



Media coverage to 24 May 23
Solar farm application

Summary

- Broadcast news x2
- Radio x 4
- Print x 7
- Online x 19



Broadcast news

24 April: Interview of Keith Hammond and Jackie Wilson by STV news



24 May: STV news piece covering the decision not to approve





Radio

RADIO

13 Feb - West FM

23 Feb - Radio Clyde

24 May - West FM

24 May - Radio Clyde



Print

PRINT
25 February:
The Herald
Deborah Anderson

Solar farm would blight beauty spot, claim island campaigners

By Deborah Anderson

CAMPAIGNERS against plans for a controversial solar farm which they say will blight a beauty spot on the Isle of Cumbrae are to stage a protest.

It comes after a revised planning application was lodged with North Ayrshire Council by operators Comsol Energy Limited.

Today islanders are due to march to the top of the island to the proposed site which they say is not the right location for a solar farm.

Campaigners say that, ironically, the proposed solar farm would look across the Clyde towards the proposed XLCC factory, potentially one of the largest buildings in Scotland which will manufacture undersea cables to transport solar energy from Morocco to the UK.

They also questioned the logic of building a solar farm on an island where it rains 183 days a year.

A 5MW scheme was first proposed by Comsol Energy Limited in 2016 but was not built.

Critics of the scheme say the proposal did not include any benefit to the local community, as all the power was to be taken off the island and fed into the national grid.

A subsequent application submitted in July 2022 provoked the submission of 263 comments – 96% of them objections – to North Ayrshire Council.

The application was then withdrawn by Comsol.

Comsol signalled their intent to submit another application at the end of last year which included battery-energy storage systems and associated infrastructure, giving a total output of 19MW.

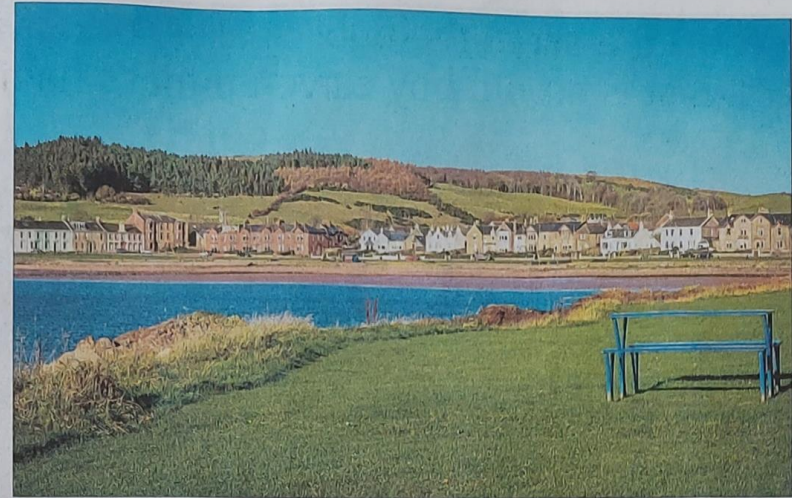
North Ayrshire Council was asked whether they would have to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) but, despite protests from Cumbrae Community Council and local MSPs, North Ayrshire Council said an EIA was not needed.

The proposed site is adjacent to the island's highest viewing point and picnic area and its core path, one of the main walks on Cumbrae. Moreover, it is within the Great Cumbrae Special Landscape Area and the Barbay Hill Local Nature Conservation Site.

Cumbrae Community Council feels local people's views are being completely ignored. They claim the planned solar farm, which is the size of 22 football pitches and would cover 1.3% of the total area of the island, at least merits a proper assessment.

They argue that an EIA would trigger important questions such as whether an alternative site might have less environmental impact than the current proposal.

A Cumbrae Community Council spokesperson said: "While we support the move to a carbon-neutral island and



The proposed site for a solar farm on Cumbrae is adjacent to the island's viewing point and picnic area and its core path, one of the main walks on the Firth of Clyde island

we are in favour of renewable energy, we have serious concerns about this particular application.

"Surely a proper assessment should be carried out to work out whether a solar farm is right for our island and, if so, whether this is the best location. That doesn't seem to be much to ask when the proposal affects such a huge area of our island.

"We rely on tourism for a significant portion of our economy and the solar farm will blight one of our main beauty spots."

The community council said the proposal pre-empted the Carbon Neutral Islands project which will undertake an assessment of the needs of the island and how they might best be met.

The spokesman added: "We believe that the proposal undermines this national policy initiative and would send a stark warning to the other islands selected to be carbon neutral,

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Surely a
proper
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that the views of the community will not be considered."

Comsol claims the project will be beneficial for the island and will help reduce energy bills.

In a planning application lodged with North Ayrshire Council, a report states: "The key determining factors in deciding the layout of the proposed development included minimising landscape and visual impact of the proposed development, minimising disturbance to local wildlife and areas of ecological interest and the protection of residential amenity."

