

Notes of meeting held for councillors and clerks organised by Stowe- by- Chartley Parish Council and held at Stowe-by-Chartley Village Hall on 19th May 2025

Speakers (Listed in the order in which they spoke): -

Cllr Peter Coote –	Chair of Stowe by Chartley Parish Council
The Rt Hon Sir Gavin Williamson –	Constituency MP
Cllr Victor Kelly -	Chair of SPCA
Philip Atkins -	Former Leader of SCC
Hannah Barter –	Urban Version Enterprise (online)
Steve Reeves-	Local farmer and formerly a Chartered Accountant
Peter Atkins-	Chair of Blithfield Parish Council
Ben Adams-	Police Fire and Crime Commissioner for Staffordshire
Cllr Michael Dodson-	Stafford Borough Councillor, local farmer and formerly a fellow of the Institute of Electrical Engineers
Edward Holdcroft-	Local resident, HGV driver and farm advisor
Cllr Eunice Finney -	MD of Amerton Farm Ltd and Parish Councillor

The guest speakers were welcomed and introduced to those present by Cllr Peter Coote. Each speaker was allotted 3 minutes to speak.

Many of the points raised had been considered by Ingestre with Tixall Parish Council and were included in our response to the solar farm application 23/37621/FUL on land to the north of Hanyards Lane, Tixall.

Some of the points raised at the meeting were: -

- a) Applications for solar farms were not only a local issue, but they affected the whole country. Applications were being considered on an individual basis with no regard to the cumulative effect to the countryside and agricultural land.
- b) Decommissioning and recycling of the panels and miles of buried underground cable was a problem for the future in approx. 40 years' time if not sooner. Who will pay for the decommissioning? The solar energy companies could liquidate

themselves as has happened with the company who owned Walleys Quarry Landfill at Newcastle-under-Lyme. The solar energy companies are offering to rent land for their solar farms but not offer to buy it. There is a danger that decommissioned sites will be considered as brownfield land which could then be open for housing or industrial development.

- c) The number of approvals already given for solar farms added to the current number of applications in the pipeline would produce in the region of 400% more energy than required. The solar energy companies would continue to receive payments for non-productive clusters. Currently in Staffordshire all the applications which have been granted, applied for or are in the pipeline would take up an area of 5245 acres. 80% of the land surrounding the hamlet of Drointon and Grindley will be covered by solar panels and together with the solar farm in the adjacent parish of Blithfield there will be a total of 5.23 miles of panels
- d) Agricultural land is vital for food production particularly with a rapidly growing population. The quality of grass under solar panels will be of inferior quality due to lack of sunlight and not suitable for sheep grazing as claimed by the energy companies.
- e) Neighbourhood plans are important in forming local policy and feeding into local plans.
- f) The proposed siting of solar farms in this area is popular because the power can be fed into the national grid at the site of the former Rugeley power station. Undergrounding suitable cables is expensive and therefore pylons to carry overhead cables will be necessary. In some cases, this will necessitate pylons to be erected in green belt areas, through townships, over railway lines and busy trunk roads
- g) There is no legal necessity for applicants to consult with the local Fire Officer. However, with the need for battery storage appropriate access needs to be provided for emergency services. Water should also be made available on the site. Structures for rectifiers and batteries cannot be of temporary nature.
- h) 200 acres of land is required to produce the equivalent amount of power produced by one wind turbine.
- i) The planners seem not to take heed of the dangers created by HGV vehicles to the environment and infrastructure delivering materials to the solar farms particularly down narrow country lanes. Inconvenience to residents carries no weight and the presence of large high pressure gas mains, oil pipelines and large water mains seem to be ignored.

The above is a brief resume of some of the issues spoken about and as you can imagine there were many others. If anybody would like to view the full event, then it is available online by going to the Stowe-by-Chartley Parish Council website and clicking on the red bar headed solar farms. There are also summaries of the meeting prepared by representatives of other parish councils who were present. In addition, there is a video available to view of a subsequent open meeting held on 6th June between Sir Gavin Williamson MP and residents.

Following the session with the guest speakers, there was a general debate and open forum giving those present, both in person or online, the opportunity to ask questions or make any points they wished to. Again, if anyone is interested in this second part of the meeting it can be viewed online on the Stowe-by-Chartley Parish Council website and clicking on the red bar named solar farms. One person suggested that membership of the Uk Solar Alliance should be considered. Membership is free and there is information available to download from their website. One publication entitled, 'The reality of low power UK solar: the numbers don't stack up,' makes for interesting reading. Their website can be viewed on <https://www.uksolaralliance.org>

In conclusion it was recommended that if an application was made for a solar farm within a particular parish, then the Parish Council should contact the SPCA and the CPRE for advice and in order that contact can be made with other Parish Councils and Counties who have received similar applications.