



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Michael Shanks MP
Minister of State for Energy
Department for Energy, Security and Net Zero
55 Whitehall
London
SW1A 2HP

30 April 2026

Dear Michael,

Botley West Solar Farm - participation in the decision-making process

Thank you for your letter of 21 April, responding on behalf of Martin McCluskey to my correspondence of 27 March. I am grateful for the reply but write now on a more fundamental point: the basis on which my office, and by extension my constituents, is being enabled to participate in this process.

Your letter confirms that my correspondence will be "treated as a post-examination representation." I note however that on 14 April the Department wrote to the applicant and a defined list of interested parties setting out a request for further information. I was not included on that list. Neither was Layla Moran, whose constituents are similarly affected. That position is difficult to reconcile with the scale of this application and the level of engagement my office has sustained throughout the process.

It is worth setting out briefly the steps already taken, because they bear directly on the request I am now making.

- In Departmental Questions earlier this year I raised directly with you the concerns held locally around engagement, transparency, ownership and community benefit.
- At these Departmental Questions, you indicated a willingness to meet to discuss these issues. My office subsequently sought to arrange that meeting and was told it could not take place given the live status of the application.
- On 12 February, Layla Moran and I wrote jointly to the Secretary of State ahead of the Planning Inspectorate's recommendation, setting out those concerns in detail and asking for a meeting.
- On 27 March, following the written statement announcing the extension, I wrote to Martin McCluskey seeking clarity on three specific procedural questions. Your reply of 21 April does not address any of them directly, instead pointing to the Planning Inspectorate's "Get Updates" functionality.

I fully accept the constraints of the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial role. There is however a clear distinction between commenting on the merits of the application and ensuring that the MPs for the affected area, and the residents they represent, can participate meaningfully in the process. The 14 April letter is evidence that the Department is actively consulting 'interested parties' at this stage. To direct me and my constituents instead to a public webpage is not, on any reasonable view, a proportionate response to the scale of what is proposed.

Botley West would be the largest solar development in the UK and one of the largest in Europe. It would cover almost 2,500 acres. Many of my constituents have engaged with this process in good faith, and many would reasonably value the opportunity to engage further now that the Department has sought additional information from the applicant and interested parties. If the developer is being given an opportunity to strengthen its case at this stage, affected residents must also have a clear and meaningful route to make further representations. Without that, there is a real risk that public confidence in the fairness of the decision-making process will be undermined.

I am therefore writing to ask the following:

1. I ask that the meeting you previously agreed to be reinstated and accepted as the formal route through which I, and ideally Layla Moran, make representations at this post-examination stage. That was the basis on which my office originally made the request. The 26 March written statement, which confirms further information will be sought and considered alongside other parties' views, removes the objection previously offered.
2. If the Department is not willing to meet, I ask that I be added formally to the list of interested parties notified by the Department, in line with those contacted on 14 April. An MP whose constituents are more directly affected by this application than almost any other group should not, in the normal course, be treated as a lesser participant than the statutory consultees, landowners and commercial entities on that list.
3. Please confirm what route is available to constituents who wish to make representations at this post-examination stage, and whether submissions channelled through my office will be considered alongside those of interested parties rather than sitting outside the process entirely.

I am copying this letter to Layla Moran and to the Secretary of State.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Calum Miller', with a stylized, cursive script.

Calum Miller MP