Planning Inspectorate
Arolygiaeth Gynllunio

Hearing Transcript

Project:	Whitestone Solar Farm
Hearing:	Open Floor Hearing 1 (OFH1) - Part 3
Date:	10 November 2026

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FULL TRANSCRIPT (with timecode)

00:00:04:27 - 00:00:19:04
Alright. Welcome back, everyone. It's five twenty five and time to resume. Next on my list, I understand mister Eastwood... Nicholas Eastwood would to like speak as an individual whenever you're ready. You've got three minutes. Thank you.

00:00:19:09 - 00:00:20:05
Thank you.

00:00:27:14 - 00:00:29:04
Sorry, computer's gone off again.

00:00:35:10 - 00:01:02:22
I'll do it from Connorsboro Runners, if that's okay. So that's a group that I started about a year and a half ago. It's a lot of runners. It includes about three hundred runners who run about Conyersburg Parks for the wellness and fitness and for the general well-being. So as part of that, we do do sort of routes throughout Conyersburg Parks, five k's and ten k's,

00:01:04:20 - 00:01:35:03
safe running away from the roads. It's a good environment. It's quite bad on the old buttocks because there's a lot of hills and slopes. So what you've got is you've got a lot of viewpoints of the castle, Saint Peter's Church. I mean, Peter's Church is older than the castle and you can see them both together from numerous points across Connysbrook Parks. The heritage is phenomenal. The views are phenomenal. The safety is phenomenal. It's just... It's great.

00:01:35:15 - 00:02:09:14
What does concern a lot of runners when I've spoke to them about it and have asked for their input, we're really concerned about EMF, electromagnetic fields. So at the moment, if you go for two fifty minute runs, maybe a ten k run once a week. At the moment, you're running in fresh air, you're running across Greenbelt, You've got open views between Clifton, Ravenfield, Hooton. It's a it's a place where you can actually be free.

00:02:10:08 - 00:02:51:27
But what concerns us is the electronic magnetic fields. We did send you a letter asking eight specific questions, which I'll not go into now. We'll leave those for you to answer because you've accepted them as part of a deadline one. But the electromagnetic fields are a real concern as to we'd never run for fifty minutes through substations and under electronic pylons. It just would never happen. You'd never go on them runs. What's the benefit for anybody? And then you look at government guidance on electromagnetic fields and it talks about child leukemia, Alzheimer's.

00:02:52:23 - 00:03:06:05

I'm not stating that Whitestone are gonna cause any of that by this development. However, it's a real concern for runners and it will just mean that nobody uses any of the bridle ways or footpaths to run.

00:03:09:02 - 00:03:23:23
And I think that's about it really. If could just mention EMF. There are nineties band called EMF and they had a big hit called Unbelievable. And if you pass this, that will be unbelievable.

00:03:28:21 - 00:03:36:18
Thank you, mister Eastwood. Thank you very much. Now on the list, we've got Erica Williamson, but I understand her sister speaking on her behalf.

00:03:54:22 - 00:04:03:02
Good afternoon. I'm Lee, Lee Sissons, and I'm speaking on behalf of my sister-in-law and our extended family.

00:04:04:17 - 00:04:06:22
We live on Hard Lane, Kivutan Park.

00:04:08:26 - 00:04:28:16
This... What I'm about to say is in addition to our relevant representations that we submitted, which really reiterates what everybody's been saying this afternoon, you know, the devastation it's caused to our lives for that to... The soul harm to be granted.

00:04:30:13 - 00:04:33:07
So in addition to the points we've already made,

00:04:35:17 - 00:04:51:10
the Whitestone work plans section two point three point one, pages twenty six and twenty eight, show the order limit running along significant section of Hard Lane, and it's called work... Clasters Work Area five.

00:04:53:20 - 00:05:30:23
The order limit was the full width of the road. It includes the grass verge, which is a large grass verge, and the public footpath. The streets and rights of way access plans, pages twenty six and twenty eight, show that the highway works, and there's permanent alterations along this road layout. This road's a very busy road. It's the main link between the villages of Hartle and Covington. It's used by children walking to school along the footpath. Horse riders, including my own children, ride their horses up the grass verge because it's such a dangerous road to ride your horses on.

