

NatPower
Level 8, Lily House
13 Hanover Square
London W1S 1HN

Reform UK, North Yorkshire
4 Bedern Bank
Ripon HG4 1PE

22nd November 2024

FTO: Bellmoor Consultation

Objection to Solar Farms & Battery Storage Units

Dear Sir,

As you are no doubt aware, Reform UK represents more than 58,000 voters across the North Yorkshire Council electoral boundary.

In our opinion, these fanatical 'eco-projects' and the obsession with Net Zero targets are ideologically led, not so dissimilar to Pacificism's world without war, or Communism's classless society. They are impractical, void of reality, and in the main, absent of all logic.

We, therefore, object strongly to the proposed battery storage facility at Bellmoor, and other such projects across North Yorkshire.

Indeed, it is the view of our supporters that central and local government policies to push ahead with industrial scale solar installations are not only naïve but are dangerously risking the nation's food security. The fact that 1.5 billion of taxpayer's money has been set aside by the Labour Government in July for 'green subsidies' is simply adding insult to injury.

Reform UK is not opposed to solar energy *per se*. We believe solar energy has a part to play in a balanced energy mix, particularly on structures such as residential rooftops or on multi-floor car parks. However, of all the renewable energy sources, solar power is the least efficient. Anyone who has spent more than five minutes in North Yorkshire (or anywhere in the UK, for that matter) knows that it's not exactly known for its endless sunshine. In fact, **Met Office** data shows that the UK averages only **1,493 hours of sunshine per year**—and that's being generous. To put this into perspective, **Spain** enjoys roughly **2,500 to 3,000 hours** of sunshine annually, yet even they struggle to make solar power a reliable staple of their energy grid.

Compare solar power (contributing 4% of the national grid's energy) to nuclear (contributing 15%), a single nuclear plant such as **Hinkley Point C**, can produce **3,200 MW** of power on a footprint of just **430 acres**. In contrast, a solar farm generating the same amount of energy would require over **130,000 acres**—nearly 300 times more land! If we start to go down the solar farm root now, we will never stop and hundreds of thousands of acres of agricultural land will be lost forever. This is a genuine food security risk – particularly given that the UK already imports over 45% of our food. North Yorkshire Council officials will be held to account for putting the rest of the country at such risk if you rubber stamp these proposals. The **National Farmers' Union (NFU)** has been particularly vocal in opposing solar farms on productive farmland, warning that this shift reduces the UK's food security.

Furthermore, according to **Solar Power Europe**, the efficiency of solar panels decreases by **20-25%** in cloudy or overcast conditions. North Yorkshire is indeed one of the least efficient locations in the world for solar energy.

I would also like bring to your attention the experiences Germany has had with solar power, particularly when obscene government subsidies are involved at taxpayer's expense (as is the case now in the UK). Germany suffered a 'Green Energy Disaster' (well documented by Forbes).

Herein, lies Reform UK's principal opposition to this solar farm madness. If a landowner wishes to put ugly, inefficient and expensive solar panels on his land at his own cost, in one sense 'so be it'. We believe in private enterprise, personal liberty and freedom. However, when the State intervenes with massive subsidies and significantly alters the price mechanism, shifting resources that were previously used efficiently to activities that are inefficient, then such scarce and valuable resources are wasted. As a society we all become poorer.

In Germany, this is exactly what happened, that will cost the German taxpayer around one trillion Euros by the end of the 2030s. The UK is heading in the same direction, and North Yorkshire is very much at the centre of this misguided ideological pursuit of Net Zero, at great cost to our residents.

We must stop this madness now.

None of this, however, is to say that solar energy should be abandoned entirely. There is a place for **small-scale solar**, such as rooftop panels, which can contribute to individual energy needs without swallowing up large amounts of land. But large-scale solar farms across North Yorkshire are a misguided solution in a country that is better suited to other forms of energy production, like **offshore wind**, **nuclear power**, and even **hydroelectric** projects.

Our Reform UK supporters are not against modernity, technology or green energy. We simply want a return of common sense in the UK's energy policies.

The position of our supporters, therefore, is clear:

- We reject outright, all solar farm (and related battery storage) proposals where taxpayer's subsidies are involved.
- To reject all other solar farm and battery proposals that have not provided satisfactory answers to residents' questions and concerns, many of which are set out below.

With specific reference to the Bellmoor project, please be so kind as to answer our supporter's key concerns, as follows:

General

- What financial incentives are being offered by the applicant?
- How much taxpayer money is involved in the proposal, in the form of government subsidies?
- How will the Bellmoor project benefit the community?
- Will it be possible to return the site back to agricultural quality land at the end of life and if so, who will bear the cost? Are these assessments supported by the farming community who seem to suggest that land that has not been productive for 40 years will not be readily available for agricultural use, possibly for a lifetime?
- Has a cost/benefit assessment been carried out for each location to establish the true cost per MW over the lifetime of the solar farm including taxpayer subsidies, replacement of degraded batteries, disposal of all equipment (including the cost of landfill) and returning the land to agricultural quality land.

General Risk Assessment

- Has a Risk Assessment been carried out? If so, please provide a hard copy.

- What is the potential for harm to human health in the event of an environmental incident and how would the population be warned/notified?
- Lithium is radioactive – how will the public and site employees be protected from the large number of lithium batteries required for each location? Exposure to Lithium can cause loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and abdominal pain. Lithium can cause headaches, muscle weakness, twitching, blurred vision, loss of coordination, tremors, confusion, seizures and coma.
- Have any emergency procedures been put in with local hospitals to deal with any lithium fire related incidents?

Environmental Risk Assessment

- Has an Environmental Impact Assessment been carried out for the location? If so, please provide a hard.
- Has any study on Lithium radioactive emissions (and land contamination) been carried out?
- Has land contamination in the event of lithium battery fire been considered?
- Has air contamination in the event of lithium battery fire been considered?
- How will the risk from off-gassing of batteries be mitigated and how will the capture and storage of said gas be managed, or do they just intend to release it to atmosphere?
- Will the operation of the site require 5G? If so, are there any 5G towers in the area?
- Has an assessment of the impact on local wildlife and farm animals been carried out for each location? If so, please provide a hard copy per site.
 - What will be the effects on wildlife?
 - What are the consequences for pollinators?
 - What will be the effects on grazing farm animals?

Fire Risk Assessment

- Has a Fire risk Assessment been carried out for the location? If so, please provide a hard copy.
 - We see day to day the risk of fire posed by industrial lithium batteries. Does the technology to extinguish a lithium battery fire exist? How would the fire service deal with such an event?
 - Is there suitable access for fire service vehicles in the event of a battery fire?
 - What is the minimum spacing distance between each battery in the event of a battery fire?
 - How will a battery explosion be contained?

Insurance

- Insurance at each location – is there any? If yes...
 - What does it cover?
 - Who does it protect?
 - Who bears the liability for any Incident?
 - Is there anything that is specifically written out?

End of Life Disposal

- End of life disposal – What arrangements have been put in place and who will bear the cost?
 - The specialist infrastructure to scrap and recycle solar panels is sadly is lacking and we are looking at a looming global environmental disaster. Solar panels also contain toxic substances and are often thrown away in landfills
 - The batteries used in BESS projects are also notoriously tricky to dispose of due to their toxic properties and the risk of fire hazards. It's generally unprofitable to recycle materials from recycled batteries.

I look forward to your prompt response.

Matthew Cooke

Interim Chairman

Reform UK Pilot Branch, Richmond and Northallerton

E: chair.richmondnorthalleton@reformuk.com

W: www.reformuknorthyorks.uk

