Submission ID: SC41B19CB

As I was unable to attend the 21 April hearing due to ill health, I did not have the opportunity to present my various points to the Planning Inspector in person.
Please see attached the transcript of the speech.

SLD Stop Lime Down speech from 21 April 2026 hearing – as submitted 280426

Lime Down Solar Park - Offshore Gain at Local Cost

The proposed Lime Down Solar Park near Malmesbury is presented as a major contribution to the UK's clean energy transition.

However, the question is not simply what a project delivers nationally, but **whether the scale, location and impacts are acceptable to this rural and historic landscape** and **how its benefits and impacts are distributed locally**.

The developers, Island Green Power and investors, Macquarie Group, emphasise that Lime Down will generate enough electricity to power 115,000 homes.

This is a national equivalence figure, presented to suggest a **direct local benefit**.

In reality, the electricity generated here would be exported via Melksham into the **national grid network.** It will not supply Malmesbury and the surrounding villages. The benefit is therefore **nationwide, not local**.

… yet the **economic impacts are firmly local**.

This imbalance is reinforced in comparable projects:

At Sunnica Energy Farm, it was recognised that there would be **a degree of harm through loss of agricultural land and associated economic activity**.

At Mallard Pass Solar Farm, the long term nature of land use change was acknowledged as altering **rural economic patterns over several decades,** with associated implications.

At Gate Burton Energy Park, it was accepted that construction would lead to **temporary but meaningful disruption to local businesses and transport routes**.

These cases show recurring conclusions:

National infrastructure delivers national benefit, but with concentrated local cost.

For Malmesbury and the surrounding area, those costs would be focussed in 3 key sectors:

- **Agriculture & its supply chain**, through the long-term diversion of productive land, and reduced demand for contractors and suppliers
- **Tourism and hospitality**, through thousands of acres of panels, fences and infrastructure fundamentally changing the historic landscape, and altering the visitor perception of the visual and cultural character of one of England's oldest towns and surrounding countryside
- **Small rural businesses**, through disruption during construction, and shifting local economic patterns, resulting in less market activity, reduced turnover and decreased profitability

These are not theoretical risks, they are **recurring patterns** observed in large-scale solar developments.

IGP highlight **community benefit funding** as part of the local return. However they consistently fail to quantify what this actually means.

UK benchmarks of £1,000 per megawatt, show a project like Lime Down should provide:

> **£500,000 per year of local funding** to support community initiatives.

However, the funds are:

- **Voluntary**
- **Broadly distributed**
- **Not designed to compensate affected businesses or replace economic activity**

and, not proportionate to the scale of land use change and economic displacement, but a small, limited **indirect local benefit**, rather than a direct economic offset.

… and significantly, IGP do not detail how the funding will be monitored and by whom.

There are also **long-term stewardship** considerations:

Solar developments operate for 30 to 40 years, which constitutes a **long-term land use change**.

Ultimately land restoration is required. However, **financial guarantees, such as secured escrow accounts or fully funded decommissioning bonds, have not been mentioned by Macquarie or IGP**.

How will restoration be delivered in practice, across changing future ownership structures over several decades.

Finally, there are many operational considerations:.

The BESS battery storage located in close proximity to people's homes introduces **unacceptable public safety and security risks**, including **fire risk management and site protection measures**, which require significantly different risk mitigation strategies from the existing agricultural use.

Conclusion

The evidence from comparable projects clearly indicates:

- The **benefits of large-scale solar are national and strategic**
- The **economic impacts are local and sector-specific**
- Community funding provides **limited, indirect and non-binding mitigation**

- Long-term land use change creates **ongoing uncertainty, with no guarantee of necessary financial resources for reinstatement**

For Malmesbury and North Wiltshire, this is not simply an energy project.

It is a long term **reallocation of land, economic activity, and risk…** from a local rural economy in a historic landscape to a national energy system, supported by global investment with significant offshore financial returns.