It added: "The proposed development would be beneficial to the local area, providing economic benefit through (temporarily) increased job opportunities ... but also through the production of clean energy which will contribute to reduced carbon dioxide emissions, ultimately contributing towards net zero carbon emissions."

PRINT
2 March:
Largs and Millport
Weekly News

www.largsandmillportnews.com

Brolly good show at solar farm protest



IT was a 'brolly good show' from Millport protestors as a colourful cavalcade of campaigners marched to the top of the island to call for a solar farm plan to be halted - armed with their trusty umbrellas.

All ages ascended to the summit of the island, as drones buzzed overhead to capture the unique protest. Members of the public staged the demonstration in a bid to block a new solar farm being built at the scenic viewpoint.

Residents were urged to come out in force to protest against the proposal by Comsol Energy after a fresh planning application was submitted to North Ayrshire Council. Cumbrae Community Council urged residents to bring an umbrella as part of the demonstration to highlight the fact that it rains 183 days a year on the island - making it unsuitable for a solar farm.

Alex Harvie, chair of the council, told the News that she was delighted by the turnout on Saturday morning.

She said: "Thank you to the over 100 people who came along - and to Millport Motors for helping people get to the top of the island."

MSP bell...

15 March:
Daily Record
Dan Vevers



Fury at plan to build solar farm on island with 183 overcast days a year

EXCLUSIVE
BY **DAN VEVERS**
Environment Reporter

PLANS to build a massive solar farm at an island beauty spot where it rains half the year have been slammed by furious locals.

Campaigners said the application to build some 12,000 panels at Glaid Stone, the highest point of Great Cumbrae, was "badly thought out".

They say the proposal, by Indian firm Comsol Energy, won't benefit the local community and would see the site built on precious wetland which supports 20 endangered bird species.

Activists also highlighted that on Cumbrae, which sits off the Ayrshire coast, it clouds over and rains an average 183 days a year.

The proposed solar farm and battery storage facility would take up 38 acres – the length of 22 football pitches – and be ringed by a 6ft 7in fence, 31 CCTV towers and other outbuildings.

Glaid Stone, which has a picnic area and views to Largs and Fairlie on the mainland, is within the Great Cumbrae Special Landscape area and the Barabay Local Nature Conservation Site.

The wetland habitat supports 20 rare and threatened birds including lapwings, skylarks and cuckoos as well as more than 30 other species.

In a document explaining their opposition, Cumbrae Community Council also said all power would go off the island to the national grid.

They said: "It is badly thought out – the wrong location for such a large-scale industrial installation... it would be a



ANGER At the Glaid Stone

permanent eyesore on this tourist island."

The memo added: "This development would take 13 per cent of the island's area, with major visual and environmental harm to the island. It would impact tourism and damage the local economy."

The 7MW solar farm scheme would see 13ft high panels set up with 375 arrays of 32, coming to 12,000 cells. Battery storage facilities would add an extra 12MW of capacity, totalling 19MW.

Dozens of local people took part in a protest against the plans last month.

In its planning application, Hyderabad-based Comsol claimed it had addressed concerns and insisted the development wouldn't obstruct views "to a significant degree".

It also said there could be "community ownership" in the longer term.

North Ayrshire Council said: "The public can comment on the current application until March 22."

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It would be an eyesore on this tourist island
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COMMUNITY COUNCIL EXPLAINS ITS OPPOSITION

PRINT
15 March:
Largs and Millport
Weekly News
Adam Lyon

Largs & Millport Weekly Wednesday March 15, 2023

www.largsandmillportnews.com

'Ruinous' solar farm plan must be refused says MSP

By Adam Lyon

Adam.Lyon@newsquest.co.uk

MSP Katie Clark has urged North Ayrshire Council to reject plans for a 'ruinous' solar farm on Cumbrae.

The Scottish Labour MSP for the west of Scotland believes the proposed site, which would cover over one per cent of the island, does not meet the needs of residents living there.

The plans have been put forward several times over the past decade, with the latest application currently under consideration by council officials.

Campaigners held a public protest at the proposed site last month, *pictured*, with over 100 residents turning out to show their anger.

In a formal objection, the MSP has raised concern at the lack of consultation, the lack of an environmental impact as-



essment and the impact on tourism she believes that it will have.

She said: "From the outset, islanders have been clear they are not opposed to renewable energy generation on Cumbrae. What they are opposed to do is the complete failure to engage with islanders on this project or listen to concerns.

"The site proposed is completely unsuitable. It falls within a conservation area and will ruin a beauty spot which attracts thousands of tour-

ists every year.

"Residents are concerned that the proposed location of the site will affect the community's ability to enjoy public spaces like the core path and negatively impact on tourism to the island."

Katy also noted the proposal pre-empts the Carbon Neutral Islands project, which will see islanders consulted on future options for renewable energy on Cumbrae.

