Submission ID: SB874982E

The Droves Solar Fam
Representation Regarding Public Rights of Way, Mental Wellbeing, Tranquillity and Recreational Amenity
I am a regular user of the rural roads and Public Rights of Way within and around the proposed Droves Solar Farm site. I use these routes frequently for running and exercise, which forms an important part of maintaining my mental wellbeing. My concern is not limited to whether routes technically remain open. Rather, it relates to whether the character and experience of using these routes will be fundamentally altered by the proposed development.
The Environmental Statement acknowledges that access to Public Rights of Way and open space has implications for physical activity, wellbeing and human health. I believe insufficient weight has been given to the lived experience of those who use this landscape regularly for recreation, stress management and mental wellbeing.
The value of these routes currently derives from several characteristics:
• Open rural views across the landscape.
• A sense of space and freedom from enclosure.
• Relative tranquillity and low levels of mechanical noise.
• Opportunities to experience wildlife and seasonal landscape change.
• The ability to exercise in a predominantly agricultural rather than industrial environment.
Although routes may remain physically accessible, the introduction of extensive security fencing, battery storage infrastructure, inverter stations, transformers and associated equipment would materially change the experience of using these routes.
I am particularly concerned about:
• The cumulative visual effect of long sections of security fencing.
• Increased perception of enclosure along running and walking routes.
• Loss of tranquillity.
• Continuous operational noise from BESS infrastructure, inverters, transformers and cooling equipment.
• Changes to wildlife movement and landscape character.
• The cumulative impact of industrial infrastructure across a wide rural area.
The assessment appears to place emphasis on whether Public Rights of Way remain open. However, there is an important distinction between retaining access and retaining the recreational, psychological and wellbeing benefits currently associated with that access.
A route that remains legally open but becomes dominated by security fencing, energy infrastructure and operational noise may no longer provide the same wellbeing benefits to users.
I therefore request that the Examining Authority gives careful consideration to:
The effect of operational noise on users of Public Rights of Way and rural roads, not solely residential receptors.
The cumulative impact of fencing, visual enclosure, noise and industrialisation of the landscape on recreational users.
The effect on tranquillity and perceived rural character.
The extent to which the human health assessment has adequately considered mental wellbeing impacts on regular users of the landscape.
Whether additional mitigation measures could be required, including increased stand-off distances from Public Rights of Way, enhanced screening design, quieter equipment specifications and protection of open landscape views.
In my view, the assessment should consider not only whether access remains available, but whether the quality and wellbeing value of that access is substantially diminished.
Mental health and access to open land
A common concern with large solar developments is the change from open-access landscapes to areas with fencing, restricted routes, and managed access corridors. Research in environmental psychology generally finds that access to open countryside, walking routes, and visual connection with nature can contribute positively to mental wellbeing. Where public rights of way are diverted, narrowed, or visually enclosed by fencing, some residents report reduced landscape enjoyment and a perception of exclusion.
Loss or diversion of existing walking routes.
Whether replacement routes remain attractive and safe.
Visual impacts of fencing and security infrastructure.
Effects on recreational access and wellbeing.
Potential fragmentation of the wider landscape. (The Droves Solar Farm)
Wildlife corridors versus human corridors
The Solar development propose wildlife corridors around and between panel arrays. These can improve habitat connectivity for smaller mammals, birds, insects, and some protected species.
However, wildlife corridors and human access corridors do not always function well together:
Frequent human use can discourage some wildlife species.
Narrow fenced corridors can concentrate both wildlife and people into the same routes.
Animals may use maintenance tracks and rights of way as movement corridors.
Security fencing can alter natural movement patterns, particularly for larger mammals such as deer.
The key ecological question is not simply whether corridors exist, but whether they are wide enough, connected enough, and managed appropriately for the target species.
Deer–human interactions and health & safety
Where deer populations are present, fencing and corridor design can unintentionally create conflict points.
Potential risks include:
Deer becoming trapped between security fences and roads.
Increased deer crossings at limited access points.
Vehicle collisions if movement routes are altered.
Stress and injury to deer if escape routes are restricted.
Increased contact between people, dogs, horses and wildlife on shared paths.
The issue is particularly important if large areas of agricultural land are enclosed because deer may continue to use

historical movement routes that existed before development.
BESS thermal runaway and water use
The Droves documents explain that current design assumptions follow NFPA 855 and National Fire Chiefs Council guidance. The strategy is generally not to flood the burning battery container itself but to cool adjacent containers to prevent fire spread. The site proposes water supplies capable of providing 1,900 litres per minute for two hours. (The Droves Solar Farm)
For the flow rate involved:
$1900\times120=228000\ \mathrm{L}=228\ \mathrm{m^3}$
That equals approximately 228,000 litres of water over two hours. (The Droves Solar Farm)
Environmental effects if firefighting water becomes polluted
The environmental risk depends on whether the containment systems work as intended.
Potential contaminants from lithium-ion battery fires can include:
Heavy metals.
Electrolyte breakdown products.
Acidic compounds.
Fluorinated compounds including hydrogen fluoride.
Suspended combustion residues. (SOCOTEC UK)
If contaminated water escaped into surrounding land or drainage systems, possible effects could include:
Soil contamination.
Harm to aquatic habitats.
Groundwater pollution.
Damage to farmland productivity.
Toxicity to wildlife using ponds, ditches, or wetland habitats.
The Droves documentation states that firefighting runoff would be captured in dedicated containment systems or SuDS basins, with penstocks used to isolate the water until testing occurs. The documents state that water would then either be removed by tanker to a licensed facility or discharged only following assessment and agreement with the relevant regulator. (The Droves Solar Farm)
Questions that need to be answered.
What is the maximum volume of contaminated runoff that could be generated if more than one BESS container becomes involved?
How long can containment systems remain isolated during prolonged incidents?
What contaminants were assumed in the pollution modelling?
What groundwater vulnerability assessment has been undertaken for the site?
How close are containment structures to sensitive aquifers, drainage ditches, and watercourses?
How will deer and other large mammals move through the site after fencing is installed?
Have cumulative effects of fencing on wildlife movement and public access been assessed?
What monitoring is proposed to verify that wildlife corridors remain functional after construction?
How will emergency vehicles access the site if primary routes are blocked by a fire incident? (The Droves Solar Farm)
Has the applicant assessed the effect of operational BESS and inverter noise on users of Public Rights of Way, runners, walkers and cyclists, or has the assessment primarily focused on residential receptors?
11. Where exactly are the proposed mammal gates and hedgehog through-routes shown on the plans, what spacing will they have, and how will their effectiveness be monitored throughout the operational life of the project?
12. If wildlife corridors are concentrated around field margins and hedgerows, how will hedgehogs move between compartments where security fencing surrounds solar arrays and BESS infrastructure?
13. Please provide the following information
A plan showing every hedgehog/mammal gate location.
The dimensions of the openings.
The maximum distance between openings.
Details of monitoring after construction.
What remedial action will occur if monitoring shows hedgehogs are being excluded from parts of the site?