

Submission to the Planning Inspectorate with reference to the application by Meridian Solar

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This long hot summer has led to comments and sound bites from politicians and the media about the energy transition which have typically been along the lines of; because of climate change we need to urgently “go further and faster” and “double down” on the introduction of renewable energy infrastructure. These knee jerk reactions all reinforce a false and unscientific narrative that as a nation, with urgent action we can have a significant impact on the warming climate.

I am not a climate change denier, we can all see first hand the effects but what is seldom (never?) pointed out is that the UK produces less than 1% of global carbon dioxide emissions. If we could reduce that to zero tomorrow then our contribution to the target of holding the temperature rise to 2 deg. C would be 0.02 deg. C (two hundreds of a degree C) an insignificant and hard to measure effect. This is the ceiling, the maximum that we as a nation can achieve, we don't have a silver bullet the closer we get to zero the harder and more expensive the process becomes.

This is not an argument for doing nothing but we must be aware of our limitations and proceed on a rational and consider basis not succumb to these knee jerk reactions that accelerate the wrong solutions, for example large scale solar installations on high quality productive farmland.

I am not against the use of solar panels (I have them on my own house) but they need to be in the correct places which are, domestic and business roofs, over car parks, on warehouses, brownfield and industrial sites. When combined with battery storage they transform customers electricity consumption from the grid, significantly reducing it with corresponding cost savings. This self generation and storage reduces demand on the grid and does not incur the transmission losses associated with large scale solar installations. The technology now exists and is in use in other countries around the world, to combine all of this local generation and storage into Virtual Power Plants (VPP's) excess power generated locally is used locally. This together with demand side flexibility is the engineering solution to the transition in the electricity sector, negating the need for large scale solar installations on high quality farmland.

This requires a change of thinking and approach, it would not only benefit consumers directly but also provides long term skilled job in all areas of the country.

NESO are in the process of a first of its kind nationwide study of how much energy is required and where that demand is located, they are scheduled to issue this report in late 2027, to date electricity infrastructure has not been introduced as part of a structured overall plan but done on an ad-hoc basis, the projects under consideration now are in this category.

It is worth pausing what we are doing now until that study has concluded and in the meantime reviewing the policies and direction of travel.

Urgent action in building new electricity infrastructure may lead to a short to medium term spike in carbon dioxide in the atmosphere through the excessive production, transport and installation of the equipment making the climate situation worse. It's similar to the situation that arises when there is speculation about a possible fuel shortage, which results in panic buying and everyone running around with a full tank.

Installation of solar on domestic and business roofs, car parks, on warehouses, brownfield and industrial sites would not be opposed by the public as it is seen as the common sense approach, in contrast to these large scale solar installations on high quality productive farmland which require this NSIP planning process and are subject to opposition in the vast majority of cases.

If we were to go down the alternative route we could be quietly and effectively be getting on with the electricity transition with full public support.

Due to the small effect we can have as a nation on global warming and climate change we do have time to pause and review.