She explained: "I understand that residents have been denied information

about survey work which the applicant claimed to have undertaken before selecting this specific site.

"Residents are not opposed to renewable generation on the island, provided they are engaged with and consulted on about any prospective projects which has clearly not happened in this case.

"Residents also believe that this proposal is fundamentally at odds with the national carbon neutral islands being pursued by the Scottish Government."

The MSP says the council must reject or pause the application until a proper assessment of its impact on the island can be carried out.

She added: "Given the sensitive location of the proposed site, residents are surprised at North Ayrshire Council's decision to waive the need for an environmental impact assessment.

"It is concerning the council seem to be waving through this proposal.

"We need to move to renewable energy, but this does not mean that every proposal should be agreed to.

"The council need to listen very closely to the message being sent by the island."

Comsol Energy, the firm behind the application, claims the solar farm would be beneficial for the island and could reduce energy bills in the future.

...ITAL TO LARGES MILLPORT'S FUTURE

PRINT
 1 April:
 Daily Mail
 Gavin Madeley
 1 of 2

Daily Mail, Saturday, April 1, 2023



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ON A clear day, when the sunshine-blue waters of the Clyde sparkle with life, one can see for miles from the top of Great Cumbrae. The scenery from the Glad Stone, the island's panoramic viewpoint, becomes ever more breathtaking at each turn of the compass.

Out to the west, the jagged outline of the Arran and Bute mountains rise up almost straight out of the water. To the north, beyond the upper Clyde estuary, stand the hunched shoulders of Ben Lomond and the ancient crags of the Arrochar Alps.

To the east, above Larga loom the Renfrew Hills, while far to the south lies the uninhabited island of Ailsa Craig. When the visibility is truly exceptional, it is possible to pick out the coast of Northern Ireland.

Often as not, of course, it won't be a clear day. Given the West Coast's notoriously fickle weather, the Glad Stone will more than likely be cloaked in low cloud and tipping rains.

Indeed, it has been claimed that the place suffers from inclement weather up to 183 days each year.

Which is why it may surprise many visitors to this quiet island paradise to learn that plans are afoot to erect a massive solar energy farm hard up against this ancient beauty spot.

They may wonder aloud why anyone would want to place a 19MW green energy scheme reliant on the power of light in a place where a pall of thick rain cloud darkens the skies for about half the year.

Locals, too, have questioned this apparent dichotomy, but their objections to the project run far deeper.

They fear that if the solar farm does receive the go-ahead from planners, the development could threaten their very way of life - which has always relied heavily on hooking the passing tourist trade.

ALLOWING rows and rows of photovoltaic panels up to 12ft high - ringed by a 6ft tin fence and 31 CCTV towers - to stretch across 38 acres of moorland beside one of its most popular visitor attractions could ruin it, they say, and damage important wildlife habitats into the bargain.

As North Ayrshire Council prepares to consider a planning application from an energy firm this month, the battle for the Glad Stone is reaching its endgame with campaigners vowing to fight to the last.

Recently, a group of them staged a symbolic protest at the beauty spot.

With them, they carried both large umbrellas to highlight the vagaries of the local climate and a serious message that 98 per cent of those who responded to the planning application said they are against it.

Some complain that there has been 'no real consultation' with islanders about the plans.

Others suggest that the firm behind the scheme, Comsol Energy, has yet to tell them what it plans to do with the electricity it hopes to generate.

And many worry about dozens of bulky construction lorries suddenly clogging the narrow roads - not to mention hogging precious space on the life-line vehicle ferry that links the town of Milport with Larga, the seaside port a ten-minute hop away on the mainland.

Great Cumbrae is also famous as 'Bicycle Island' among cyclists drawn to the safe, ten-mile mostly flat, circular loop road which takes in the bike hire and repair shops along the historic Victorian seafront.

Speak to any passing shoppers or daytrippers there and the solar farm quickly becomes the hot

topic - yet one might question why anyone living beyond the island in the Clyde should care too much about what seems a very localised dispute.

But with energy bills soaring and a cost of living crisis in full swing, with North Sea oil and gas facing a precarious future and Holyrood committing itself to stringent net zero targets, the pressure is undoubtedly on to find room for renewables.

Wind, wave and solar are the buzzwords, while last month, energy giant SSE announced that it was investing £100million in the UK's biggest pumped hydro storage scheme in 40 years at Coire Glas in the Great Glen.

Suitable sites big enough to swallow a solar farm are also evidently at a premium, which perhaps explains why Comsol Energy has been pursuing plans at the Glad Stone since 2016.

But it has left the people of Great Cumbrae asking if their precious rock is to be sacrificed for a commercial energy scheme where do we draw the line?