00:05:30:25 - 00:05:41:27
It's the only link to the safe off road put... Footpaths, which are also going to be affected by Whitestone. The order limit comes right up to the boundary of our properties.

00:05:44:23 - 00:05:55:19
So we would like to know that we would be able to rely on being able to access our properties during the construction phase and after.

00:05:57:26 - 00:06:31:00
It's not simply a matter of convenience. We rely on this access every day to get to our homes, care for our animals, and manage our land. Emergency access is also a significant concern. My eighty two year old mother lives with us, and so it's essential that emergency service can reach our property at all times without delay. We're therefore asking the applicant to provide clear and binding commitments that safe, uninterrupted access to our home and fields are maintained twenty four hours a day, seven days a week, and how can this be granted...

00:06:31:02 - 00:06:39:12
Guaranteed? We've also concerns regarding the proposed removal of part of the hedgerow that forms the boundary of our field.

00:06:41:10 - 00:07:14:11
The applicant's outlined construction traffic management plan, AS eleven, section five point one two point one, page eighty nine, identify... Identifies an indicative hedgerow removal visibility display. However, despite the fact that this hedge forms part of our field boundary in which we keep livestock, we have received no con... Communication, consultation, or explanation regarding this proposed removal. This hedgerow is an established feature of our land and forms part of the rural character of Hard Lane.

00:07:14:25 - 00:07:37:28
It's therefore deeply concerning that we have discovered this proposal through planning documents rather than through direct engagement with those affected. We would like the applicant to clarify whether this hedgerow will be removed and why is it necessary, what mitigation or replacement planting is proposed, and why affected landowners have not been consulted about the works directly impacting their property.

00:07:40:00 - 00:07:41:10
Thank you for listening.

00:07:42:16 - 00:07:43:10
Thank you.

00:07:49:25 - 00:07:58:16
Thank you very much. Next, we've got Angela Eastwood. don't know I whether a microphone can be... Are you happy to come up and be filmed, do you want

00:07:58:18 - 00:08:00:09
to sit to one side? Okay.

00:08:08:17 - 00:08:47:17
Hello. I'm Angela Eastwood. I live in Thursby, which is on the western boundary of Whitestone one. Today, I'm gonna speak about Conyersborough Parks. This is where I live. It's where I know, and it's where Whitestone believe that Whitestone One will be appropriately located. I'd like to talk about my house and my home, my family home. We specifically bought it for equestrian facilities and direct

access to three bridalways. I'm an experienced horse rider and a horse owner, and throughout consultation, I have engaged with Whitestone representatives, and I've repeatedly warned Whitestone about the dangers that this scheme poses to horse riders.

00:08:48:06 - 00:09:18:14
At Whitestone's request, I proposed alternate bridle ways. I warned about placing a substation beside a bridalway. I requested a personal safe riding area to enable me to safely exercise my horses throughout construction. I raised the wrists, I offered solutions, and I was ex... Ignored. I received no answers. I'll submit to yourselves supporting evidence to which will substantiate my claims. Now I'd like you to consider Whitestone's visual assessment.

00:09:18:26 - 00:09:57:20
Its own environmental statement identifies significant adverse effects at viewpoint seven and thirteen, yet viewpoint eleven assesses Fursby residents as not significant. Viewpoint eleven, I'd also ask you to note, is incorrectly labeled as being on footpath three. I have confirmed its coordinates fall directly on bridleway thirteen. This document, I'd ask you to note, has been authored, reviewed, and approved. How did such errors survive those checks? Whitestone claims viewpoint eleven represents the views of Fursby's residents.

00:09:58:04 - 00:10:29:18
Look on a map. Our homes face different directions. They have different outlooks. Whitestone actually acknowledged our home had a different aspect and offered to visit. They gave us two days notice to visit our house. I was working. I offered alternate dates, and Whitestone refused to visit. What I'd like to know is what assessment replaced that visit, where is the evidence supporting its conclusions about my home. I'd also ask you to note that my home is in a peaceful rural setting.

