

My name is Tony McAleavy. I am a historian and the author of a detailed study of Malmesbury Abbey in the Middle Ages. I wish to comment on the environmental submissions relating to landscape, archaeology and heritage. These submissions are flawed both in methodology and findings. The impact assessment is framed by the artificial construct of the 5 Limedown sub-sites. The applicant fails to conduct a holistic impact assessment based instead on consideration of the likely damage to the quality and integrity of the whole historic landscape of that part of Wiltshire that lies between Malmesbury and Chippenham. It is this distinctive, ancient and fragile rural environment that will be harmed massively by the intrusion of great swathes of solar panel. The area is above all agricultural in character and has been so for over 5000 years. The long barrows in Luckington are monuments built by those Neolithic farmers who introduced agriculture to north Wiltshire in around 3000 BC. This was the beginning of a remarkable story of an evolving agricultural landscape shaped and reshaped by subsequent generations of local people: Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, medieval and modern local people. It is the beautiful and productive landscape they created over 5 millennia that the Limedown project will catastrophically harm.

The level of heritage damage in covering farmland with solar panels cannot be measured simply by a calculation that there are no designated heritage assets within particular fields. There is a bigger picture. These are fields that were tended by the Bronze Age people who built round barrows at Foxley. These are fields that fed the Roman town at Easton Grey. At Cowage Farm there was a Saxon royal estate centre where produce from these fields was gathered and stored. Land in four of the five sites belonged to Malmesbury Abbey and was farmed by the monks for hundreds of years. The produce of these fields supported the religious and intellectual life of one of the most important monasteries in medieval England.

Much of the Battle of Sherston (1016) was fought across the Limedown A, B and C sites. The applicant's comments on the Battle are ill-informed when they state that this battle 'possibly' involved Cnut, king of Denmark. No serious medieval historian questions the fact that Cnut indisputably came to Sherston down the Fosse Way and was ambushed by Edmund Ironside leading to a major battle fought over two days across nearby fields.

To conclude. The Limedown proposals consider old buildings and monuments as if they were isolated islands of heritage and not part of a rich interconnected historic landscape. The proposed Limedown fields currently knit together this important landscape and constitute an essential part of the historic setting for the heritage assets. The solar panel intrusions will make a complex multi-layered landscape much less coherent and cohesive in heritage terms. In downplaying this issue the applicant completely fails to evaluate properly the highly damaging synergistic effect of the proposed changes.