

Meeting with Pippa Heylings

Friday 6th December 2024, 17:30

Meeting venue: [Fulbourn centre](#)

Present: Simon Chandler (West Wrating Parish Council), Kathy Day (KSCA), Geoff Harvey (South Cambridgeshire District Council)

This was a very good balance of public, parish council and district council representation, illustrating how we are working together.

Overall aim: Use this opportunity to establish a productive working relationship with Pippa.

A map of the area, highlighting Land Parcels A, B, and C, was shared with Pippa Heylings (Pippa). Key concerns were outlined, including the importance of avoiding Fleam Dyke, the Icknield Way, and the areas close to the villages of West Wrating and Weston Colville.

Key outcomes/discussion points

1. Pippa's views on the proposed Kingsway solar farm development plans
 - a. Pippa supports renewable energy and stressed the urgent need for more solar and wind power to hit net zero targets. But she believes it needs to be planned properly, not left to private companies alone. She pointed to the EV charging network as an example, where leaving it to the private sector has caused uneven coverage and charging blackspots.
 - b. She recognized that because the Sunnica project had been approved, there would be several applications for grid connections to the substation at Burwell South, and that Kingsway Solar was part of that process.
 - c. For this reason, she is pushing for the Land Use Framework to establish a strategic plan for large-scale solar projects. She believes it shouldn't be left solely to private developers.
 - d. She confirmed that for NSIPs, the responsibility for monitoring compliance with the Development Consent Order (DCO) rests with the local authority. There is no further regulation.*
 - e. Pippa confirmed that she supports our efforts to mitigate the effect of the industrial-scale solar farm that is being imposed on us by this NSIP.
2. What Pippa is doing at a government level
 - a. Pippa mentioned that she is a member of the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC), which operates on a cross-party basis and is actively working on key issues such as:
 - i. Achieving the government's climate targets.
 - ii. Reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework with an emphasis on environmental concerns.

- b. In addition to the Land Use Framework, Pippa has been reviewing the GB Energy Bill, which she expects to become law by late January 2025. The original proposal for a local plan (Section 6.3 in the founding statement) will now be presented as a separate bill in the House of Lords. This new bill (which is supported by Labour) will aim to establish a framework for a Local Power Plan, setting out rules for community benefits (as already set out in Scotland) and promoting community-led energy projects
 - c. She also highlighted the [Strategic Spatial Energy Plan](#), which is scheduled to be debated next year. This will be carried out by the National Energy System Operator (NESO) and will provide a blueprint for Britain's energy infrastructure.
 - d. She also mentioned that the Energy Minister Michael Shanks is exploring ways to reform how grid connections are agreed. This may include ways to help communities and individuals to create their energy nearer to their homes.
 - e. She is backing the UK Climate Change and Nature Bill and hopes it will be introduced in Parliament next year. When it comes to balancing climate change and nature, she sees tackling climate change as the top priority. She fully supports renewable energy, but thinks it should be done the right way and in the right places.
 - f. **In summary**, Pippa supports renewable energy, community-led projects, and a balanced approach to climate change and nature, while advocating for the Land Use Framework and Strategic Spatial Energy Plan to ensure sustainable development and energy infrastructure. She emphasized that she is *"fighting for a better way for all this to happen"* and believes it's crucial for people to understand why these frameworks are needed.
3. How Pippa can help us
- a. She's willing to speak up for our community and has urged us to get involved with the developers (Kingsway/DRD) while making it clear that we don't support the project as it is currently proposed. It's important to share ideas on how the development can be designed to cause the least disruption. We also need to push hard for community benefits, using the Scottish scheme as an example to get the best deal possible. These actions can be done together, and she fully supports this approach.
4. What we can do to help Pippa support us
- a. She encourages us to provide as much evidence and detail as possible and wants to be kept updated.
 - b. Before the statutory consultation begins, Pippa will meet with Kingsway/DRD to review how the feedback from the non-statutory consultation has influenced the design they plan to present for public and local authority consideration. We can then meet to share what she found, and for us to update her on the activities and plans.

*For clarification, everything promised by the applicant in the DCO is legally binding. If the LA identifies a non-compliance then it must be rectified by the applicant at their cost. Moreover, Pippa told us that the LA can charge the applicant for the cost of monitoring work being carried out by experts (e.g., ecologists). **That, apparently, is not widely known.**