00:10:30:03 - 00:11:03:12
However, Whitestone's noise assessments actually liken it to one... A house that's actually by a busy main road. I'm gonna challenge aspects of the assessment, the noise assessment, and I'm gonna submit evidence to challenge the reliability of the noise assessment and subsequent baselines that's been produced. I'm also going to challenge and submit evidence about the assessment of common lane, Lidget Lane, and Bramley Lane as I believe these baselines are flawed. I've requested and I'm awaiting the traffic survey dates and supporting records.

00:11:03:19 - 00:11:27:03
And once received, I will submit evidence to challenge the baseline. I'd ask, why should the examining authority accept conclusions before the underlying evidence has been verified? One final note, or maybe they're not the final, but Thursby Lane is our only lawful vehicle access to our hamlet. It's also bridal way number two. Whitestone seek permanent new rights over it.

00:11:28:22 - 00:12:05:29
When... And when would the detailed construction traffic and rights away arrangements be approved? After consent. Yes. After consent. This is the only lawful access to my house, but I'm not significant enough to know about their plans before this scheme is granted. Whitestone are asking you to accept its assessments. I am asking you as a planning examining authority to scrutinize the evidence behind

them. And if Whitestone cannot demonstrate that Whitestone One is acceptable, I'm asking you, the examining authority, to recommend its removal from the development consent order.

00:12:06:16 - 00:12:25:04
There were ten thousand four hundred and nine responses to Whitestone's statutory consultation, and I believe due to that amount of responses and the relevant relevant representations, this is the level of public scrutiny that this put... This proposal deserves. Thank you very much for listening to me.

00:12:27:08 - 00:12:29:01
Thank you very much.

00:12:31:01 - 00:12:34:09
Thank you. Next on the list, we've got Matthew Clay.

00:12:53:07 - 00:12:57:26
Oh, can you just pop your microphone on, please? If you just press the button. Thank you very much.

00:13:00:01 - 00:13:30:09
Good afternoon. My name is Matthew Clay. I'm representing myself today. Thank you for letting me speak. I'm a resident of Harthill affected by Whitestone three, and I strongly object to the proposed solar farm because its significant and lasting effects on our village and the surrounding countryside. My wife and I moved to Harthill because of its rural character, its community, and importantly, the beautiful countryside on our doorstep. The proposed development threatens to fundamentally change that.

00:13:30:13 - 00:14:02:05
I have three particular concerns. Point one, Whitestone's representative viewpoint assessment does not accurately assess the impact on Hart Hill. Viewpoint forty eight is classified as a medium value view. I strongly disagree. As you emerge from the narrow hedgerow lined footpath from the village, you will see an expansive panorama of beautiful open countryside, fields, and Kiviton pit stop. It is enjoyed daily by dog walkers, cyclists, horse riders, runners, and families. In the morning, many children walk to school this way.

00:14:02:08 - 00:14:41:18
In the summer, the sunsets across these fields are spectacular. I walk my dog here almost every day. It brings calmness to our family life, and it is exactly the sorts of countryside that makes Harthill so special. To describe this as a medium value view demonstrates just how disconnected the assessment is from the experience of those who actually use it. Viewpoint forty nine is similarly underestimated. Harthill Reservoir is an area of phenomenal beauty. Whitestone did not accurately assess this area. I'm concerned by Whitestone's statements in the viewpoint assessment that there would be views of solar panels west from gaps through the trees along the public right away on the western side of Harthill Reservoir.

00:14:42:00 - 00:15:16:18
This implies the western path, the view would be somewhat shielded by trees. To be clear, the tree line between the western public right away and the development is very thin with substantial gaps of many

meters between trees and panels right up to the boundary. It will not screen the panels in any way. Both these views have been inaccurately assessed. Point two, important viewpoints have not been considered. Fir Hill, the highest point of Rotherham, is a significant local landmark with a trick point, and yet visual impact has not been assessed by Whitestone.

00:15:16:25 - 00:15:50:16
Likewise, there appears to have been no proper consideration of the impact on properties along Whitestone Drive. From this street, we will see the three point eight meter high panels and an elevated position and will be clearly visible from our own home and from our living room window. These are highly affected areas which have not been assessed. Point three, what this means for Harthill as a village. Harthill is a village with much loved identity. We have many local produce shops and pubs sitting within a historic conservation area and a thriving community.

