SUBMISSION BY MERIDIAN ACTION GROUP

REGISTRATION NUMBER FC94001AB

SUBJECT Meridian's Skills, Supply Chain and Employment Plan

1.0
MAG believe that there are significant flaws in Meridian's skills, supply chain and employment plan.

The study area has been set as a 60-minute drive time from the scheme. This includes an area way beyond the boundaries of South Holland.
Within the 60-minute drive time area are Peterborough, Huntingdon, Corby, Kettering, Cambridge, Lincoln and King's Lynn.

This overarching parameter brings into disrepute all the claims that follow for benefits to the local area.

2.0
What would be more pertinent would be a study area within the bounds of South Holland if we are to be convinced about the economic benefits to areas more local to the scheme.
The 60-minute drive time study area means much of the economic benefits felt by the 855 FTE staff per day will be taken out of the scheme locality and the South Holland area.
In fact the picture worsens when Meridian concedes that 60 per cent of staff would reside outside the study area.

Conversely Meridian can and does give figures for South Holland alone - making the point that the site is within the South Holland District Council administrative boundary, and giving figures for South Holland's economic activity rate, level 4 degree qualification and levels of deprivation.

It seems as though the wider travel-to-work area has been deliberately chosen to inflate the employment benefits. There is no accurate estimation of new employment for the immediate area, even though other figures have been boiled down to be applicable to only South Holland; so it can be done.

In this latest version of the Plan, Under the headings of "opportunities" many "could, likelies, considers" have belatedly been changed to "will". Opportunity 3 STEM education and careers must be changed to say this WILL target named schools and colleges in South Holland.

3.0
Reference to using a community benefit fund for education and skills remains so woolly as to be worthless. In any event the Community fund is not covered by the DOC so is not binding.

4.0
Meridian "will investigate" measures to promote take up of jobs by local people. This sentence needs to drop the word "investigate" and must define "local" - is this the 60-minute drive time study area (so not really local) or just South Holland? The same applies to "local businesses" and "local partners" under opportunity 6; define local.

Meridian persists in its updated document that not one single FTE job is currently associated with 1,067ha of what they themselves term "predominantly agricultural land". This assumption is ridiculous.

A quick search reveals trusted Government figures for FTEs associated with this volume of farmland and the additional FTEs generated down the line by those employed to process the grown produce.
Four to ten FTE directly, 400 to 675 FTE for potatoes, carrots, onions, brassicas -

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs GOV.UK Standard Labour Requirements).
Gross value added to the 60-minute travel area is set at £8.9 million per annum, but there is no break down to illustrate how much would be added to the South Holland area or, even more pertinent, the scheme impact area.
However, Lincolnshire County Council, says taking the land out of agricultural production will cost the local economy £80 million over the 40 years, and the negative impact on the local economy will be £57 million to £76 million.

Para. 2.2.13: "a gross number of 10 permanent jobs generated by the scheme; 2.2.14: "there are no workers who are reliant on the farmland for full time employment".

These are carefully chosen words to give the impression that, so far as taking the land out of agricultural production, there is no negative impact on employment. This abandons the previous adherence to FTE.

This false interpretation serves to inflate the claimed positive impact for future employment.
The claim that gross ten permanent jobs and a net gain of 11 is nonsensical. Surely the logic here points to the current employment for managing more than a thousand hectares of farmland at minus one!

Can we have clear clarification about where business rates collected for this scheme go - the annual amount to be paid and whether all or some of it is retained and used locally and if so, how much?

Submitted on behalf of the MERIDIAN ACTION GROUP (MAG)
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Note: AI was not used in writing this submission