'We don't know why, if you were wanting to set up an industrial zone, a solar farm, you would choose an environmentally fragile location on a tourist island best located on the West Coast of Scotland,' said Alex Harvie, chairman of the Cumbrae Community Council, which is spearheading opposition to the solar farm. 'We did point out that it would mean a year in Milport. Just against a solar farm, we're just against a solar farm in this south of Spain and you should

do solar farms everywhere. We have a balance to strike between the people who live here and the tourist trade, which we really welcome.

'But if you take out one of our major beauty spots and therefore reduce the tourist value of the island, that will really affect businesses and our economy.'

Having set out its stall, the community council posted a forcefully worded statement on its website arguing that approving the scheme in the face of such overwhelming opposition would stand as a 'betrayal' of local democracy.

It said: 'Islanders are asking themselves, as a community, if their views as those actually living on the island count. Planning authorities have made it clear that ordinary views do not count in the same way that the measured views of technicians backing the proposal.

'Are then the democratic values of ordinary folk to be waived along with serious thought about the consequences for the island's natural habitat?

'Does indigenous knowledge of the locals not come into the planning process?'

It points out that 100,000 passengers a month come to Cumbrae each July and August, according to North Ayrshire Council figures, anything that stops the flow of tourist pounds could be disastrous.

'The Scottish Wildlife Trust has voiced its disapproval for a

SPECIAL REPORT
 by Gavin Madeley

Daily Mail, Saturday, April 1, 2023

SCT
 Page 39

It's one of our prettiest small islands and a magnet for tourists - despite the wet weather. But an extraordinary planning row has sparked a revolt on Great Cumbrae...



Stunning vista: Great Cumbrae's renowned beauty could be threatened by solar panels, left

We're not against a solar farm - we're against having it here. We told them: it rains 183 days a year in Milport!

ment could have been found, and was told by the council that it was not necessary.

Craig Little, an advisor to Comsol Energy, stressed community concerns had been addressed.

He told trade website Scottish Construction Now that similar schemes carried out in Denmark and Wales had opened up 'green tourism opportunities, leading to significant economic benefits beyond tourism.'

He said that 'the island's own energy security and disaster resilience' would be vastly improved, notably during the winter when the island has been prone to regular blackouts and would reduce its carbon footprint by 40 per cent.

He added: 'Longer term, if residents were interested, there is the potential for community ownership of the solar farm, which could also provide options for discounted island electricity tariffs. The benefits to the island, not to mention the planet, are significant.'

Others are wary of such rhetoric, although the notion of a community-led scheme offers a glimmer of hope.

Great Cumbrae is one of six islands selected for a Scottish Government green energy scheme, the Carbon Neutral Islands (CNI) initiative, which aims to turn them into models of carbon neutral energy usage. A key stipulation of CNI is that it should be community-led.

'We feel that this planning application undermines that initiative, because CNI is all about community-led renewables and this isn't,' said Mrs Harvie.

'What we are calling for is a renewable energy of the sort that will benefit the whole island and one that, considers a more logical location.

'Why not do it on the tops of mountains in the interior?'

It is not lost on her that easterly views from the island take in an area which has long been associated with heavy industry and the production of alternative power.

What we are calling for is a renewable energy of the sort that will benefit the whole island and one that, considers a more logical location.

'Why not do it on the tops of mountains in the interior?'

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has already created 500MW of installed renewable capacity, with a further 1,600MW at various stages of planning and development.

Comsol Energy, which is headquartered in the Indian city of Hyderabad, actually secured planning for a slightly smaller scheme at the same location several years ago before then choosing not to act upon it.

The company has used its previous success as justification that its renewed application for a project lasting 25 years should be granted.

In its planning application, the firm insists that its key aims include 'minimising disturbance to local wildlife and areas of ecological interest and the protection of residential amenity.'

It says it had queried the need for an environmental impact assessment, which would have automatically looked at whether a more appropriate site for the development

justify mindless violations of the island's landscape?

'How will row after row of solar panels, the outbuildings, rings of fences and security cameras improve the island?'

Strong stuff. But the community council certainly still has its work cut out trying to be heard above the confident hum of a burgeoning Scottish renewables energy industry, which now supports more than 27,000 full-time jobs and generating around £5.6billion of output. It

The community council statement adds: 'Surely the broad aims of cleaner energy sources cannot

Turn to Page 40

PRINT
1 April:
Daily Mail
Gavin Madeley
2 of 2

Continued from Page 39

sources. Across the narrow channel on the Ayrshire coast sits the industrial blot of the Hunterston B nuclear power station, which is in the early stages of being decommissioned.

Up the coast is the distinctive jutting pier of the Hunterston terminal, built to handle iron ore and coal bound for British Steel's giant Ravenscraig steelworks in Lanarkshire.

The former iron ore and coal yard has since been cleaned up and turned into an 'energy and marine campus', called Hunterston PARC (Port and Resource Campus).

One of its proposed tenants will be the XLCC factory, potentially one of the largest buildings in Scotland, which will manufacture undersea cables to transport solar energy from Morocco to the UK.