00:15:50:26 - 00:16:27:16
Harthill is a village whose character, local economy, and community are intrinsically to connected its beautiful rural surroundings. The countryside is not simply the backdrop to Harthill. It's fundamentally to what makes this village so special. This development and its inaccurate assessments of the visual impacts would cause lasting harm to the identity of Harthill. I respectfully ask the inspector to recognize the inadequacies of the assessments, consider what this development means for a village like Harthill, and listen to the people who have come here today because they feel this development is intrusive and inappropriate.

00:16:27:20 - 00:16:31:23
Please could their planning inspector refuse this development. Thank you.

00:16:36:11 - 00:16:40:28
Thank you, Mr. Kay. Next on the list, we've got Mira Robinson.

00:16:56:14 - 00:17:26:26
I was gonna say good afternoon, but it's actually good evening. My name is Myra Robinson, and I'm speaking today on my own behalf. I have previously worked in intensive care and accident and emergency departments. During the COVID nineteen pandemic, I assisted on the high dependency and intensive care units of a local hospital. I have witnessed some incredibly distressing experiences, which have left me living with post traumatic stress disorder.

00:17:28:19 - 00:17:51:05
I am also currently being tested for a late diagnosis of autism with ADHD. For me, access to nature is not simply about enjoying a walk in the countryside. It is essential to maintaining my mental health and well-being. It gives me somewhere to escape, regulate my emotions, and find peace.

00:17:53:03 - 00:18:30:02
There is considerable scientific evidence supporting the benefits of spending time in nature. A study by Song and colleagues of two thousand eighteen found that people walking in forest environments experienced improvements in several negative mood states, including anxiety, depression, fatigue, and confusion. This was compared to those people who walked in urban environments. Research by

Franco and colleagues in two thousand seventeen also highlights how nature benefits us through all of our senses and not just what we see.

00:18:31:03 - 00:18:38:07
The sound of the birdsong, the flowing water, the rustling leaves can all help us relax.

00:18:39:28 - 00:18:52:25
The smells of trees and plants, the feeling of grass beneath our feet, natural sunlight, all contribute to our sensory experience and connection with the natural world.

00:18:54:28 - 00:19:09:02
Research by Wickes and colleagues of twenty twenty two also suggests that physical activity in natural environments can provide additional psychological benefits, including reductions in anxiety and fatigue.

00:19:10:18 - 00:19:29:10
This is particularly important to me because I regularly walk, cycle, and run through our local countryside. I also swim and kayak in our local reservoirs and canals. These are not simply hobbies. They are essential ways in which I look after my physical and mental health,

00:19:31:05 - 00:19:45:07
which brings me to my concerns about large industrial scale solar farms being built on our local countryside. I would like to make it clear that I recognize the importance of renewable energy and tackling climate change.

00:19:46:27 - 00:19:57:16
However, I strongly believe that we must consider where these developments are located and the impact they have on local communities and the natural environment.

00:19:59:01 - 00:20:22:00
We must consider the loss of open countryside, the impact on wildlife and biodiversity, the disruption to recreational routes, and importantly, the loss of access to green spaces that people depend upon for their physical and mental well-being. I'd now like you to consider a question.

00:20:24:06 - 00:20:47:20
You see a field, it's empty. It's just a piece of land to some people. But to somebody else, it's probably where they find peace, where they escape anxiety, where they manage trauma, and they simply enjoy being outdoors. Would you really take that away from us?

00:20:51:08 - 00:21:28:21
I have spent so much of my working life witnessing human suffering and trauma. I know firsthand how important it is to protect our mental health. And for me, our nature and our communities provide that opportunity. Our fields, trees, reservoirs, and canals are places where I can breathe, where I can move, where I can think, and where I can find calm. For all these reasons, I respectfully ask that these proposals are given the fullest scrutiny and that the planning permission for Whitestone Solar Farm is refused.

00:21:29:13 - 00:21:30:11
Thank you for listening.

00:21:35:04 - 00:21:37:12
Thank you very much. Thank you.

00:21:41:12 - 00:21:54:27
I do have Lee's sisters on the list next. I know you spoke for your sister. Were you planning to speak for yourself as well, or was it all in one? It's all done. Lovely. Thank you very much. Thank you. Then we've got Paul Bookland online then, please.

