40:55:27 - 00:41:17:23

It affects a vulnerable population and the scientific evidence is genuinely incomplete. It should not proceed. An irreplaceable water resource lies beneath the site. I urge the inspector to refuse consent,

or, at the very minimum, to impose stringent, independently monitored and legally binding conditions to protect it. Thank you.

00:41:22:12 - 00:41:26:26

Thank you. I'll move on to Stuart Dobson, please. Thank you.

00:41:28:28 - 00:42:01:08

Stuart Dobson, resident of Middleton for 40 years. I object to the lime down solar development because of the harm it will cause to the physical and mental well-being of me and my family, to the local community, and to the ecology and biodiversity. Let me share some detail on just two aspects. Firstly, wellbeing. My principal form of exercise is walking at least twice a day directly from my house on local footpaths. Every morning I walked through the village with my wife and dog to path reference grid 20.

00:42:01:24 - 00:42:13:24

This provides at least 40 minutes exercise without having to drive. It also includes conversations with friends and neighbors and indeed daily conversations with my wife, which might otherwise not happen.

00:42:15:27 - 00:42:56:21

If the solar development goes ahead, Path Reference grid 20 will be blocked by the site of a building compound and by the cable route, and that amenity will be lost to me and the village. Walking through the village will be accompanied by the noise, pollution and physical danger of HGVs. So I shall be forced to find alternative walks which will necessitate driving. Secondly, ecology and biodiversity. I know the network of local paths as well, because I walk extensively in pursuit of my hobby of birdwatching, conducting wild bird surveys for local farmers and contributing to citizen science, including Path reference grid 20.

00:42:57:04 - 00:43:28:02

Another nine path, which I use weekly or monthly, will be adversely affected if the solar development goes ahead. Aesthetically, physically and in terms of species of birds harmed or lost. To reference just one species Skylark. I'd like to quote from the applicant's own report on ecology and biodiversity, which estimated a density of 164 territories at 0.19 per hectare, which represents more than four times the national average.

00:43:28:10 - 00:43:42:00

I quote, in the absence of additional mitigation, skylight would be permanently for the lifetime of the scheme displaced and would likely constitute a significant adverse effect at district level, unquote.

00:43:43:16 - 00:44:15:15

Additionally, very close to Littleton, I know of a density of Skylark of over one territory per hectare, which is among the highest in the United Kingdom through which the cable route will go directly. The applicant may say it can mitigate for Skylark to recover, but for many years I shall have to drive further afield to hear their song. With these examples, I hope to have shown that the proposed development will bring harm to me, my family, the community and to the local ecology and biodiversity.

00:44:15:17 - 00:44:17:23

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

00:44:22:28 - 00:44:28:18

Thank you. I will now move on to Richard Jeffcoat. Your three minutes starts now. Thank you.

00:44:29:04 - 00:45:02:05

Sirs. Madam. Good afternoon. My name is Richard Jeffcoat. I live in Littleton and have done so for about 35 years. I oppose the proposed Lime Dam project and refer you to comments in my initial written response. Today I shall comment on the unsuitability of the street Littleton for use by construction traffic. The street passes through the heart of Gritstone Village and we have a traffic problem. Much of the village was laid out back in the early to mid 1800s as an estate village.

00:45:02:11 - 00:45:36:25

The roadways within the village were built to serve the modest needs of the community and local traffic, predominantly horse drawn in that era. Not much about the size of the roads or the village layout has changed since then. Residents of numerous houses adjoining to or fronting the street, including mine, have no off street parking available to them. We all park on the street. Take into account home delivery, grocers, vans, visitors cars, parcel delivery vans, deliveries to the pub, pub visitors, people attending the church.

00:45:36:27 - 00:46:07:22

Oil tankers delivering heating oil bin lorries. Garden contractors with equipment, trailers etc.. Street parking is integral to village life. Vehicles parked lawfully on the street reduce the available width of the roadway for use by other vehicles. In effect, this makes lengthy sections of the street. Single track. I have witnessed chaotic scenes on the street, particularly bad when traffic using satnav is unofficially diverted from the M4.