SOLAR is becoming huge and new farms are springing up across the country. They need a lot of space so are often sited on agricultural land, such as a plan to build a 60MW facility south of the Buchan village of Crimond and another scheme spanning 148 acres at Broombrae Farm, near Newmachar, Aberdeenshire.

Cumbrae's solar farm may not be of that magnitude but is daunting enough to prompt 285 locals to write to the council opposing it, while only five people supported it.

Among those against the plan is Johanna Williams, 53, owner of the Brewbaker café and bakery on Stuart Street. She started coming to the island as a child in the Seventies, in the days before package flights took off and families would steam 'doon the watter' on their annual break.

'People come back generation

after generation and that's the thing with this place,' she said.

'I have customers in their 20s who are following in their parents' and grandparents' footsteps.'

'It's daytrippers and weekenders and that's what we are anxious not to lose.'

Ms Williams added: 'I don't want it personally - I think it's in the wrong place and covers such a vast expanse, so I can't imagine it will make the area prettier.'

'But if it goes ahead, we will have to make the best of it like we always do here. I am more concerned about the effect that months of construction lorries might have on the ferries.'

Miss Williams said the island's tourism had been expanding recently to a year-round business following the Covid pandemic.

'I used to shut for a month in January, but post-Covid the whole landscape has changed in the way people holiday,' she said. 'Those in the Airbnb market have really upped their game, so people are now coming in January and February. Many come on bikes and many go up to the viewpoint.'

'They won't be happy if that is impacted, that's for sure.'

Of course, nothing has been decided yet. North Ayrshire Council is not due to discuss the application until April 26.

A spokesman confirmed it will be determined against a range of factors, including the council's Local Development Plan and the CNI.

He added: 'All public comments received will be taken into consideration when determining the application.'

For now, all the residents of Cumbrae can do is walk up to the Glaid Stone and take in those spectacular views.

Like forecasting the weather, no one quite knows what the future will bring.

PRINT
19 April:
The Herald
Adam Lyon



Islanders 'disappointed' with solar company

COMMUNITY councillors on Cumbrae have spoken of their "disappointment" that the firm behind controversial plans for a solar farm has submitted extra documents after the consultation has ended.

Comsol Energy, who have lodged a planning application for the site at Wee Minnemoer, submitted extra drawings and details at the end of April.

The application is due to be heard on Wednesday, May 24, with hundreds of objections lodged to the plans.

However, Alex Harvie, chair of Cumbrae Community Council, believes the late submission of the documents means there is no chance for them to be scrutinised by the island community.

She said: "We are extremely disappointed that the applicant has been permitted to submit five drawings and a 17-page report after consultation has

Adam Lyon

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closed, with no opportunity for public scrutiny. The correct time for democratic debate and responding to concerns is before a planning application is submitted not after the opportunity for democratic objection has ended.

"We note that the additional documents submitted do not include a single change to their proposals in response to the comments made by the community, and all the objections laid out still stand."

The island community say concerns still remain over several key issues, including the location of the site, the environmental impact, and the lack of engagement and benefit on Cumbrae. Comsol Energy has submitted a document outlining their response to the community's concerns, but Alex

believes it did nothing to address the issues raised.

She explained: "This has been our experience of the applicant throughout the seven years that this proposal has hung over the island.

"During this time they have failed to take on board a single one of the many hundreds of formal comments that have been submitted.

"Their latest report they describe as a 'rebuttal' of every comment. This is in no way the constructive dialogue that we would have hoped for.

"Rebutting our comments and making vague suggestions of mitigation after the consultation period has ended is entirely inappropriate and does not address any concerns which were submitted."

Comsol Energy declined to comment on the addition of extra documents when contacted by the *News*.

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PRINT
18 May:
The Herald
Ema Sabljak
1 of 2

Islanders' anger over 15-hectare solar panel battery farm plans

Ema Sabljak

ISLANDERS facing planning proposals for a solar farm the size of 22 football pitches have their concerns overheard on the island.

Great Cumbrae could see 12,000 solar panels at a site at the top of the island if plans are approved next week. However, including the development would blight one of the island's main "beauty spots", as well as harm the wildlife present.

After the consultation period ended, developer Comsol submitted a 17-page report which it described as a "rebuttal" to the concerns raised by Cumbrae Community Council.

In the concerns raised by Cumbrae Community Council, submitted by Gregor Harvie, who lives on the island, advised the Cumbrae Community Council on planning matters.

He said: "The applicant has been saying this proposal is an option, so they have had ample time to engage with the community and tackle our concerns, but they have made no genuine attempt to do that. They haven't particularly taken on board our concerns – they have just refuted all of them."

"They have basically said 'we're right and you're wrong', which isn't the kind of constructive dialogue that we would have hoped for."

There are also many questions still left "unanswered" about the development, including how the small island would benefit.

When the developer stated they had carried out "full and robust assessment of protected species", the community council called it "inadequate".

