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Michael Shanks MP
Minister for Energy

By Email: correspondence@energysecurity.gov.uk

Dear Minister

Solar Farm Proposals for the Romney Marsh Area

Following on from our correspondence earlier this year, I write to make you aware of the growing concerns of Romney Marsh residents in relation to proposals for a number of solar farms in their community.

This Council, at its meeting of 1st October 2025, considered a petition from residents titled '**Stop industrial scale solar sprawl on Romney Marsh**'. During the meeting, I undertook to write again to ensure you are aware of the concerns of the residents and attached is a summary of the petition as presented to the Council. The basis of this was to petition the Council to oppose the spread of oversized solar and battery storage NSIP schemes on Romney Marsh's prime agricultural crop-producing land. Following debate, the Council agreed that the matter should be given further scrutiny recognising the importance of the issues raised and the strength of feeling and concern of the local community.

The principle of solar energy generation is not being challenged. Indeed, this Council has recently agreed a new corporate plan, underpinned by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, which includes an aim to build the green economy through support for clean methods of generating energy that respect our protected landscapes and habitats. What is being challenged is the aggregated scale and impact of the solar farm proposals on land, towns and communities.

It is recognised that there will be local and statutory consultations as part of the consenting process for each proposal and I have doubt that there will be strong views put forward from communities across the Romney Marsh.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Jim Martin
Leader, Folkestone & Hythe District Council



Summary of Romney Marsh residents' petition to FHDC to protect Romney Marsh's unique countryside and farm land from mass solar/BESS industrialisation.

414 residents of Romney Marsh in the Folkestone Hythe District Council area request that as a statutory consultee, FHDC represent residents' voices and views and does everything in its power to protect Romney Marsh's unique environment and ecology, its people and economy, its heritage, and the unique character and sense of place from mass and disproportionate sprawling solar industrialisation.

Note: 4,535 people have signed further online public petitions on change.org opposing the three oversized schemes announced for Romney Marsh in the last 10 months. <https://handsoffourmarsh.org/take-action>

Summary of points raised by residents

- **Oversized industrial solar/BESS power stations are disproportionate to the compact area of Romney Marsh** - 3 industrial-scale solar/BESS NSIP power stations proposed to date totalling 5,700 acres of land - 10% of Romney Marsh - 8.5 sq miles - 3 x the size of Gatwick Airport
- **Scale of developments threaten irreversible harm to ancient, historic and fragile landscape** - Romney Marsh is a historic, unique, flat, open, high flood risk landscape with far reaching views across the entire Marsh between Hythe and Rye from the Kent Downs National Landscape above.
- **Historic internal drainage system threatened by infrastructure** - Most of Romney Marsh, once underwater, is in the highest risk flood zone. An intricate clay-pipe drainage labyrinth has for centuries kept the sea out, draining water in the Royal Military Canal, allowing agriculture to thrive. Piling solar panel frames into the land and laying concrete plinths for BESS units will put the drainage system at risk, threatening the flood defences of the Marsh, and posing catastrophic risk to people and properties.
- **Romney Marsh already hosts its share of energy infrastructure** - Romney Marsh already hosts the former Dungeness power station, an onshore wind farm and a small solar energy farm
- **Private energy investors and developers exploiting lack of energy strategy** - The NESO TEC register lists another 2-3 large NSIP schemes 'in scoping' phase in the area, one as an integrated 1000MW solar, BESS, wind and nuclear power station. These will engulf small villages.
- **Additional smaller scale schemes also in local planning** - Several smaller solar schemes in the area are also currently going through local planning
- **Large amounts of Grade 1 & 2 arable land targeted** - South Kent Energy Park and Shepway Energy Park sites are targeting almost exclusively top grade 1 & 2 arable land (which is scarce in the UK making up less than 20% of UK's agricultural land) - will cause losses to local agricultural economy
- **Harm to sensitive ecological sites** - South Brooks Solar Farm targets mixed quality land around Lydd and Lydd airport, and bordering sensitive SSSI and Ramsar ecological sites around Dungeness. Cabling will need to be constructed through these ecological area to connect to the Dungeness substation
- **Harm to heritage settings** - at least two of the schemes are being proposed around ancient churches and historic church ruins
- **Overwhelming cumulative impact will harm the local economy** - Many of the sites border each other, creating the sense of inescapable vast giant solar power stations visible everywhere one goes across the small flat escarpment-bound landscape. The leisure, tourism and agricultural economy, which the small area relies on, would irreparably suffer. Even businesses on the Kent Downs National Landscape area that rely on the views across the Marsh, such as wedding venues, will suffer.

- **No benefits for communities** - the schemes will create more harms and disruption than benefits to the residents of Romney Marsh. The only winners are landowners and developers.
- **Risk of an exodus of the population** - The scale of schemes proposed offer few long term employment opportunities for working-age residents and future generations, they harm the opportunities that currently exist, and farming knowledge and skills will particularly decline.
- **Additional transmission infrastructure mooted** - Developers say they need a new 400kV substation to connect the South Kent and Shepway energy plants to but no indication of this in NGET's strategic plans for the Great Grid Upgrade
- **Breaches local planning policies** - Not in keeping with Folkestone Hythe District Council Places and Policies Plan and Climate Change Policy which seeks to protect Romney Marsh's BMV land and heritage settings
- **Harm to visual amenity poses irreparable threat to tourism and visitor numbers** - Developments would harm the visual amenity and change the unique character of the Romney Marsh with 5m high solar panels proposed in some schemes - taller than a double decker bus. BESS infrastructure would be between 4-12m high. Cyclist and rambler numbers would especially decline.
- **Risk to all life forms from Li-Ion Bess fires/thermal runaway** - Unextinguishable Li-ion BESS fires would threaten not only rural residents' lives and wildlife but also contaminate the wider water and ecological system of the Marsh through water drainage into the Royal Military Canal
- **Wildlife habitats at risk** - Romney Marsh is home to many rare and endangered species. The scale of each scheme and in such numbers would make it almost impossible to retain or regenerate wildlife populations

Romney Marsh residents recognise that clean energy is needed. We actively encourage and support new nuclear technology solutions for Dungeness, and we support solar generation and safe battery storage schemes on unproductive land, rooftops, brownfield and former landfill sites.

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