

Wiltshire Council Meeting - 21 May 2024

Stop Lime Down presentation

Thank you Chairman for the opportunity to speak at your full Council Meeting. My name is Sir Mike Pitt and I am speaking on behalf of the organisation known as 'Stop Lime Down'.

We believe that the Lime Down Solar Park proposal is a highly damaging assault on the county's precious landscape and way of life. To call it a 'park' is a misnomer. Lime Down would be a vast industrial complex with battery storage, transformers, grid connection and solar cells some 4.5 metres high. Future generations would wonder why we haven't taken greater care of the county.

If the application progresses, in about one year's time Wiltshire Council will be making a submission to the Planning Inspectorate and giving evidence at a Public Inquiry into Lime Down. We believe Wiltshire Council will be by far the most important statutory consultee. You are the only democratic and impartial organisation with the necessary skills and countywide perspective. The quality of your evidence will be of critical importance to the final decision made.

Land is a limited resource, food security matters and decisions on large solar developments should not be made incrementally. There is a strong case for a county and national approach. Locally, this would be led by Wiltshire Council in the form of a county solar plan. An approved county plan would guide potential developers, inform recommendations made by the Examining Authority and decisions made by the Secretary of State. It would also reflect the contribution Wiltshire has already made towards accommodating solar energy compared with many other parts of the country.

My final point is to confirm that Stop Lime Down supports solar energy. However, we should be learning from the experiences of other countries. Solar energy generation should be located in the right places, including rooftops and brownfield sites. Where additional solar farms are needed they should be limited in size, avoid cumulative effects and be very carefully located. Hopefully a county plan would take all of these factors into account.