The survey by the applicant, carried out on a single day during winter, identified a single protected bird species – dunlin.

Community members have registered sightings of at least 20 endangered species on the island, including greenfinches, skylarks, lapwings and wheatears.

A 5MW scheme was first proposed by Comsol Energy Limited in 2016 but was not built.

Another application submitted in July 2022 led to the submission of 263 comments to North Ayrshire Council.

Each of the comments was sent to the planning process and the applicant was asked to respond to the additional information that had been submitted.

While the community council questions were submitted after the public consultation period had ended, North Ayrshire Council said such submissions were "part of the planning process".



Islanders are concerned over the "blatant" process for approval of a huge battery farm



Milford is the only town on the island of Great Cumbrae in the Firth of Clyde

The community council was asked to provide a response to the additional information that had been submitted. The proposal was for the farm to be a solar farm, which would generate electricity for the island's needs. The proposal was for the farm to be a solar farm, which would generate electricity for the island's needs. The proposal was for the farm to be a solar farm, which would generate electricity for the island's needs.

High Level Nature Conservation Site. It is a "beauty spot" (the council) and the island's main "beauty spot". The proposal was for the farm to be a solar farm, which would generate electricity for the island's needs. The proposal was for the farm to be a solar farm, which would generate electricity for the island's needs.

"We would welcome renewable energy" – a statement from the community council.

Ema Sabljak

ISLANDERS facing looming proposals for a solar farm the size of 22 football pitches fear their concerns have fallen on deaf ears.

Great Cumbrae could see 12,000 solar panels at a site at the top of the island if plans are approved next week. However, residents fear the development would blight one of the island's main "beauty spots" as well as possibly impact the wildlife present there.

After the consultation period ended, developer Comsol submitted a 17-page report which it described as a "rebuttal" to the concerns raised by Cumbrae Community Council.

Artist and qualified architect Dr Gregor Harvie, who lives on the island, advises the Cumbrae Community Council on planning matters.

He said: "The applicant has been pursuing this proposal for seven years, so they have had ample time to engage with the community and tackle our concerns, but they have made no genuine attempt to do that. They haven't particularly taken on board our concerns – they have just refuted all of them."

"They have basically said 'we're right and you're wrong', which isn't the kind of constructive dialogue that we would have hoped for."

There are also many questions still left "unanswered" about the

development, including how the small island would benefit.

While the developers stated they had carried out "full and robust assessment of protected species", the community council called it "inadequate".

The survey by the applicant, carried out on a single day during winter, identified a single protected bird species – dunlin.

Community members have registered sightings of at least 20 endangered species with the RSPB, including greenfinches, skylarks, lapwings and wheatears.

A 5MW scheme was first proposed by Comsol Energy Limited in 2016 but was not built.

Another application submitted in July 2022 led to the submission of 263 comments to North Ayrshire Council – of which 96% were objections. The application was withdrawn by Comsol Energy. The latest application would include battery energy storage systems and a total output of 19MW.

While the community council questioned why such an extensive document was submitted after the public could no longer respond to the plans, North Ayrshire Council said such submissions were "part of the planning process".



Millport is the only town on the island of Great Cumbrae in the Firth of Clyde

The community council was allowed to provide a response to the additional report added in May, but public consultation had finished in March.

The proposed site for the farm is adjacent to a viewing area at the island's highest point and the core path which is one of the main walks on the island. It also lies within the Great Cumbrae Special Landscape Area and the Barbay

Hill Local Nature Conservation Site.

Dr Harvie added: "If [the council] permit this, you've got to ask – what do those designations mean? If they don't prevent 15-hectare solar farms, then what do they prevent? This is not us saying we are against solar farms or renewable energy. We would welcome renewable energy on the island and if solar power is the right way to do that

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We would
welcome
renewable
energy

then so be it. But what we are saying is that this is the wrong place. This is just not the right place.”

Developers have previously said that the site does “not form part of the beauty spot” – its Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment acknowledges there will be a limited effect on more than a tenth (13.5%) of the whole route.

As well as fears over the well-used beauty spot, residents have questioned claims it would help Cumbrae achieve Scottish Government ambitions for carbon neutrality by 2040.

The proposal is expected to be considered at the next planning meeting on May 24. A North Ayrshire Council spokesperson said: “The additional information provided was in response to matters raised in the public consultation period and by the community council.

“Submissions of this nature are part of the planning process and permitted under the regulations governing planning applications. All the information submitted will be considered by the planning committee when the application is determined.”

Comsol was approached for comment by The Herald.



Online

ONLINE
20 Jan:
Largs and
Millport News
Adam Lyon

'This needs investigation' - Concerns over Cumbrae solar farm plan



By Adam Lyon

Trainee Reporter

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COMMUNITY councillors have joined forces to call for a vital study into the impact of a proposed large-scale solar farm on Cumbrae.

