

Tel 01303 853000  
Date: 9 May 2025  
Email: [jim.martin@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk](mailto:jim.martin@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk)



The Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP  
Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero

By Email: [secretary.state@energysecurity.gov.uk](mailto:secretary.state@energysecurity.gov.uk)

Dear Secretary of State

### **Renewable Energy Projects in the Romney Marsh Area**

I write as Leader of the Council to convey concerns of residents about the lack of strategic co-ordination for major solar farm developments in the coastal south of our district.

The residents of the Romney Marsh are voicing concerns that solar energy providers are increasingly interested in the area due to the topography and connections to the existing electrical grid, with little regard or consideration for the impacts that multiple, market led, large scale solar arrays may have on the unique rural landscape. Although it is outside the protected Kent Downs National Landscape, the council's High Level Landscape Appraisal identifies the Romney Marsh as being of particularly high landscape sensitivity, due to its flat, open character, low lying nature and long-distance views to the Kent Downs escarpment.

Public announcements have been made by a developer for a 500mw array in the area and we have recently received a planning application for a smaller 16MW array in close proximity. In addition, residents have reported to councillors that more are planned in the same broad location.

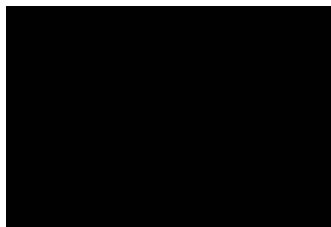
Our greatest concern, and that being expressed by residents, is that development appears piecemeal, lacking any concerted strategic oversight or co-ordination and the consequences would be significant. As I am sure you are aware, the District Council would not be the determining authority for large scale projects and as such cannot act as the strategic body - this will fall to the Secretary of State.

We are aware of the establishment of the National Energy System Operator (NESO) and the creation of new Regional Energy Strategic Plans (RESOs) for the country, including a plan for the South East of England. We understand that local authorities will feed into RESOs through working groups, that RESOs are designed to give local authorities more influence over the development of regional energy planning and ensure that spatial planning is better integrated into energy planning and that the views of local customers and stakeholders will be taken into account in developing the plans. However, we understand that the first RESOs will not be published until late 2027 and until then there appears to be a strategic policy vacuum, which has resulted in solar developers targeting the district in an uncoordinated and ad-hoc way.

I ask you to consider what steps can be taken by Government to ensure that there is a strategic energy plan for the Romney Marsh. We also ask you to ensure that the Planning Inspectorate, through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) process, properly examines the cumulative impacts of multiple proposals at different stages of development in a highly sensitive and constrained area like the Romney Marsh, before a properly planned, south-east-wide approach can be supported by local stakeholders.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Jim Martin  
**Leader, Folkestone & Hythe District Council**