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Preamble

SBW's spokesperson, Anthony Thompson, was not given the opportunity to respond to Mark Owen-Lloyd's remarks on air but after the interview told SBW that PVDP were in denial by claiming that Merton's exit is not important and that they were only a small part of the scheme.

Anthony pointed out that the issues their exit has caused is material in that it has caused;

1. A delay in consultation
2. A redrawing of the total plan
3. A challenge to re-site the electricity cable
4. A challenge to the credibility of their biodiversity claims

SBW are working on a full response to Mark Owen-Lloyd's other claims.

Mark Owen-Lloyd on behalf of PVDP

Summary

Mark Owen-Lloyd defended the proposal saying that it was "NOT ALL BAD" and that the PEIR explains every single thing we're going to do on this site from the panels to the community agriculture. When asked if Merton's pull out was a blow to the plans he answered "absolutely not" as it was only 5% of the land and PVDP would be continuing as planned.

Full Text

Sophie invited Mark Owen-Lloyd to address Anthony's concerns and what he said

Obviously, we listen to what the Stop Botley West group say all the time. What I would say is that's it's really important that people understand the facts of this. The facts of the UK generation system, the challenge we face as we close all our old power stations and are, at the moment, completely dependent on imported natural gas which, as we've seen over the past two years is a highly volatile priced commodity. So I'd say to people is that we're about to come out to consultations, we're going to do 9 events across West Oxfordshire as we did a year ago. We're going to do an online webinar and at that we will present the actual facts about what we will do with the land, why we're doing it and what the National need is and also, most importantly, because I accept that it's all very well saying to people "National need", what this will do for people locally in terms of what the Stop Botley West spokesman mentioned "community" well we're going to have community agriculture, we're going to sell our power to our neighbours at reduced prices, there'll be improved access through public rights of way, it's NOT ALL BAD and I do challenge words like 'ocean' or town 'size of Banbury' this is placing these solar arrays inside existing fields and growing the hedges around them. Most of the time you will not see our solar arrays unless you stand at a fence and look over and you will see that if you come to our public events there will be photomontage visualisations of what you will see from key vantage points (I think there are 48 we've ascertained) so you can see that we're going to sit within the landscape not on top of it.

But I absolutely accept that people see this as a change that scares them so I'd say come and talk to us. I'll be at every single event, you can come up to me and say "come on then, let's .."

Sophie intervened with "from the texts this morning, Mark, I'm sure people will....and asked him whether Merton's pull out is a blow to the plans.

Absolutely not no this was always the core landowner is Blenheim Estate who are a remarkable organisation with a very, very clear green vision and also frankly a desire to stop farming their land intensively with nitrates and pesticides but I respect what Merton have done. They've decided to put regenerative agriculture on their land, they're not going to return it to intensive farming. This was a piece of land between their housing developments and our developments so they asked us if they could join, the dons have decided they don't want to so we respect that but it doesn't effect the viability, it was less than 5% of the land. The only affect it did have is that we've had to revise completely our Preliminary Environmental Information Report which is the document we're about to go out to consult on with local residents to remove Merton's land from that and that involved all 18

chapters being re-written so that's the only reason that's we're slightly delayed, there's been three weeks' work redrafting the whole of that - it's a large tome I challenge people to read all of it. There is a summary at the beginning - a non technical summary - but that is the key document that explains every single thing we're going to do on this site from the panels to the community agriculture.

Sophie reads out a few texts referring to the industrialisation of the country side, Bladon resident less than 50 meters from the development who asks are we going to have to get in our cars to drive to open countryside before we can enjoy it. When are people going to be able to come and talk to you?

Well, the anticipation is that the first events will be held before Christmas. I'm afraid I can't name a date because I have to be told that the PEIR is being published and that is in the next couple of weeks. The people who texted in will be able to talk to me within the next 4 to 5 weeks in an event near their homes and they'll be able to challenge me on those things that you've just mentioned.

It's interesting that you mention Bladon because they were very vociferous at the our first consultation and, as result of what they've said to us including comments like your caller, we have moved the panels way back from the village and we've put in extra mitigation and wildflower meadows and we've also put a cycle track across to Begbroke so we have listened and there are things that will please them and we're not industrialising the landscape that couldn't be further from the truth.

In an earlier recorded interview

Reporter Sophie Rumsbey asked Mark O-L "How do you feel about the level of local opposition"?

I was in every single public meeting when we had our first consultation last year so I listened to all the objections about the views being spoiled and the nature of the countryside being altered but we have answered those in our consultation materials that were about to come out with in our designs and what were doing for the solar farm so I understand people's fear of change near where they live but the benefits of the solar farm are so significant and the national need for renewable generation is so pressing that I think they'll be impressed by what we've done in terms of biodiversity and screening and planting and there are a myriad of other benefits such as people growing food on our land, social enterprises and job opportunities, apprenticeships, etc so I think the 2nd consultation where we present the whole of the project as we have designed it I think they'll be pleased with what we've done.