00:22:05:06 - 00:22:37:26
Hello? Yeah. Not through. Right. My name is Paul Buckland. The reason I'm speaking is that I was once the field officer for Doncaster district, and I was asked by the Connorsburgh group... Connorsburgh Parks group if I would assess the archaeological report prepared for White Plains. And my reaction is that it is inadequate.

00:22:38:08 - 00:22:54:00
What it does is fairly deliberately, I guess, ignores the miles of buried cable that go with all these sites. The depth of that cable is going to disturb archaeological deposits.

00:22:55:27 - 00:22:56:21
The

00:22:58:11 - 00:23:28:29
archaeological assessment done for Whitestones restrict... Is restricted entirely to the place where they're going to build the substation. So it is, to put it mildly, deliberately misleading. Now the same applies to the other Whitestone sites that once all those trenches have been cut, they will have effectively destroyed large areas of important archaeology.

00:23:29:06 - 00:24:05:16
Now going back to the Clifton Roman Villa on the park site, this is an interesting site because it's the only site we know of on the coal metres. All the other sites are up on the bank limestone and that various other site... Sites as you go south of it. What's he doing there? Well, part of the explanation is probably in the several iron smelting furnaces which turned up in the adjacent field, which, of course, were not part of the archaeological assessment for white stones.

00:24:06:03 - 00:24:37:22
The probability is that that villa is the residence of a procurator whose job it was to run those industries taking place across that area. In the medieval period, Conyersville Parks becomes a deer park, but it's a deer park which is extensively exploited largely for timber timber that is coffees wood for firing the pottery kilns at Fursby.

00:24:37:24 - 00:25:04:25

We do not know the limits of that site. In addition to all this, there are numerous bell pits which show on some recent photographs I was given and also on the nineteen forty eight photograph. There's perhaps a hundred of these along the edge of the area, which is proposed for solar panels. We have no idea of their depth. We have no idea how extensive underground

00:25:07:26 - 00:25:34:07
excuse me, an... Underground passages run out from those. They're working the Upton coal in the upper coal measures, but also Rudall, which is an important industry centered on Micklebrink, where there are also other remains which have never been plotted. There is a need for a very detailed study of that area. Fine.

00:25:36:21 - 00:25:37:17
Okay?

00:25:38:06 - 00:25:41:17
Yes. Thank you very much. Thank you, mister Brooklyn. That was very helpful.

00:25:44:23 - 00:25:45:20
Thank you.

00:25:45:29 - 00:25:46:16
Bye.

00:25:46:18 - 00:25:49:27
Next on the list, we've got Trevor Stanway.

00:26:22:13 - 00:26:48:18
Is that better? Thank you. My name is Trevor Stanway, and from nineteen fifty nine to nineteen ninety nine, I worked for the Central Electricity Generating Board and then on its privatization for the National Grid Company. I was a retiring engineer with engineering responsibility for the four hundred k v and two seven five k v primary plant, that switch gear transformers, overhead lines, and cables.

00:26:50:04 - 00:26:57:09
This was in an area that covered the east side of the country from Wizbeach in the south to the Scottish borders in the north.

00:27:00:05 - 00:27:24:22
The proposal location as first submitted was in this area because the applicant was aware that National Grid had identified that there was spare capacity on the Brinsworth two seven five k v substation. That spare capacity still exists and came about because of the demise of the steel production at both Tempura and Tinsley Park sites.

00:27:27:06 - 00:27:40:14
So I could say... So I suppose you could say that the principal reason for this project as first proposed no longer exists as the connection to the National Grid is now going to be made at four hundred k v.

00:27:42:01 - 00:28:02:22
The decision by National Grid to apply for and be granted planning permission for a gas insulated four hundred k v substation on a site between the existing four hundred k v and two seven five k v substation, Long Lane, further increases the footprint of industrialization of this valley.

00:28:04:15 - 00:28:35:06
It also means that the connection being the property between the proposed Whitestone two substation to Brinsworth will need to be at four hundred k v as also will the substation infrastructure on the Whitestone two site. Everything is bigger when you move to four hundred k v as the clearances required at this higher voltage are significantly larger than two seven five k v. Let me be clear.

