FILLINGHAM PARISH MEETING
Extra-ordinary Meeting
MINUTES
26 January 2023

ATTENDANCE

Present: Margaret O'Grady (Chair), Judith Russell (Clerk), Peter O'Grady (Vice Chair)
In Attendance: S. Deacon, Z. Rampley, T. Jois, P. Hepburn, J. Gidlow, P. Gidlow, A. Baldwin, N. Hall.
Apologies: N. Heather, C. Eastfield, W. Rose, G. Cargill, V. Cargill, A. Baldwin

1. WELCOME

The Vice Chair welcomed people to the meeting and took apologies.

2. NOTICE OF INTEREST

None Reported

3. Subject of Extra-Ordinary Meeting – Position on Proposed Solar Farms

Fillingham Parish Meeting attended was a meeting of Parishes, in conjunction with the 7000Acres action group, where a draft joint statement was produced, opposing the proposed solar developments.

It was agreed that the statement (Version 1) is accepted as a position of Fillingham Parish Meeting on 26th January 2023.

It was also agreed that the Parish will support this statement being used as the basis of a joint letter on behalf of Parishes and the 7000Acres action group to the Planning Inspector.

The motions were proposed by M. O'Grady and seconded by A. Baldwin, with unanimous agreement.

4. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Next parish meeting Monday 6 February at 7.30

Element		Statement:
1	We agree with the need to act on climate change	***We agree**:* • There is a climate emergency that calls for the urgent decarbonisation of our economy. • Solar is a proven technology, that can be deployed competitively, now.
2	We are concerned that the benefit the schemes can bring is limited	***The role solar can play in decarbonisation is very limited**:* • In the UK, solar panels produce on average around 11% of their rated output – and they *produce most of that power on sunny, summer days when we least need it. When demand is at its highest, on winter evenings, they produce nothing at all.* • To keep the lights on, something else must produce power when solar is not producing, so for much of the year, that means relying on alternative sources, e.g. which may be low carbon (e.g. wind, hydro, nuclear), but may as easily be fossil-based (e.g. gas, oil, diesel). • The proposed solar projects make no material attempt to match when power is produced to when it is needed. They take up a huge amount of space for the limited contribution they can make to the electricity system, and therefore represent an extremely inefficient use of land. ***Batteries don't solve the problem**:* • Batteries help, but they can only store a few hours of electricity; they are not capable of storing volumes of solar power from the summer to be used in the winter.
3	We are concerned that development on this scale will have serious adverse consequences	***Covering the countryside with solar panels has adverse consequences**:* • **Food & Farming:** Using arable land for solar will displace the production of existing crops, food, animal feed and energy crops. It makes no sense, from an environmental perspective or from a security of food supply perspective, to cease farming here and import more crops. • **Employment:** Solar farms will destroy agricultural jobs, skills and livelihoods and create very few new skilled jobs or replace livelihoods. It is likely, there will be a likely net reduction in employment, in an area with relatively few opportunities. There will not be any economic benefit to the communities affected. • **Wildlife & Habitat:** No matter what precautions and assurances, it will not be possible to deliver and install millions of solar panels, pour thousands of tonnes of concrete, as well as containers with batteries and switchgear, all surrounded by miles of fencing, without damaging habitat. • **Visual:** The cumulative scale of the development is unprecedented, and the impact of such a development would change the character and nature of the area for 50 years or more,

Element		Statement:
		such a change has the potential to have a significant detrimental impact on the general health and wellbeing of residents. • **Disturbance during construction:** The impact of traffic during construction and decommissioning phases, in terms of road safety, noise, disruption, damage to roads is of great concern to residents owing to the volume and potential size of material being moved, particularly on the local small, inadequate road infrastructure.
4	Our position	**We are against the proposed large-scale solar developments, because of their limited contribution to decarbonisation and the adverse consequences arising from using farmland in this way.**
5	What we propose	***We are in favour of good solar development:*** • Solar should be deployed where there is little else that can be done with the space – such as rooftops (in the UK only around 3% of households have solar panels) • To make that happen, planning should require solar on new-build commercial warehouses and domestic properties as an immediate priority, and a framework should be provided to support retrofitting of solar to existing buildings. • Where a solar development is considered at scale, it should be decided upon locally, not nationally – and any development must consider sustainability in its widest sense, including the impacts on sustainability of food production, sustainability of communities, impact on health and wellbeing.