The News can reveal that Comsol Energy Ltd is set to submit another planning application to turn a chunk of the island into a 'green power plant' after its previous bid sparked a public backlash.

The applicants planning consultants have indicated that the revised proposals will allow for 7MW of solar generation – 40 per cent more than before – from a sprawling site that will cover over 15 hectares.

Community council chair Alex Harvie has written to local authority planning chief Iain Davies, urging him to make sure an environment impact assessment (EIA) is carried out by the developer, before the project is progressed.

She said: "This would allow a proper assessment of whether there are alternative sites for this particular proposal that might have a lesser impact on the environment.

"It would also look at how power generated would be connected to the national grid, which has not been explained in any of the previous applications.

"Our understanding is that proposals of this nature should be required to carry out an EIA if they are likely to have significant effects on the environment.

"Schedule two, which this falls into, sets a size threshold of 0.5 hectares for installations for the production of electricity - and the proposed development is for 15.3 hectares.

"This is 30 times larger than the minimum threshold and 1.3 per cent of the island's land area so it will clearly have a significant effect."

The application is for a site to the north east of Wee Minnemoer, near the highest point on the island, and would take over more than per cent of Cumbrae's land mass.

Hundreds of objections to the plans were previously sent in to North Ayrshire Council, with only a small minority of islanders saying they were in favour.

Community councillors believe the site is the wrong position for the farm, and say it goes directly against discussions around Cumbrae becoming a carbon-neutral island.

Alex explained: "One of the main concerns of the local community is the sensitive location at the island's highest point, adjacent to the Glaid Stone, and the island's viewing point.

"The site is also within the Barbay Local Nature Conservation Site.

"The selection of this important landscape by the applicant is based purely on commercial considerations and we do not believe any alternative sites have been looked at.

"It also pre-empts the work that will be undertaken as part of the Carbon Neutral Islands project, which will carefully consider whether renewable generation is appropriate for the island.

"If so, it will look at what form it might take, where it might best be located, and how it might benefit the community."

Alex believes an EIA is a must to avoid setting a precedent for similar developments elsewhere.

She added: "If no assessment is required by North Ayrshire Council, this will send an unfortunate message to other communities which are part of the Carbon Neutral Islands project.

"It will signal that proposals will not be properly considered and that inappropriate developments will be thrust upon them without a proper probe."

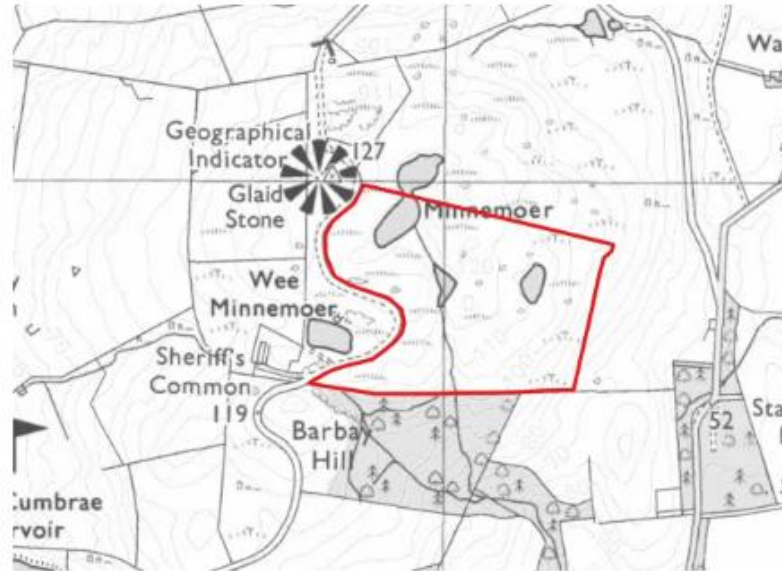
ONLINE 13 Feb: Project Scot

Home > News > Renewed plans submitted for solar farm on Isle of Cumbrae

News Sustainability

Renewed plans submitted for solar farm on Isle of Cumbrae

13 February 2023



COMSOL Energy has lodged a planning application with North Ayrshire Council to establish a solar farm on the Isle of Cumbrae.

Located at a site north west of the island, the solar farm will feature around 7MW solar and 12MW battery energy storage, enabling the island to move closer to being clean energy self-sufficient.

The solar farm has been tipped to immediately reduce the island's carbon footprint by over 40%.

The application is a new submission following the expiration of a previous application. Comsol Energy has received approval from the DNO SSE to import and export power to the island.

Craig Little, advisor to Comsol Energy, said, "North Ayrshire Council granted the original application, however, it was time-sensitive, so we are submitting a fresh application. Comsol has also addressed concerns raised by the community.

