

This Report will be made
public on 14 July 2026



Report Number **A/26/12**

To: Council
Date: 22 July 2026
Status: Non – executive decision
Responsible Officer: Ewan Green, Monitoring Officer and Director of Strategy and Partnerships

SUBJECT: MOTION ON NOTICE

SUMMARY: Councillor A Martin has submitted a Motion on Notice for Full Council which includes three actions in respect of the council's response to proposals for three large solar farms. This report provides background to assist Members in their consideration of the Motion.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report A/26/12.
2. To consider the Motion on Notice put forward by Councillor A Martin.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. On 2 July, Councillor Alan Martin submitted a Motion which asked members to resolve the following:

“As three large solar farms have been proposed in our area at such scale that, because they are classed as national infrastructure, this Council is effectively sidelined from decision-making, this Council therefore resolves to:

- *Reaffirm that cumulative impact must be treated as a material planning consideration, and to call on Government to introduce a cap on the amount of agricultural land, in any one area, that can be converted to solar use.*
- *Ensure that it highlights the potential cumulative impact of all three developments when considering its response to each individual proposal if forced to do so on different timelines.*
- *Produce a clear, accessible guide for residents on how to engage with national infrastructure consultations, setting out the relevant material planning considerations, ensuring that this guidance is actively shared with all Ward Councillors and Town and Parish Councils to ensure communities are properly informed and involved.”*

- 1.2 This report aims to support Members in the consideration of the Motion submitted by Councillor A Martin. It sets out the background in respect of the proposed motion.

2. BACKGROUND AND IMPLICATIONS

- 1.1. On 1 October 2025, Full Council considered a [report](#) setting out details of e-petition titled “Stop industrial-scale solar sprawl on Romney Marsh”, which had received 414 signatures. Full Council resolved that the matter be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC). On 26 February 2026, OSC received a presentation and [report](#) setting out the three proposed solar schemes and the legal framework within which the council would operate. OSC noted the report and resolved to report back to Full Council with its observations and feedback on the proposed NSIP solar schemes.

- 2.1. The committee’s [report](#) and recommendations were subsequently considered by Full Council on 24 June 2026, which resolved as follows:

1. **That report A/26/10 be received and noted.**
2. **To note that the council will be responding to consultations on the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) solar schemes in exercise of Folkestone & Hythe District Council’s regulatory functions via the Planning and Licensing Committee.**

3. **To delegate authority to the Chief Officer Planning and Building Control and the Director of Strategy & Resources to:**
 - i) **Submit Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) related responses, in documents including, but not limited to, Local Impact Reports, Relevant Representations and Statements of Common Ground, in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee and Planning Policy Portfolio Holder.**
 - ii) **Represent the Council and submit evidence at examinations in public into the NSIP schemes.**
 - iii) **Determine Development Consent Order (DCO) requirements as part of the DCO process, should one or more of the schemes be granted consent, in consultation with the Chair of Planning Committee.**
4. **To agree that officers commence work on the development of a district-wide Community Benefits Policy for large-scale energy and infrastructure schemes, to be reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee and considered by Cabinet for adoption in due course.**
5. **To agree that, as a result of the above, the matters raised in the petition will not require further consideration by a meeting of Council.**

2.2. The Motion recommends three actions:

- Reaffirm that cumulative impact must be treated as a material planning consideration, and to call on Government to introduce a cap on the amount of agricultural land, in any one area, that can be converted to solar use.
- Ensure that it considers highlights the potential cumulative impact of all three developments when considering its response to each individual proposal if forced to do so on different timelines.
- Produce a clear, accessible guide for residents on how to engage with national infrastructure consultations, setting out the relevant material planning considerations, ensuring that this guidance is actively shared with all Ward Councillors and Town and Parish Councils to ensure communities are properly informed and involved.

2.3. Considering the recommendations above, officers wish to highlight the following:

Cumulative Impact

- i) Officers have stressed the need for cumulative impacts to be considered as set out in responses submitted to date, including representations made to the Planning Inspectorate and comments provided to the promoters.

Officers will continue to emphasise the need for cumulative impacts to be assessed throughout the process and in the examinations of the three schemes.

Officers have also drawn attention to examples from elsewhere in the country, such as for the Gate Burton, Cottam, West Burton and Tillbridge solar projects in Lincolnshire, where a Joint Report on Interrelationships has been produced. Officers have highlighted this approach to the Planning Inspectorate requesting that a similar approach is taken to the three schemes currently being progressed in the Romney Marsh.