00:46:08:02 - 00:46:41:18

Vehicles coming from opposing directions attempting to pass through gritstone are obstructed by parked vehicles. Vehicles mount the kerbs at the side of the street, drive along the pavements and dash for a gap in an effort to get through. One day a car drove at me on the pavement. My wife and I have had two cars written off, both parked lawfully on the street, were hit by a lorry in separate hit and run incidents. Our cars have been scratched or dented through impact from other vehicles.

00:46:42:14 - 00:47:20:10

I am concerned for emergency vehicles, police ambulances and fire engines seeking to make their way through or attend a situation within the village, unhindered by traffic on the street and congestion. The street is designated as an access to the proposed cable route and contractors compound on the east side of Middleton Village. Specifically, an abnormal indivisible load cable route corridor. The situation with the street and the traffic problem we have is bad enough as it is, without being exacerbated by additional and abnormal traffic generated by the project.

00:47:20:18 - 00:47:30:09

Adverse impacts from such a difficult additional traffic would be beyond mitigation. Thank you. I hope my submission will be of assistance to you.

00:47:32:15 - 00:47:33:00

Thank you.

00:47:33:18 - 00:47:37:29

Thank you. Now turn to Laurence Copeland. Your three minutes starts now.

00:47:38:12 - 00:47:40:24

Good afternoon. I am Laurence Copeland and.

00:47:40:26 - 00:48:12:06

I'm speaking on behalf of Gretchen, 17, and Leigh Dale and the Village Hall Charity. I am a trustee of said charity. I would like to provide more detail to our written submission, where we registered our objection to the proposed lying down project. The proposed cable route will pass the eastern edge of Littleton. According to the Outline Construction Traffic Management Plan, there will be two access points. Reference 101 and 102, plus the construction compound leading off from access point 102.

00:48:12:24 - 00:48:45:08

The village hall is 75m from these access points. Our children's playground is 36m away. Our main hall, where recreational classes are held, is 16m from the road leading to these entrances. The children's playground is just the other side of the wall. The traffic management plan states accesses along the cable route will generate the following trips per day. HGV for deliveries eight movements per access. LGV for deliveries eight movements per access.

00:48:45:18 - 00:49:16:14

Construction worker. Arrivals. Cars. Vans ten arrivals 20 movements. With two access points, there will be 32 movements of HGV, LGV plus 40 of cars and vans slowing down or speeding up as they pass our Holland playground each day. Timings of these traffic movements will be between 930 and 1630. This does not include the number of vehicles required to construct and decommission the compound. I couldn't find anything about that.

00:49:17:03 - 00:49:47:18

So why are these movements important to the village hall? The majority of our income comes from regular hire as running various wellbeing and physical activities e.g. yoga, Pilates, fit camp predominantly held between Monday to Friday, 930 to 1230 at the same time as these traffic movements, what was once a peaceful, relaxing environment will be ruined by the noise and pollution of the construction traffic as they slow down and speed up towards the access points.

00:49:48:07 - 00:50:04:24

Even getting to our facilities will be stressful as you negotiate the narrow road alongside these JVs. If attendees stop coming due to the noise and pollution, then we can't blame our hearers if they move elsewhere to save their businesses.

00:50:07:06 - 00:50:39:01

You may say that the construction is temporary. However, once people change their habits, it can be hard to lure them back. If we lose the income from our regular daytime hires, then our business model is broken. How can we maintain the hall for our evening or weekend hires? The family parties, children's parties, village social events. We are just one small part of a far bigger picture. However, we are concerned for our survival. So we felt we had to speak against this proposed development.

00:50:39:09 - 00:50:40:17

Thank you for listening.

00:50:43:09 - 00:50:48:06

Thank you. And now move on to Elizabeth Maxwell. Your three minute starts now.

