

ACTON TRUSSELL, BEDNALL WITH TEDDESLEY PARISH COUNCIL

The threat to Staffordshire and beyond of Solar Panel ‘Farms’ [generating plants] and associated Battery Energy Storage Systems [BESS]

On behalf of the PC, on 19 May 2025, I attended a meeting at Stowe by Chartley Parish Hall organized by the Chair of the PC (Cllr Peter Coote) and the Chair of the Staffordshire Parish Council Association and, I think, SSDC (Cllr Victor Kelly). Others on our PC may have attended electronically.

It was a very well organized meeting with a really good spread of speakers. See attached. This infers that the meeting was for the PC; it was not limited to this and there were many attendees from beyond the PC. There is a proposal for a solar generating site and battery storage at Drointon Lower Farm [50MW, refused by SBC, in appeal. Promises ca. £20K pa/MW to the community and charity] and another for Blithfield PC at Moreton Brook which has been approved.

My conclusions:

1. Large, ground mounted, solar panels (PVs) are a favoured application in the drive to renewables.
2. Associated with them and with other intermittent supply renewables (wind, solar) are Battery Energy Storage Systems [BESS].
3. Sir Gavin Williamson (our MP) promised support to address the hypocrisy of some upper level actions, ‘nodding though’ of planning decisions and all agreed that pressure is needed from larger networks of stakeholders (from Parish to National) to address what could become a catastrophic planning blight on the countryside.
4. It is claimed that these are well developed and thought out solutions for our present and future energy demands. The developers have huge financial resources and use part of this very cleverly in nationwide publicity at all levels of society; they claim to be altruistic and to be ‘the good guys’.
5. There was evidence that the claims that grazing of sheep is successful ‘under’ the panel are false; the grass received insufficient sun, and the grass is poor quality.
6. There were concerns that after use (life is claimed to be ca. 40 years; I doubt most will work >25 years due to known component deterioration) the land will be designated ‘*brownfield*’ and converted to building development, housing or industrial.
7. There was credible evidence that the financial model being used by developers does not commit them to decommission the extensive facilities or panels on frames, HV cables and interconnectors to the HV electricity grid. It appears likely that by the time the PV generating plants cease to operate reliably, the original developers will have sold their assets onwards (I know this is common in the offshore renewables sector), likely multiple times, likely to overseas untraceable owners and there will likely be no route to source the

significant funds needed to 'clean up' the site rented from the landowner. Some figures (unknown accuracy) were that land with a value of £2Million might be left with a decommissioning cost of £40Million.

8. Typically 1 MW of solar (PV) generation requires 5 acres of land; this will be effectively sterilised from food production or from any environmental benefit to public or private use.
9. For comparison, an onshore wind farm using 2MW turbines [65m tall, blades 45m] would be spaced ca. 250m apart and the land will still be fully accessible for farming. So a single 2MW tower and turbine will deliver a similar [weather dependent, but day and night] energy capacity as 10 acres of farming land consumed for solar. An example in Bedfordshire [Biggleswade Wind Farm] has 10 such towers/turbine generators and the local community derives £24,000 pa under a Section 106 Agreement; it is estimated that the landowner will derive some 10 to 15 times this income for 10 towers.
10. There appears to be more public opposition to onshore wind renewables than solar. This appears to me to be ill informed.
11. Planners, including those in Staffordshire, appear to have 'given way' to planning applications for solar generating plants [and BESSs] with little account given to food production, environmental and leisure benefits of the countryside that these consume.
12. Apparently [Michael Dodson] there are presently 4 times more planning applications submitted, including applications to the National Energy System Operator [NESO, their role is to bring together the activities required to deliver the plans, markets and operations of the energy system, including], than are necessary to fulfil the entire UK energy requirements. The system is out of control, obviously driven by profit.
13. There can be major issues in respect of access to the construction sites (repeated later for decommissioning, if anyone will pay for this) in respect of damage and disruption to residents. One example was a 1.5 mile traffic light controlled single track route with homes and farms having to guess what the direction of traffic is at any time.
14. Hannah Barter was a speaker and advised key issues were:
 - a) Cumulative planning issues [multiple nearby developments]
 - b) Food security, visual impacts, flood risks, 24 hour access, noise in particular of BESSs, grid connection which may be 132KV overhead
 - c) Decommissioning planning
 - d) Good Local Plan and good Neighbourhood Plan.
15. Ben Adams, the Police and Fire Commissioner, emphasised the need for developers and planners to ensure the emergency services were involved at an early planning stage. BESS installations in particular for ingress and egress. He opined that BESSs are safe; my information is that there is a high frequency of fires (Li ion batteries), they burn for days and there is a significant air and water pollution risk.
16. I had a quick look at the company involved in the large Drinton development. Companies House; 8 separate companies, the major one with negative equity and itself holding majority shareholdings, most indirectly, in >50 separate