To further highlight the approach being taken by officers, Members' attention is drawn to the report to the Planning and Licensing Committee (P&L) for its special meeting on 21 July 2026, which considers the Council's response to the statutory pre-application consultation. The report to P&L highlights the need for cumulative impacts to be assessed at all stages and recommends that this point should be conveyed to the scheme promoters. The Planning and Licensing Committee meeting takes place before this meeting of Full Council and, at the time of writing, the Committee's final recommendation is not known. A copy of the Planning and Licensing Committee response will be circulated to all Members in due course and published on the Council's website.

Solar Land Cap

- ii) Members may choose to write to the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero to call for the Government to introduce a cap on the amount of agricultural land to be used for solar development in any one area. However, it is unlikely to be a matter that the Examining Authority/ Inspectors would attach significant weight or be determinative in the examination of the three schemes. The schemes will be assessed against existing national policy, particularly National Policy Statements for energy infrastructure¹, and the Council's adopted local plan policies and there is no 'cap' on solar development in existing policy. To ensure the Council's comments are relevant to the examination, officers must focus on making relevant and specific comments on the proposed schemes, taking account of the existing policy background.

Public Guidance

- iii) While there is guidance already available for members of the public to participate in the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) process, including guidance on the Planning Inspectorate's [website](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-infrastructure-planning-advice-notes#advice-for-members-of-the-public)², officers are preparing a clearer and more accessible summary. This will be intended to help residents, District Councillors and Parish and Town

¹ Available to view here: [National Policy Statements for energy infrastructure - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-infrastructure-planning-advice-notes#advice-for-members-of-the-public)

² Available to view here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-infrastructure-planning-advice-notes#advice-for-members-of-the-public>

Councils understand the process and feel confident in engaging with consultation on the projects and any resulting examinations.

3. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

3.1 Legal Officer's Comments (KP)

The legal authority for Councillors to bring motions for consideration by Full Council derives from:

The Local Government Act 1972, including Schedule 12 which provides the statutory framework for local authority meetings and proceedings.

The Council's Constitution and Council Procedure Rules which set out the process for submitting, debating and determining motions at meetings of Full Council.

In considering the Motion, members may also have regard to the General Power of Competence contained in Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011, which enables local authorities to do anything that individuals generally may do, subject to any statutory limitations.

Should the Motion be supported, any action arising from this must be implemented in accordance with the Council's Constitution, relevant statutory powers and duties and any applicable legislative requirements such as the Planning Act 2008.

Nothing in this Motion should be interpreted as fettering the Council's discretion or the exercise of professional officer judgment in preparing any responses or other representations relating to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. Any responses must be prepared having regard to the relevant statutory framework, evidence available at the time and any applicable policies.

The Motion does not, of itself, give rise to any specific legal implications.

3.2 Finance Officer's Comments (JGS)

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report at this stage. Should external advice be required on any aspects of development of the proposed Community Benefits Policy for large-scale energy and infrastructure schemes, any such costs would need to be borne within existing budgets or sums vired between budgets as required. It is unclear at this stage, however, whether any such resources are required.

3.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (JH)

There are no direct equality implications arising from this report at this stage. In considering the Motion and any resulting guidance or communications, the Council should continue to have due regard to its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty, including the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, and to its Equality and Diversity Policy commitment to make

information accessible and support participation by people with protected characteristics and those who may experience social or economic disadvantage. The third proposed action 'Produce a clear, accessible guide for residents' would support this commitment.

3.4 Climate Change Implications (JWi):

Solar energy generation aligns with the Council's District Wide Carbon Plan in that renewable energy development contributes to decarbonisation for the district. Careful assessment of cumulative social, environmental, landscape and land-use impacts should be weighed against the proportionate response to the climate change emergency the Council declared in 2019.

4. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting

Ewan Green, Director of Strategy and Resources

ewan.green@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

Report to support the E-Petition – Full Council 1 October 2025 -

<https://folkestone-hythe.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s52610/Reportpetition%20-%20final.pdf>

Report on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) Schemes on the Romney Marsh– Overview and Scrutiny 26 February 2026 -

<https://folkestone-hythe.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s54468/OSC%20Report%20-%2026%20February%202026.pdf>

Report on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) Schemes on the Romney Marsh – Full Council 24 June 2026 - https://folkestone-hythe.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s55607/2026_06_24_Solar_Farms_Petition_Full_Council_Report.pdf

https://folkestone-hythe.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s55607/2026_06_24_Solar_Farms_Petition_Full_Council_Report.pdf

Report to Planning and Licensing Committee - South Brooks Solar Farm – 21 July 2026 - <https://folkestone-hythe.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s55908/South%20Brooks%20Committee%20report%20FINAL%20002.pdf>

<https://folkestone-hythe.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s55908/South%20Brooks%20Committee%20report%20FINAL%20002.pdf>