

SPRINGTHORPE PARISH MEETING

REGARDING

TILLBRIDGE SOLAR LTD.

7.00PM, 1ST AUGUST 2022

Attendees:

Chair: Gilli Procter

Minutes: Tom Graham

Attendees:		
Claire Anyan	Mike Draine	Peter Martin
Michael Anyan	Dan Elkington	John Oaks
Lorraine Batty	Danielle Elkington	Julie Oaks
Tom Brumby	Jean Gelder	Gillian Procter
Annabel Cameron	Marian Graham	Heather Sault
Brian Cameron	Stephen Hall	Fiona Smith
Martin Caswell	John Hallam	Russ Smith
Ella Collins	Matt Hiddins	Peter Thompson
Vanda Colman	Peter Holmes	Matthew Winter
Gill Cowan	Rachel Holmes	Mike Winter
Mike Dewsbury	Martin Hopley	Neil Winter
Sue Dewsbury	Anna Leckey	Shirley Winter
Daphne Draine	Lynda Martin	Sue Winter
Claire Anyan	Mike Draine	Peter Martin
Michael Anyan	Dan Elkington	John Oaks
Lorraine Batty	Danielle Elkington	Julie Oaks

(Webmaster's Note: Apologies to any of the above if I spelt your name incorrectly or missed anyone from the handwritten list.)

An attendance register was circulated for all to complete.

Apologies: Steve and Wendy Gelder, Tracey Gertyen, Jane Johnson

The Chair introduced the meeting and said it was to be an opportunity for the Civic Parishioners of Springthorpe and Sturgate to review the facts about Tillbridge Solar Ltd, proposed solar 'farm', to be able to discuss it freely and formulate an opinion and a plan for coping with the proposed development. It was hoped the outcome would be a decision from the Parish about the way forward with these proposals. The land owners are Rochester Bridge Trust.

INTRODUCTION

The Chair continued that two solar 'farms' are proposed for the Hemswell Ward.

Cottam and West Burton solar 'Farms' providing energy for 324,000 houses, Tillbridge Solar 'Farm' providing energy for 200,000 houses.

Together they will be one of the largest in the country covering 11,000 acres and occupying land for the next 40 years. Imagine 1 mile wide strip of land from Springthorpe to South of Lincoln.

Arguments for the building of Solar 'farms' include the push for 'net zero' and the need for national energy security. The concerns are land being taken out of food production when the need is for more independence of food production. Much of the land is graded as 3a or 3b.

Because of the size of the whole development it is regarded as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project or NSIPs. Because this project is an NSIP, land could be compulsory purchased. Business Rates will go to West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) provided agreement is reached with Nottinghamshire where input to the grid occurs.

Solar Farm businesses should also provide funds for Community Benefit which have to be applied for through grants to benefit the whole Community.

Land owners would be compensated by statutory rates - this will inflate the value of land.

Tenants will also receive statutory compensation but will lost their business and home.

Planning application by Tillbridge Solar Ltd. is anticipated early 2023 and go live in 2027, earlier than the Cottam project. Public consultation meetings will occur.

Michael Anyan and Martin Caswell (tenant farmers affected) are likely to lose the whole or part of their farms under current proposals.

DISCUSSION

The meeting was opened up to the floor and Michael and Martin were invited to give their opinion about the Solar 'Farm'.

Charles Anyan said about three weeks prior to this meeting, an agent from TillBridge Solar Ltd. arrived at their farm and informed them of their intention to apply for planning permission for a solar 'farm' on the identified land. (a plan had been circulated to the meeting) extending from Belle Vue Farm across to Harpswell. This was the first they or anyone also knew about the proposals. Rochester Bridge Trust is likely to support the plans. Enhanced wilding would be proposed in certain areas - to get the proposals through the Planning Authorities. According to the Tillbridge Solar Ltd agent the land is unproductive and unviable but it is in fact much better than that being grade 3a to 3b. Sir Edward Leigh was said to be very against solar 'farms' and was supportive of the farmers. WLDC are also believed to be opposed to the plans.

Martin Caswell said 80% of his farm would be affected and four generations of farming lost.

The Chair said that Paul Howitt-Cowan Cllr. had indicated Corringham had no appetite to oppose any plans. Meetings are to be held in other parishes to discuss the proposals. Tillbridge Solar Ltd. will have two years to install the solar panels.

Comment was made about the quality of land and how it is graded. Land is graded 1 to 5 and the land in question is 3a or 3b.

The panels have to be or near as possible to the transformers which are at West Burton and there is poorer grade land much nearer. As stated this land is 3a to 3b and is much better and more productive than the planners say. The planners want land that is as close as possible, flat and will not flood. Sub-stations to store the electricity for up to 4 hours will be needed.

Discussions held around the pros and cons of solar 'farms'.

Proximity of airfields with reflection and glare from the panels.

Impact on health concerns as solar panels contain chemicals and at what percentage.

The panels are air cooled as opposed to water cooled and noise pollution from the fans could be an issue.

Heat given off the panels could be a fire risk.

Paul Batty said he had lectured on solar panels and any heat generated was dependant on the spacing between them.

Panels are made in China - they use lithium in the batteries which are mined by young boys.

It was commented that Tillbridge Solar Ltd. was formed on 27 May 2022 with an office in Mayfair, London. To date, the directors include two Spaniards and one who lives in America. One of the directors has 10 other directorships involving solar farms and all have a capitalization of £1 each. Concern was expressed over the validity of Tillbridge Solar Ltd. and was it a 'del boy' outfit. Planning has apparently been going on for 2 years.

Solar panels are a good form of green energy and saving the planet for our children and grandchildren.

It is hoped representatives of Tillbridge Solar Ltd. will come to talk to us.

Architectural digs should take place before any work commences.

Sir Edward Leigh lives in the County and should be interested in coming to talk to the Parish as is Jeff Summers; Cllr Keen to come.

11000 acres in total of lost food production with these developments - it was asked where the loss of production in Ukraine lies with this proposal.

West Burton power station is being revamped.

It was stated that 60% of our food is produced in the country and most of the land is 3b quality.

The Chair identified the problem of 'time line' - i.e. we need to know more about the process.

It was stated the development was lucrative for the farm owners - it was a matter of 'Energy v. Food.'

Martin Caswell said the various government departments appear not to know where they stand on solar panels.

The issue of expenses for visiting speakers was raised but it was felt none would seek payment.

Property values would be affected (-2 to 3%) and the character and atmosphere of Springthorpe and Sturgate would be adversely affected.

Individual farmers have been approached by Tillbridge Solar Ltd.

CONCLUSIONS/ACTIONS

The Chair is to approach our MP and Councillors with a view to them coming to any meetings.

It was suggested a working group be formed as one or two had been doing researching the proposals. To include Peter Martin and John Hallam.

Tillbridge Solar Ltd. to be invited to present the project to the villages.

There would be merit in talking to the other Parishes involved.

The meeting was closed at 8.10pm.