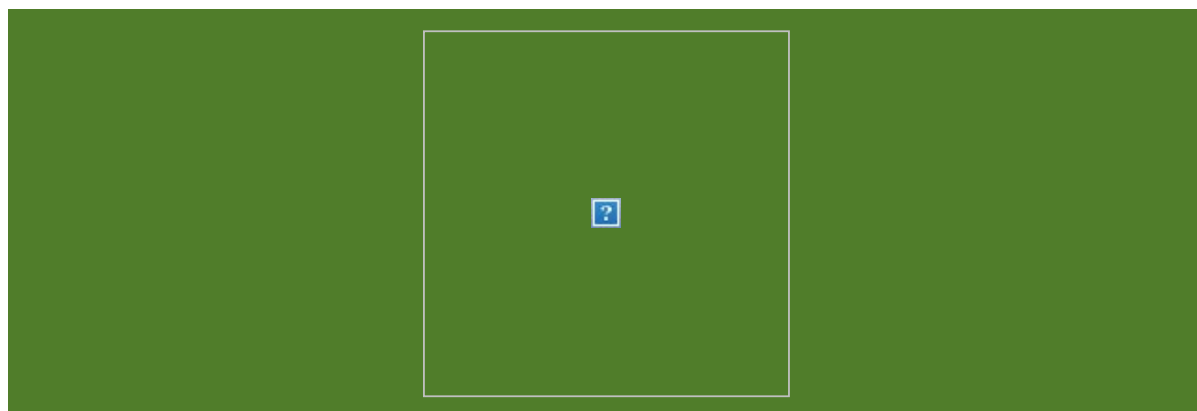


From: [Stop Botley West Campaign](#)
To: cassingtonclerk@cassington-pc.gov.uk
Subject: Latest Campaign news, plus the feudal imposition of solar
Date: 28 September 2023 21:39:47



Dear Supporters – please see the following updates on events, and this week’s Newsletter from Professor Alex Rogers – Co-Chair of the SBW campaign. As ever, your thoughts and offers of help and support are always welcome!

News

Witney Eco Forum

On the evening of Thursday 25th September Witney Eco Forum held An Evening with Robert Courts MP, an open event chaired by The Rt. Rev. Steven Croft, Bishop of Oxford, and facilitated by Roger Harrabin, BBC energy and environment analyst. The event involved discussions amongst Roger Harrabin and the Guest Speakers, pre-submitted questions from the public, and open questions.

The meeting focused on the Government’s stepping back on elements of its Net Zero policy. Concerns were raised on whether this meant a shift away from Net Zero, to which Robert Courts responded that it was more of a change in **how** to reach the 2050 targets, rather than a change in the targets themselves.

Concerns were raised about damage to the U.K.’s reputation for setting the international climate agenda. A member of the audience spoke in favour of the Botley West scheme and asked Robert Courts why he was not supporting the scheme. He pointed out that the great majority of residents in the areas affected (80%) were opposed to the scheme and he felt an obligation to support his constituents.

The meeting ended with the Bishop of Oxford stating that climate change and biodiversity loss were the major existential issues of the age and there was a pressing

need to repair nature and the climate for future generations. The audience was clearly very engaged with the entire climate and biodiversity issue, but it was notable that the vast majority of the audience were more senior in age, with, sadly, very few young people evident.

WODC'S Your Place, Your Plan: a new Local Plan 2041

This is an opportunity to submit your own ideas for the area to West Oxfordshire District Council and to see what other ideas have been submitted. Obviously, this area includes the proposed land for the Botley West Utility-Scale Solar Power Station. However, there are only 4 weeks left to do this. Submit your ideas by following the link [here](#) and then click on "Call for ideas, Opportunities and Sites". Other aspects of the proposed Local Plan are also open to comments. Again, check on the WODC planning portal for the consultation link.

Cherwell Local Plan 2040 Consultation Draft

Cherwell District Council are also holding a further consultation on their 2040 Local Plan. This is an opportunity for all of you to comment on the major developments within Cherwell's boundaries including the Botley West Utility-Scale Solar Power Station. This has now been published with Consultation lasting until 3 November. There is an exhibition in Woodstock on 17 October. If you want to have a say, follow the link [here](#).

Presentation on the Botley West Utility-Scale Solar Farm by Alex Rogers, SBW Co-Chair - Cassington Village Hall, 19th October, 7.30pm

Prof. Alex Rogers, Co-Chair of the Stop Botley West campaign will be giving a talk on the Botley West Utility-Scale Solar Power Station at Cassington Village Hall. Will it be before, during or after the consultation? We will see! Come to learn more about the Botley West proposal, how the planning process will unfold, impacts on people and the environment and implications for democracy and social justice.