00:50:48:22 - 00:51:19:20

Hello. My name is Claire Maxwell. I'm a retired GP from here in Chippenham, having looked after this town and the surrounding villages for the last 20 years. I also live in Alderton. I'm particularly concerned about the mental health of the local population, and the overwhelming demand that this will put on the local services. I note that in the response to the relevant representations by IGP in H.H. oh one, there are approximately 750 representations about mental health. I think this is very high.

00:51:21:08 - 00:51:52:14

We need to consider the reasons why people have moved to the countryside. It may be because they recognise their need for green space, the tranquility, the walking or cycling for their mental health. The IGP suggestion that maintaining old or making new permissive footpaths with 4.5m panels, often on only one side, or planting that will take 15 years to grow, will mitigate the loss of visual immunity. Green space and calm. Seems to me derisory.

00:51:53:12 - 00:52:32:16

This plan is actually five separate solar fields and with the other local planned and built solar fields nearby, such as Lavington, Leigh Delamere and Kington Saint Michael surrounding the villages and the footpaths, there's nowhere for people to turn. I think cumulative effect makes this plan different to other schemes that have been assessed. I'm concerned that the noise will also affect people's mental health. This is a profoundly quiet area. The noise will be alien and people will notice it in their homes and when out walking, the best will cause noise at night, particularly affecting Bradfield Manor.

00:52:32:28 - 00:53:11:00

There's good evidence that low grade noise can increase stress hormones and can be a factor in depression, anxiety and behavioural problems in children. Wiltshire Public Health has suggested following Suffolk County Council's Community Engagement and wellbeing guidance for climate and energy adaptive infrastructure policy. Assessing IGP against this, I feel there's been very little involvement or collaboration in developing the scheme. I can see no contact by Alan Green Party, the local mental health charities or to AWP, the mental health provider in the area.

00:53:11:19 - 00:53:47:09

IGP suggests that either they or a local panel of representatives will signpost members of the public to a list of existing services. There's no mention of increased demand or increased availability. My experience is that due to lack of availability, this will end up with the local GP. We know how busy

they already are. What are their options? Well, referring to social prescribers in the practice who may use green prescribing, this is prescribing nature and exercise useful in this circumstance.

00:53:48:12 - 00:53:55:29

Alternatively, GPS can refer to CBT or counselling already overrun services or medication, of course.

00:53:56:15 - 00:53:57:01

This isn't.

00:53:57:03 - 00:53:57:24

Just three.

00:53:57:26 - 00:53:58:11

Minutes.

00:53:58:13 - 00:54:02:26

This isn't just for the construction phase. This is for a lifetime for many.

00:54:10:07 - 00:54:18:09

Thank you. Could I ask you just to turn your microphone off, please? Thank you. I'm now going to come to Leslie Bennett. Your three minutes starts now.

00:54:18:17 - 00:54:20:09

Well, I'm different from everybody else.

00:54:20:11 - 00:54:22:19

I actually support this proposal.

00:54:23:21 - 00:54:56:24

I was a trustee of the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust for 12 years, as well as chair of Wiltshire Wildlife Community Energy. I know a bit about solar farms and how they interact. I've also been a councillor. I'm also lived in the area for 40 years, have walked with my children, my grandchildren and my dog across this whole area and driven millions of times and I understand it now. For the last year, we have been inundated with stop lime down posters and social media, which reduced the issues to a detective, a deceptive simplicity and that's what I want to address in this conversation.

00:54:56:26 - 00:55:07:17

I mean, I hadn't heard all these other arguments about mental health and so on. I want to talk about the publicity that we've been subjected to, which makes it very difficult for ordinary people who.

00:55:07:23 - 00:55:26:00

Sorry, Miss Bennett, can I pause you there? Can we pause the timer, please? I'm going to ask again, everybody. We have a we have a respectful process. Regardless of your views, your personal views. Everybody has a right to speak. So I'm going to ask people in the room to please be respectful of everybody's opinions and views on this project.

