



## Ends Don't Always Justify Means Thoughts inspired by Lime Down Solar Park

This morning I was at Fosse Farm for a protest/photo opp in relation to Lime Down Solar Park, a proposed 2,000 acre photovoltaic project in Wiltshire. The issues this project raises go far beyond the local, touching on much bigger questions of economics, politics, and environment. (Photo: with colleague Doug Price at Fosse Farm)

**First, to be clear, nobody can doubt my commitment to action on climate change.**

I rowed solo across 3 oceans specifically to raise awareness of our ecological and climate crises. Along the way I met people who are going to lose not just their homes, but their entire country, to rising oceans. I have written endlessly on the need for activism and for action.



**But there are many ways to skin the climate cat**, and I don't believe that solar parks on the scale of Lime Down are the best way. I have received numerous messages from residents close to the proposed Solar Park, and without exception they have been distressed about the proposal, as am I.

From my conversations this morning, it's clear that they are not a bunch of NIMBYs. They are thoughtful, environmentally-conscious people. Like me, they agree that we need renewables, but in the right forms, the right amounts, and the right places.

And also for the right reasons – research into Lime Down Solar Park Ltd shows that it is owned by Island Green Power, an offshore company registered in the tax haven of Bermuda. To me, it looks like this project is motivated less by environmental concern, and more by raw profit.

**The English countryside is being exploited for financial gain – a corporate wolf dressed up in green clothing.**

I and my Liberal Democrat colleagues are committed to net zero by 2045, and have pledged the necessary investment to make sure 80% of the UK's electricity is generated from renewables by 2030 through a practical plan.

We would require all new homes to be fitted with solar panels. We have a national housing shortage (or at least, a housing mis-allocation – but that's a conversation for another time), so if we're going to install lots of solar panels, why not stick houses underneath them?

It would also be a good idea to fit panels on the roofs of the huge warehouses that are springing up around Chippenham and Swindon. Public buildings, our car parks and schools should all be similarly fitted.

There are sensible and minimally intrusive, even positive, ways to contribute to net zero, like planting 60 million trees per year. This would also restore valuable habitats.

What's needed is not destructive, massive schemes that wreck our countryside, but rather multiple, smaller initiatives that provide community energy to homes, schools and businesses alike.

**It's time we had a proper, grown-up conversation about the difficult choices ahead.**

I'd like to see this conversation take place in a non-political context, like a Citizens Assembly, and then progressed with cross-party support. This question of meeting future energy needs, while not trashing either the climate or our countryside, is too important to become a political football.

If we were to meet all the UK's electricity needs with solar (which nobody is proposing, but this is an interesting statistic), we would need to cover 12% of the country in solar panels. For reference, only 6% of the country is currently classified as "built environment", so even if every roof was covered with solar panels, that still wouldn't meet demand. But it would be a start.

Part of the problem is that developers are not currently required or incentivised to put solar panels on new builds, so doing the right thing puts a dent in their profits. Maybe not coincidentally, over 20% of the Conservative Party's funding comes from property developers.

Barring a miraculous breakthrough in power generation (like nuclear fusion, which has been [20 years away for 50 years now](#), or hydrogen, which [covers a spectrum from green to greenwashed](#)), there is no magic bullet. And I'm not willing to bet the (solar) farm on a highly speculative future miracle.

We can maintain an energy-intensive lifestyle.  
We can have a beautiful countryside.  
We can leave a liveable climate for future generations.

But we can't have them all.

**We need to create a fact-based, long-term, locally appropriate while nationally joined-up strategy on how to meet present and future energy needs, sharing the benefits and the burdens fairly across the country, to be signed off with cross-party support so it survives changes in government.**

P.S. If you live in the South Cotswolds and would like to make your views known, you can find the list of consultation sessions, starting tomorrow - details [on the Lime Down website](#). Best if you're unambiguous in stating your views, whatever they may be - in this particular context, statements are better than questions.

### Other News

Great time at Lib Dem conference last weekend - possibly our last before the General Election. Fantastic speeches by Layla Moran, who has led our principled stand on the Middle East with such credibility and authority, and by Sir Ed Davey, setting out our priorities in the run-up to the election.



### Campaign Notes

To keep up to date with me and my campaign, please follow me on [Facebook](#). Or on [LinkedIn](#), if that's more your style.

We're keen to **welcome more campaigners** to our team to help with deliveries and/or doorknocking. Please consider lending us an hour or two a month. [Email my wonderful Campaign Organiser, Poppy Fair, for more details.](#)

We are also looking for **financial support**. Every pound matters - even the price of a weekly latte would help. If you're ready for positive change in the South Cotswolds, please put your money where your mouth is by hitting Reply to this email, and I'll let you know how. Thank you! 🙏

### Quote(s) of the Week

"It isn't always true that a critical end justifies desperate means."  
— *Richelle E. Goodrich*

Have a great week!



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