

# **GREAT CASTERTON PARISH COUNCIL**

## **MALLARD PASS SOLAR FARM MEETING 7 APRIL**

I attended this well conducted meeting along with an audience of about 40, mainly from Essendine. I did not observe anyone from other Parish Councils (although I may have missed Ryhall). I was struck by the expertise of the subject exhibited by Essendine PC and the Action Group. The meeting was chaired by Alicia Kearns MP. A BBC camera team were also present.

These are my observations:

1. The recent scoping consultation by Canadian Solar, as it was called, was unofficial despite its 900 page report. It has concentrated on construction, environmental impacts and operational matters. It had ignored visual impact, tourism and much of the community concerns. The Planning Inspectorate has declared that this was not statutory and the proper one would have to be completed. It is expected the the Planning Inspectorate would not respond to the Statutory Report until Autumn next year.
2. I was struck by the sheer scale of this development which has been concentrated in a small area surrounding a village. Canadian Solar has stated that the electrical capacity will be 350 MW, enough to power 92,000 homes. This is an exaggeration as in England the sun shines only 20% of the time and the solar farm would only reach 350 MW on a clear day in Summer with a temperature of 24 degrees. In reality the solar farm is only 15% efficient and this reduces the capacity to 52.5 MW and 13,800 homes.
3. The site will contain a large number of batteries for electrical storage. These will be stored in shipping container size vessels which can take up to 100 batteries. The batteries are made of Lithium and are highly dangerous and prone to fire. A recent fire on one of these occurred in Liverpool last year and it took the Fire Brigade 30 hours to put it out and a follow up standby of 69 hours. The fire service in Rutland and Lincolnshire does not have that capacity. Another point is that the safety regulations for these things are out of date and need to be revised.
4. The value of the batteries to the developer is evident as they can receive and store electricity at cheap times in the day and then transfer it into the National grid at expensive times. In other words this is a vehicle for the trading of electricity.

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5. It was strongly emphasised that the value of solar panels is in an urban environment on the top of buildings, be they factories, schools, or homes. It is undesirable in large sites in the countryside, such as Mallard Pass, where it impacts on agricultural land. This is an important point which has been missed in the latest Government report.
6. Finally, Alicia Kearns pointed out that Canadian Solar is owned and financed by a Chinese company which is owned by two Chinese businessmen who are heavily associated with human rights violations in China. The panels are manufactured by slave labour. This is a thoroughly undesirable company to be investing in the UK, particularly, as thanks to COID and Ukraine the world has changed.

I was impressed by the expertise of the panel. But they have a difficult task ahead of them to persuade the Planning Inspectorate that this development is unsuitable for both this country and particularly Rutland. Much technical expertise will be needed as well as knowledge of the various regulations. The three Councils, Rutland, SKDC and Lincolnshire who will deliver the report to the Planning Inspectorate have a similar problem. We were told that the final decision on whether to go ahead will be a political one.

Mark Bush  
8th April 2022