00:28:35:28 - 00:28:42:21
I have no issues in moving to renewable energy, but I do have issues with how this has been achieved.

00:28:44:09 - 00:29:25:03
Covering over viable, arable land and open spaces is, I believe, criminal. When there are acres of existing homes and distribution buildings that have huge roof areas that could be covered with solar panels. The output from these panels could be used by those businesses with any surplus being exported into the local electricity infrastructure at no additional cost. This is exactly what currently happens with all surplus energy created from solar panels on the roofs of properties where homeowners have already invested in solar energy.

00:29:26:18 - 00:29:45:25
Every existing home and commercial stroke industrial property in the UK currently coax with the import of electricity into their property. So there would be no infrastructure issues in them returning power back into the network when their solar panels produce a surplus.

00:29:48:02 - 00:29:58:18
As many of proposed the locations are close to both the m one and the m eighteen motorways, there could be significant issues with reflective glare from the panels for motorists.

00:30:01:09 - 00:30:27:20
The only people who are going to benefit from this project are the shareholders in the company proposing this blot on our landscape. The question they should be asking themselves is, would we like this in our backyard? The most likely answer to that would I suggest being no. So why should we have it in ours? Thank you.

00:30:31:27 - 00:30:37:10
Thank you very much. Now we've got Christine Sandom, please.

00:30:58:01 - 00:31:45:08
Hello. Thanks to everyone that sort of sat here this afternoon and to yourselves. I appreciate I'm right at the end. I've got a bit of a bingo card of points because as I've start and listened this afternoon, everything that I was going to say has basically come up. The first point, very much, very quickly, I just feel this has been flawed from day one, the whole project. I think it's been very disrespectful of the area. When when you listen to what people have said, the the poor consultation, the lack of

consultation, the inadequate paperwork, the inadequate maps, the inadequate responses that we've had when we've asked questions.

00:31:45:25 - 00:32:19:11
It begs the question, if they can start like that, is it going to carry on like that? What if we get a few snags? What if we get a few things that don't work quite properly? Are we still going to get cover up? Are we still going to be dealing with inadequate operation? Because that's what I feel we've been dealt with so far. It's been totally inadequate. I live in Kiverton. I moved to Kiverton twenty seven years ago, and I...

00:32:19:13 - 00:32:51:26
My house borders the Kiverton... What is now the Kiverton Community Woodland. And every day, I walk up to that lovely bench with that lovely statement about the hard climb, and I sit and I look around. And I remember what that was like when it was still the pit tip, as it's still referred to. I spend a lot of time in mining communities all across South Yorkshire, and I work with miners.

00:32:52:08 - 00:33:24:24
Sheer joy they've had of seeing their industrial area turned into something very much different is testimony to what can be done. And I'm I'm gonna say only one more thing. In sixty years' time, when these solar panels are no longer valid, if they last that long, you're not gonna be able to build a community woodland over the top of them like you've been able to build a community woodland over a pit tip.

00:33:25:11 - 00:33:41:23
What are you gonna build over top of solar panels that are lifted? Where are they gonna go? Where's net zero in all of this glass and aluminum, all this wasted resource? Where's it gonna go? Thank you.

00:33:47:02 - 00:33:52:20
Thank you very much. We've now got Oliver Copard. Please.

00:34:22:11 - 00:34:56:11
On now? Yes. I'll try again. Thank you for thank you for the time and and to everybody here for spending so much time making their objections clear. My name is Oliver Coppell. I am the mayor of South Yorkshire. Therefore, I'm responsible for the communities that will be impacted in such a detrimental way by the Whitestone solar farm. I've made my position on the Whitestone solar farm clear to the public, and indeed, I'm keen to make that position clear with you today. Over the last year, I've held meetings here from people right across South Yorkshire and the impact that, that Whitestone solar scheme could have on their everyday lives.

00:34:56:21 - 00:35:27:19
I'm here today to put that position to the inspectors, both on the development itself and on the process, which people in South Yorkshire are being put through that you've just heard about from any number of witnesses already. Firstly, though, I'd like to thank everyone who's spoken here today on behalf of their village, above their town, on behalf of our community. They've given up a day of their time to speak out on behalf of their neighbors and their friends. And for that, I believe they deserve all of our

thanks. To be absolutely clear, as others have already said, I also support renewable energy wholeheartedly.