companies. The Directors typically are Directors of ca. 100 companies. A suspicious person would read section 7 above and worry.

ACTION

17. I suggest that the PC appoint someone to progress the threats [and possible benefits] of Renewable Energy developments in and near the Parish.
Preferably not me; I wish to concentrate on Acton Hill. Active volunteer?
18. We establish a close liaison in these matters with:
 - a) Staffordshire Parish Council Association (Cllr Victor Kelly)
 - b) CPRE (Peter King, Vice-Chair of CPRE West Midlands)
 - c) UK Solar Alliance <https://www.uksolaralliance.org/schemes>
 - d) Continue liaison with Stowe by Chartley PC for mutual support and information exchange.
19. In our Parish Neighbourhood Plan, promote the use of 'Solar on Roof' for all new build and all existing domestic and farm and industrial buildings.
20. Consider if it is viable to place a single ca. 2MW wind turbine at the northern end of the Wattles Lane boundary of the Parish community centre field, with the income to the Parish and the Community Centre.

Brian Wyatt

Parish Councillor

Acton Trussell, Bednall with Teddesley Parish Council

Beware





Stowe by Chartley Parish Council

Agenda

A meeting will be held for councillors and clerks at **Stowe-by-Chartley Village Hall, ST18 0LG** on **Monday 19th May 2025** commencing at **6.30pm** to discuss Solar Farms.

Cllr Peter Coote BA(Hons), MA(Ed) - Chair of Stowe by Chartley Parish Council will welcome everyone and introduce the panel (3 minutes).

Cllr Victor Kelly Chair of Staffordshire Parish Council Association to welcome all parish councils (2 minutes).

Speakers to address the meeting for 3 minutes each (27 minutes)

- **The Rt Hon Sir Gavin Williamson CBE MP** – our constituency member of parliament
- **Philip Atkins OBE** - Former Leader of Staffordshire County Council,
- **Steve Reeves** - A local farmer.
- **Hannah Barter BA (Hons) T&CP, PG Dip T&CP, PG Dip UD, MAUD, MRTPI, FRSA** - Urban Version Enterprise will join the meeting online.
- **Peter Atkins MBE, O.StJ** – Blithfield Parish Council Chair. *For Solar Allowed*
- **Ben Adams**, the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, for Staffordshire.
- **Michael Dodson** - a Stafford Borough Councillor and a Farmer.
- **Edward Holdcroft** - A local resident, HGV driver and farm advisor
- **Cllr Eunice Finney FRAGS** - MD of Amerton Farm Ltd and Stowe-by-Chartley PC

General debate and open forum - This will involve those present at the meeting and online participants.

Please note: Any councillor or clerk wishing, to raise a question is respectfully requested to be short and concise, no longer than one minute, when asking your question. Before asking your question, please state your name, who you represent and the area you live in. The chairman will only allow one question per individual attendee. (30 minutes).

Do we have any experts with skills in our audience and how can a group be formed to address the issues and concerns regarding solar farms, which are going to blight our countryside? (20 minutes).

Chairmans closing remarks from the meeting (10 minutes)

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