

Statement of Objection: Lime Down Solar Project

Speaker: Willa Gibb

Role: Local Resident and Great Britain Athlete

Good afternoon. Thank you for allowing me to speak today.

My name is Willa Gibb, and I am a [REDACTED] Sherston resident and a Great Britain athlete. My objection to the Lime Down Solar proposals is based on my direct, daily use of this landscape.

I am here to speak specifically about the footpaths, the public rights of way, and the bridleways that crisscross 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. For me, this isn't just about a leisurely Sunday stroll. These paths are my training ground and, therefore, my place of work.

I am 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 promise 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. They cannot restore the solitude.

Right now, I can run along these paths and feel immersed in a rural landscape. I can look out over 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 life span, 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. That is a generation of users who will lose their connection to this landscape.

This is what I meant when I said I am worried the footpaths may be "changed forever." It is the loss of the open, rural character that defines them as public

rights of way rather than simply public rights of passage.

Finally, I would 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. We are constantly being told to get outside, to exercise, 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 another (public health and access to nature).

In conclusion, my objection is not a NIMBY objection to green energy. 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.