



The countryside charity
Cambridgeshire
and Peterborough

SUNNICA SOMERSAULT: DEMOCRACY OR DICTATORSHIP?

Countryside campaigners say Energy Secretary Ed Milliband's trigger-happy go ahead for a 2,500 acre solar farm on the Cambridgeshire-Suffolk border smacks more of dictatorship than democracy.

The Countryside charity, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough CPRE is calling for a judicial review to overturn Mr Milliband's announcement, which came just days after the General Election. "Everyone is against the proposal," said CPRE Chairman, Dr Alan James. "Suffolk County Council, East Cambridgeshire District Council, at least two MPs, local residents and most importantly, the Planning Inspectorate. Ed Milliband can't possibly have read the Planning Inspector's recommendation that planning permission should not be granted. He hasn't had time."

CPRE contends it is quite clear that solar panels belong on rooftops and brown field sites rather than prime agricultural land. The Say No to Sunnica action group say the UK has over 600,000 acres of south-facing commercial roofs. They point out that in Germany, 14 GW of solar energy was installed last year, nearly 70% of it from roof tops.

Campaigners say the Sunnica scheme will take out 2,500 acres of some of our most productive farmland at a time when food security has seldom been higher on the national agenda. "During the election campaign, Labour was clear that food security was high on their agenda. This announcement is completely at odds with the pledges they made" said Dr James. "With the increasing risk of flooding to the Fens, we need to take even more notice of the Environmental Audit Committee's concern that imports will become less available in the future.

"They recommended we should be growing more food, not less. Their report "Our Planet, Our Health" said 'We are concerned that the Government is complacent about the risk to food security posed by climate breakdown'. With the rate of sea level rise increasing month on month, food security and the protection of good crop-growing land has never been more important," said Dr James.

The other major area of concern, says Dr James, is the enormous safety risk posed by the quantity of battery storage to local communities. "Should anything go wrong, the consequences don't bear thinking about."