

Why we need the Blenheim Solar Farm – and so much more

The cold, hard reality is, that when it comes to climate change, we may well already be too late. If we hit our target of a 1.5 degree climate increase, this is what we will limit our damages to, our best case scenario, if you will:-

- 41% increase in forest fires
- 2 months of drought per year
- Wheat, maize, rice and soy production will suffer
- 48cm sea level rise displacing 46million people
- 70-90 percent decline in the coral reef

These consequences are hideous, but we can work with them and recover our planet. If we miss our target by even just half a degree, these changes scale up:-

- 62% increase in forest fires,
- 4 months a year of drought,
- a rapid decline in agricultural yields
- 56cm rise in sea level
- 99% destruction of the coral reef

It is at this point that billions of people will die.

I would like to address the main objections to the Blenheim solar project that I have heard so far:-

- **“Off shore wind farms are a better option.”** Wouldn't it be wonderful if the government were ploughing sufficient funds into enough offshore wind projects to fuel our country? Absolutely it would! But that isn't happening. The reality is that we are currently losing the climate change race. The time to be selective about how we win this has long passed. We are now in a place where we have to do everything that we can. Yes, wind might be a better option over all, but this isn't an 'either or' situation. These solar panels aren't stealing sunlight from anything else, we should utilise this renewable resource
- **“With this project alone, Oxfordshire supporting 5 to 8 times of it's fair share of UK's total renewable energy (based on land area)”** - Does it really matter what is our fair share? Yes in an ideal world the load would be evenly split between counties. Again, this is not happening. It is not an ideal world. I think 'well, we did our faire share and not a jot more' will be little consolation if we end up facing the consequences of a 2' climate increase. We need to get away from this 'them and us' thinking. We are all sharing this planet.
- **“Using greenfield land is unsightly and the same could be achieved using wind and roof top solar”** - roof top solar is nowhere near as efficient as large scale solar farms. Larger scale installations punch above their weight in terms of providing power for the immediate vicinity
- **“Nothing can grow under solar panels”** - This is very simply incorrect. Installing sympathetic solar can provide a place for billions of much needed wild flowers that support pollinators and encourages diverse wildlife. Blenheim have been clear that this is a large part of their plan. The population of pollinating species has declined alarmingly. If we lose our bugs, bees and butterflies we will lose 87% of all plant life, 75% of all of the food that we consume will disappear. Losing our pollinators is a pre apocalyptic event from which we are highly unlikely to recover. This solar farm will have a positive impact on our local pollinator population which is a really fantastic thing
- **“This is a money making exercise for Blenheim / Blenheim stand to make £2m per year”** - Each and every company has to make profit to stay afloat. Yes, Blenheim

will profit from this, anybody who objects to that should consider switching off the electricity in their homes, lest they line the pockets of their current energy suppliers. Is it not wiser to support the companies who are prioritising sustainability, than those who are still using fossil fuels? Alongside making profit, Blenheim will be making a positive impact on the planet

- **“The Nottinghamshire solar project was rejected”** - I feel that entertaining this as an objection is rather cutting off our noses to spite our face. It is like an argument that I would hear from my young children “HE hasn’t done it so why should I?” - Again, if we end up facing a 2 degree climate increase I feel that this will be of little consolation
- **“We need green space for our mental health”** - Spaces can be lush and green whilst housing solar panels. If we hit a 2’ degree climate increase those lush green spaces won’t be there at all, we will be looking at lots of scorched fields

I urge you to check out the Yarnton solar farm. It isn’t the vile, mechanical beast that you are imagining. Properly managed solar farms can look so green and peaceful. They can be sanctuaries for wildlife and pollinators. Yes, lets ask for assurances that the wildlife will be protected. Let’s make sure corners are not being cut in terms of aesthetics. Lets be part of this conversation and make sure it is being done properly.

We are all coming from the same place. We love our local landscape, and it is great to know that people are so passionate about it. But the cold hard, reality of what we are facing as a planet cannot be ignored, changes have to be made and some of them are not going to be comfortable. Creating a world based around our own convenience has got us into this situation. If we don’t make as many changes as possible right now, then the changes that will be forced upon us in the future will be even less palatable. Do we want to see commercial flights limited, or even stopped? How will you feel when our food is rationed?

Things are going to get worse before they get better. The day will come when we will all regret not having done more. I implore you to think about what is really important here. Every unit of renewable energy produced and used is vital. The war on climate change can only be won with many, many tiny battles. One big thing can’t save us.

I understand that the concept of the end of the human race is almost too much to comprehend. But it is past time to remove our blinkers and to face this head on. There is nowhere to hide. We have to act now. Climate change isn’t some radical, hippy concept. It is happening all around us. This weekend I saw people out wearing T shirts and others mowing their lawns! It is November. This is not right! Please, please wake up to the reality of our situation before it is too late. There is no margin for error. We have to act now. Let’s say yes to everything that is going to help us.