00:35:27:22 - 00:36:03:03
We need more clean power, greater energy security and faster progress towards net zero. That is the only answer to high bills and global instability. But supporting renewable energy does not mean backing every project in every location when that's the wrong decision for the community, and I believe, indeed, for the country. To put it simply, I believe the proposed white zone solar farm in South Yorkshire is too big and in the wrong place. It would cover fourteen hundred acres of South Yorkshire countryside, yet it offers so little benefit to local people, only eighteen million pounds over sixty years.

00:36:03:05 - 00:36:34:06
And to put that into some context, that is the same amount of money we've recently spent on a roundabout. Meanwhile, I believe there's a huge problem with the scheme, not least failures the in communication that I've been made aware of. And clearly, the cumulative impacts, I don't have the time to go into, on safety, transport, crime, environmental detriment, traffic, heritage, landscape, there are any number of problems. But perhaps the worst thing about the scheme is the decision has been taken over the heads of the people who will be most affected by it with far too little real engagement.

00:36:34:08 - 00:37:08:02
And I don't believe that can be right. As mayor, my argument for devolution has always been simple. Decisions should be made as close as possible to the communities they affect. And if a decision can be taken closer to home, it should be. That is agency. Yet when South Yorkshire faces one of the most significant planning decisions in a generation, the ends it process means that the final say rests not with the people of South Yorkshire, indeed, not with me as mayor, but in Whitehall. If mayors are trusted to lead on transport skills, housing, economic growth and regeneration, then we should also be trusted to determine whether infrastructure of this scale is right for our communities.

00:37:08:16 - 00:37:38:04
Devolve a target for clean energy, give us the capacity to deliver on it, and I would accept that challenge. But for a large developer to come into our community and tell us just to accept what we're given is not acceptable. Finally, I wish this decision could be taken with a local democratic mandate. That isn't the system we have. But in that spirit, I ask you, the inspectors, to make sure that people in South Yorkshire have every possible opportunity to hear about and engage with these proposals. They deserve to have their say in this process, and I will continue to use my voice to make sure that they do. Thank you very much.

00:37:41:16 - 00:37:43:08
Thank you very much. Thank you.

00:37:44:29 - 00:37:49:23
And next on the list, we've got Sharon Leahy. Leahy, I'm not sure how to pronounce it. Apologies.

00:38:03:16 - 00:38:35:27

Hello. My name is Sharon Lehi speaking on behalf of myself and family affected by compulsory acquisition for cable route c. This is my personal preamble to this examination. We are told by the applicant that these fields are merely silent baseline assumptions, yet to walk them with my grandchildren is to stand amidst the choir. There is a vibrant music in the grass, a symphony of hidden creatures singing a song as ancient and vital as that of earth itself.

00:38:36:13 - 00:39:12:14
I remain astonished that such a rich tapestry can be found in so small a footprint, and it is a music that we are morally bound to protect from being crushed under the heavy civil weight of speculative green pretense. The wild things of this earth do not recognize spatial order limits or corporate option agreements. They simply sing where the soil is left at peace. We hold this landscape in sacred trust for those who will walk it long after this examination has closed.

00:39:12:21 - 00:39:13:17
Thank you.

00:39:15:05 - 00:39:16:04
Thank you very much.

00:39:23:15 - 00:39:28:24
Thank you. I understand, mister Eastwood, do you still want to speak as an individual? Is that correct?

00:39:34:09 - 00:40:10:01
Yes. Thank you for this opportunity. My laptop's gone, but my phone's working. I'm out on the comfort zone. I've had to book today off this holiday, and let me tell you, it's probably the worst holiday I've ever had. I've spent much of this last year helping local people understand why it's done and submit their representations throughout Connysborough, Ravenfield, and Houghton. And I've witnessed something quite generally that troubles me. I've seen strong, intelligent, capable men and women, people who have known this landscape all their lives, reduced to tears.

00:40:11:02 - 00:40:15:26
Not because they're against renewable energy, but because they feel completely powerless.

