

**Response from the Campaign to Protect Rural England Nottinghamshire
to the West Burton solar energy development proposed by Island Green Power**

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Having analysed the proposal - in so far as this was possible given how little information Island Power have made available - we have concluded that it should not be developed further. We were guided in forming our view by the national CPRE approach to the development of solar energy.

The national CPRE approach to solar is as follows :

The generation and supply of low carbon energy will be core to achieving our goal of net zero carbon emissions by 2045 or earlier. This will require a transformation of our energy system over the next 20-30 years. The scale and immediacy of the threat to the climate and our countryside means that change is necessary now. The countryside will have a key part to play in delivering that change. This will bring with it benefits, but also challenges such as an increased amount of land being needed for renewable energy technologies.

The current model of renewable energy development has resulted in some poor outcomes for landscapes, the environment and rural communities. CPRE wants to change this and believes it is possible to achieve the net-zero transition, including the introduction of new solar and onshore wind developments, in harmony with our wider environmental and social objectives. To achieve this, however, the model of development and planning must be radically different.

This means taking a strategic planning approach to the development of renewable energy assets at national, sub-regional and local levels and ensuring that local communities are empowered to help shape their local energy response. CPRE will require that new onshore wind and solar developments minimize impacts on landscapes, tranquility and heritage, through decentralization and appropriately-scaled development; bring net benefits to wildlife; benefit the rural economy, form a cornerstone of local enterprise and jobs; and are supported or owned by local communities.

Renewable energy generation and climate change mitigation must also be maximized within urban areas and priority given to using previously developed land, in line with CPREs 'brownfield first' policy.

The West Burton proposal does not meet these criteria. The development

- would use good quality, productive agricultural land rather than a brownfield site
- follows the current centralized model of energy generation and distribution, which is not resilient or future proof (significant weather events or technical problems can lead to outages for a large number of people)
- has not been developed in conjunction with the local community and does not have the support of local people, who do not have a stake in it.

This is not only CPRE Nottinghamshire's judgment. The project also does not meet Island Power's own site selection criteria. These criteria are sadly no longer visible on the project website, but we understand they include that the site should be "low grade agricultural or former brownfield sites (landfills, quarries etc)". The West Burton site clearly does not meet this criterion.

The text in the 'phase one information event boards' made available as part of Island Green's consultation process contains the following statement :

"Our team has undertaken an extensive process of site selection to identify areas of land close by to the existing grid connection infrastructure. The use of several separate land parcels also reduces the impact on the local area compared to fewer larger sites. Our team has identified the proposed site areas as suitable for solar energy generation within appropriate distance to the agreed grid connection points. We considered a range of factors including:

- Their existing land use and quality
- The need to avoid existing environmental or heritage sites
- Other environmental issues such as minimising visual impact"

However, no information on the work undertaken has been provided, or at least not in a way which would make it easy to find. We would expect to be shown, among other materials,

- relevant expert assessments including a biodiversity analysis and a heritage assets assessment;
- detailed maps showing landscape features and current land use;
- modelling and visualisations of the likely landscape impact of the development;
- evidence to substantiate Island Power's claims regarding the electricity generation capacity and the job creation potential of the proposed development.

It is common practice to provide materials of this kind at an early stage of a planning proposal. The maps provided in the 'document library' are Ordnance Survey maps, which have the proposed sites and the broad cable corridors superimposed on them. We know from our own experience that given current technology it is now quite straightforward to superimpose other features such as landscape data onto these maps. It is therefore surprising that Island Power have not taken this comparatively not very labour-intensive opportunity to show the public the extensive work they claim to have undertaken. This is particularly surprising given their declared intention to engage with the community - it is unclear what they would like to engage with them about. The consultation questions include ones about which environmental issues the respondents to the consultation

consider important, but in one sense these questions are the wrong way round - those proposing this development should demonstrate that and how it meets environmental standards.