00:55:27:22 - 00:55:31:02

Thank you, Mr. Bennet. Sorry to interrupt you there. I felt I needed addressed.

00:55:31:04 - 00:55:32:23

So I wanted to continue.

00:55:32:25 - 00:55:33:10

Thank you.

00:55:33:12 - 00:55:35:08

Please restart the timer and continue.

00:55:35:20 - 00:56:10:10

So I wanted to address the issues that have been highlighted by the extensive line down posters and publicity Which have made anybody who thinks it's actually quite a good idea. Scared to speak out now. Last Friday on Facebook, they said the solar farm will span 18mi² across North Wiltshire and historic council villages, Cotswold villages, and it listed them 18mi². Actually, there will be only 2.9mi² of above ground development, plus a square mile of environmental mitigation land that they're proposing to develop.

00:56:10:12 - 00:56:41:20

The mitigation environmental mitigation will be new trees and hedges. There's also the passage to Melksham, the trench, which is 15 miles, which of course sounds as if it's an enormous amount and it is along a long trench, but it'll only be 1.7m it. Once it's completed, it will be covered over, just like our gas pipelines are covered over, just like our water mains are covered over and you won't even know it's there. The countryside will revert to what it was. They say it will be an interest.

00:56:41:22 - 00:57:12:24

I'm quoting from the posters in industrialization of the countryside and wildlife will be decimated. The facts are. But once it's completed, wildlife will benefit hugely. I know that from our solar arrays, from the Wiltshire wildlife. The soil will be rested. Biodiversity in nature will flourish, wild flowers will grow and birds, hares and hedgehogs will find homes under the arrays. Adjacent fields will benefit from the abundance of pollinators. Sheep can graze under the panels as they do on other local panels.

00:57:12:26 - 00:57:50:18

Local solar farms. They say the land will be sealed under glass and steel, but won't. The panels are above ground. That grass and plants can grow underneath. And as for this stuff about these mammoth panels, the only mammoth, only some of them are there. Sorry, only some of them are there and only some of the time, the very tall ones. Most of the day they will be down at about two metres. They are only going to be at four metres, Some of them for the early morning and late evening. I'm worried about the flooding that I've heard, but I am certain that it should be understood by other experts who will be looking at it all.

00:57:50:20 - 00:58:11:11

And there should be an outline construction management plan, which which understands all the potential flooding and deals with it. They say protect our heritage, save the Fosse Way. There will be no impact directly on the Fosse Way. It will continue exactly as it is. There will be they've removed in this subsequent plan. They've moved the panels further back.

00:58:11:13 - 00:58:32:15

Sorry, Miss Bennett, just to address that comment. Yes, there was a matter with the time when we asked the time to be restarted. Unfortunately, what happened was the timer was reset. That's what's happened with the timer. So the only way that I can ensure that Miss Bennett is getting her definite three minutes is to allow the timer to rerun, so I can only apologise for that.

00:58:32:17 - 00:58:33:10

Thank you.

00:58:33:24 - 00:58:37:14

It is only 30 more seconds. Miss Bennett, please, back to you.

00:58:37:16 - 00:59:06:26

Okay. This I could say lots more. They say they want to save Wiltshire. Well, the best way to save Wiltshire is to help it meet its national target for renewables, to combat climate change, and to help strengthen the grid for smaller panels on barns and warehouses locally, which won't be able to access it normally. Which the council will benefit from business rates that will be paid. You don't pay rates on your agricultural land. Probably about three quarters of a million a year. There's going to be a community fund, which again, hasn't been specified, but it's expected.

00:59:06:28 - 00:59:07:13

To fund that.

00:59:08:24 - 00:59:10:29

There are lots of local benefits.

00:59:11:19 - 00:59:31:24

Okay. We'll call it there. Thank you very much. Um, before we close for a ten minute break, I'm going to ask Mr. Sean McGee to please report to the case team. Um, so we'll stop for. We will adjourn for ten minutes, and we'll come back at about 14 minutes past. 25 minutes past. Thank you.