00:40:18:08 - 00:40:43:20
There's only so many times you can tell a developer, that's wrong. I don't want it. I don't understand it, and then get no proper answer, and then be sent back around the system again before you become exhausted. Eventually, people stop trying. And it is not evidence of people and public accepting this scheme. It's evidence of people giving up, alienated from this process.

00:40:45:27 - 00:41:13:08
At the first public concert... Consultation event at the Ruddell Centre in Braithwell, November twenty twenty four, on the notice board outside, I saw a little a four consultation notice advertising the event. It was dwarfed in comparison to a much larger out of date poster advertising a village wheelbarrow race. This is a nationally significant infrastructure projects... Project, and this is what it is.

00:41:15:09 - 00:41:29:18

I couldn't help thinking that at least with the wheelbarrow race, everybody knew where the finishing line was. With Whitestone, the goalpost just seemed to continuously move and move and move, and we can't keep up. We can't keep pace.

00:41:33:08 - 00:42:00:18
Their own consultation report confirms that printed environmental statement cost seven hundred and fifty pound. And what is Whitestone's favorite figure headline, seven hundred and fifty seven hundred and fifty pounds seven hundred and fifty megawatts. Apparently, hundred and fifty is a popular number for Whitestone. Unfortunately, one of them was the price of understanding the other one.

00:42:03:03 - 00:42:17:11
Yet the same environmental report claims that no reasonable requests were ever made for an alternative format. Why wasn't my request seen as reasonable? I just don't get where this consultation comes from.

00:42:20:07 - 00:42:45:25
When he asked why it's doing about seven hundred and mech... Seven hundred and fifty megawatts, what it actually meant, they pointed me towards Cleve Hill Solar Park. But look, what I realized is that installed capacity is not electricity generate... Generated continuously. And so what will Whitestone actually generate, and how does that justify the consequences placed upon residents and people within our community?

00:42:48:15 - 00:43:16:17
I ask you to look beyond the headline figures and listen to our community. You can measure electricity in megawatts. You can't measure the value of the community in the same way. If the evidence cannot evidence cannot justify the damage to Connorsbury Parks, Harthill, Woodall, everywhere else, seems the entirety of South Yorkshire, then you need to recommend not accepting this and just getting short.

00:43:21:26 - 00:43:23:11
Thank you, mister Eastwood.

00:43:28:20 - 00:43:47:09
Thank you very much for your contributions. That brings us to the close of the list of speakers that I've got. Turning to the applicant, Mr. Walker, I'm conscious of the time. Was there anything you to want come back on before we close today in person? Or did you want to do it in writing? So I'll give you two minutes to get all the way up.

00:43:53:17 - 00:44:26:15
Thank you, Madam. Angus Walker I feel a bit strange sitting with my back to people who've contributed this afternoon. Angus Walker for the applicant. I would just like to express the applicant's gratitude for everyone coming today, putting their points very strongly but very calmly and effectively. I appreciate that you all oppose the project or most of it, much of it. But nevertheless, we do all of it, okay. Then nevertheless, we do appreciate the points you're making.

00:44:26:25 - 00:44:34:27

We will come back at deadline one addressing the points that are we're not already addressing in response to your relevant representations.

00:44:37:09 - 00:45:07:12
One plea I might make is although you're opposed to the project, we would still be interested to hear ways in which it could be made better if it does go ahead. That doesn't water down your opposition. You can still be opposed to the project in principle. But if it's going ahead, we would be interested to hear how it could be better. Finally, the name Whitestone is the origin of the village of Whiston.

00:45:07:14 - 00:45:19:02
That name means Whitestone and is roughly in the center of the project, and that's why it's named Whitestone. Thank you very much. That's all I have to say. I'd say that everyone can leave soon.

00:45:20:29 - 00:45:35:23
Thank you very much, Mr. Walker. So we've now come to the end of the time for this hearing. And a big thank you to everyone in attendance today who's taken the time to give your comments. They've been really helpful to us, and we're very grateful.

00:45:39:00 - 00:45:55:01
A recording of today's hearing will be placed on the planning inspector's website as soon as practical following the meeting. And yes, just to reiterate, we're grateful for your time and your input today. So it is now ten past six, and the hearing is now closed. Thank you very much.