Donations

Many thanks for the donations flowing into the Stop Botley West campaign since August! **Please continue to donate** what you can, we need further support to stop this inappropriate industrial development.

What can I do?

1. **Making yourself fully aware of the proposal** and how it will affect you: head over to our Learn More page on the SBW campaign website, which provides a good starting point.
 2. **Preparing for the second round (the ‘Statutory’ stage) of Community Consultations:** what questions do you have about how the proposal will affect you & the Oxfordshire environment, and whether Botley West Solar Park really is the right solution for renewable energy in the UK?
 3. **Volunteering to help the SBW campaign:** do you have specific skills to offer or are you a willing campaigner? We are particularly looking for;
 1. A suitably experienced Fundraiser
 2. A suitably experienced Project Manager
 3. Additional administrative support
 4. An experienced Social Media operator
 4. **Helping fundraise:** fundraising is crucial - it helps the campaign to facilitate a collaborative effort to challenge the development, create access to expertise and information, and pool resources to enable an effective, and if necessary, legal challenge. Perhaps you could organise an event to support the campaign?
-

Co-Chair Alex Rogers: The Feudal Imposition of Solar and Why It is Wrong

Dear Stop Botley West campaigners,

I was particularly struck by MP Layla Moran's concerns related to the Planning Inspectorate process for utility-scale solar power stations like Botley West and the lack of democracy and community input into such proposals.

The danger with the current process for national infrastructure development is that it becomes a box-ticking exercise for the developers who are evidently at a significant advantage throughout the whole process.

Local communities are "consulted" but as we saw in the pre-application (non-statutory) consultation this was largely a presentation of the project. Subsequent details of the plans presented in PVDP's Scoping Report showed little or no change, essentially ignoring the viewpoints of the community.

We see another example published this week by O'Callaghan et al. based at the University of Oxford's Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment in a report entitled "Could Britain's Energy Demand Be Met Entirely by Wind and Solar?".

They estimate that the combined solar and wind potential in the U.K. is 2,896 TWh (Terawatt Hours) nearly twice the maximum projected energy demand of the country in 2050 at 1,500 TWh. This is an impressive statistic but their route to achieving this figure is extremely concerning. The first Recommendation of the report is to remove barriers to new solar and wind energy capacity in order to address planning delays which they blame for the slow uptake of renewables in the country.

The report is an interesting contribution to the debates on renewables but shows a shocking disregard for the people of the United Kingdom and the communities who may be severely impacted by utility-scale solar power stations like Botley West. They justify this strategy by saying that:

"Bans on renewable energy installations are out of step with the British public, who overwhelmingly support more renewable energy in the UK in opinion polls."

They clearly are not aware of the results of the pre-application consultation for Botley West which showed conclusively that 80% of the people in the communities affected do not want the proposed scheme. To further take the brakes off what is already a

highly undemocratic planning process for national infrastructure, under which the Botley West proposal falls, is a truly appalling prospect.

We already know that the system is massively stacked against communities, with the new Solar Task Force comprises entirely of civil servants and representatives of the solar industry. One begins to wonder whether the authors of the new report are aware that we live in a democratic country - not a dictatorship - where the people are directed to accept whatever dictats come down from government or a leader.

Obviously, this all makes sense from the ivory towers of Oxford, but try walking a few miles outside the city and you'll find a very different view of how such planning should proceed from the residents of Oxfordshire. It shows a staggering lack of consideration of the rights and views of the citizens of this county, thousands of whom live in close proximity to such proposals. Cumnor village, for example, is now facing three separate proposals for solar power stations, including Botley West.

Our challenge to the Government and academics is, we believe, that if local communities are asked to adopt renewable energy schemes on a county by county and even district by district basis, it is much more likely that this will succeed through a truly democratic process. This would not take much, we have local government that is perfectly capable of dealing with such planning matters, they do after all put forward Local Plans (see above).

Such an approach would help to promote schemes which not only have minimal impacts on the public, but at best would benefit local communities through provision of cheap **locally-supplied** renewable energy, and/or through other means such as setting aside land to benefit biodiversity or for amenity and sustainable transport. It would also be democratic.

We will be examining the figures in the new Smith School report with interest. But just as an aside, I point out that if the UK's maximum energy requirement by 2050 is 1,500TWh (it could be much lower) and if offshore wind can provide 2,120TWh/yr as noted in the report, then there is clearly no need for utility-scale solar power at all!

The Stop Botley West Campaign is entirely dependent on your generosity, both in time and donations. If you are able to contribute, please do give whatever you can - click the link below and scroll down to the donate section.

Together, we will Stop Botley West. Thank you.

Donate



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