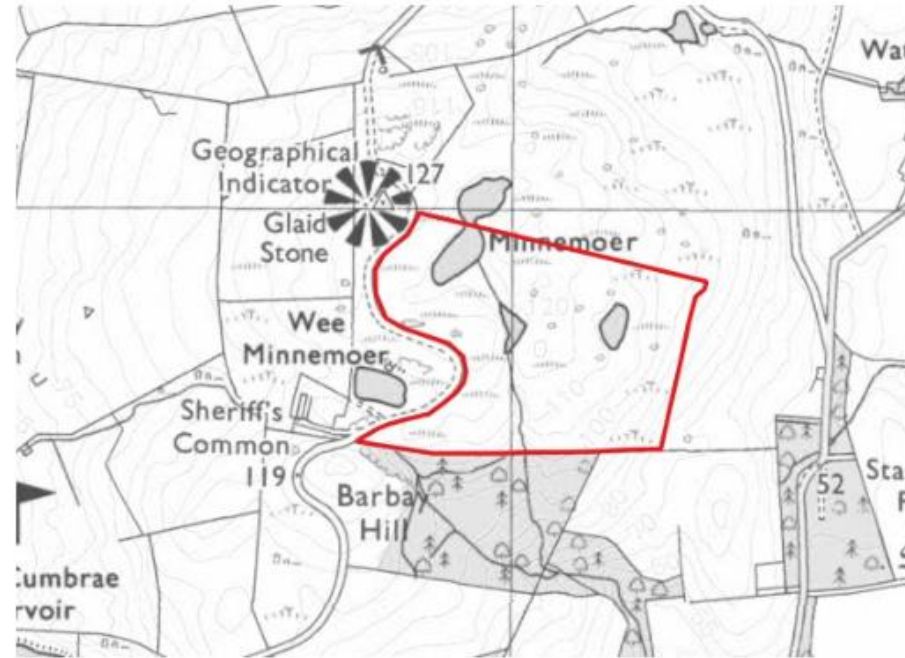
"We are excited by the potential the solar farm has for the island, which could follow in the footsteps of other pioneering islands in Denmark and communities in Wales, which have transformed in an effort to become more carbon neutral but equally have embraced green tourism opportunities, leading to significant economic benefits beyond tourism.

"As well as offering potential economic opportunities, the island's energy security and disaster resilience would be vastly improved, notably during the winter when the island has been prone to regular blackouts. The proposed battery storage element of the solar farm, if not discharged, could provide up to 24 MWh of backup power.

"Longer term, if residents were interested, there is the potential for community ownership of the solar farm, which could also provide options for discounted island electricity tariffs. The benefits to the island, not to mention the planet, are significant."

Solar and battery storage proposal lodged for Isle of Cumbrae

13 FEB 2023 |  Reading time: 2 minutes



Comsol Energy has lodged a planning application with North Ayrshire Council to establish a solar farm on the Isle of Cumbrae.

Located at an identified site northwest of the island, the solar farm will feature circa 7MW solar and 12MW battery energy storage, enabling the island to move a step closer to being completely clean energy self-sufficient. The solar farm would immediately reduce the island's carbon footprint by over 40%.

The site boundary for the solar farm remains the same as the original application. The generation capacity will provide additional energy storage when power is not required for export. Consequently, the extra battery storage will support the island's energy security and future adoption of renewables.

The solar farm could become the catalyst for the island's ambitions to become one of six carbon-zero islands in Scotland by 2040, supported by the Scottish Government.

The application is a new submission following the expiration of a previous application. Comsol Energy has now received approval from the DNO SSE to import and export power to the island.

Craig Little, advisor to Comsol Energy, said, "North Ayrshire Council granted the original application, however, it was time-sensitive, so we are submitting a fresh application. Comsol has also addressed concerns raised by the community.

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"Longer term, if residents were interested, there is the potential for community ownership of the solar farm, which could also provide options for discounted island electricity tariffs. The benefits to the island, not to mention the planet, are significant."

New plan revealed for solar farm that would cover almost one and a quarter per cent of Cumbrae

14th February 2022

LOCAL GOVERNMENT TECHNOLOGY MILLPORT



By Adam Lyon
Trainee Reporter
@Adaml_99

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PLANS for a photovoltaic solar farm which would cover more than one per cent of Cumbrae are back on the table.

Planning permission was given to the project by North Ayrshire Council back in 2017, however no work was ever carried out and the permission lapsed.

Comsol Energy Limited has now requested that the council provide a screening option to determine whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) would be required to revive the proposed solar farm plan.

The site at Wee Minnemoer to the north of Millport would cover around 15 hectares on moorland that is currently used for grazing.

Resident Gregor Harvie, an architect and special advisor to Cumbrae Community Council, says an EIA is essential.

He said: "The applicant has brought the plan back to life, and is proposing to bring back a previously designed scheme.

"It is a very big development and will cover around one and a quarter per cent of the island, which is pretty sizeable.

"North Ayrshire Council does not have to consult on whether or not to do an EIA, but we have written to suggest that they do anyway.

"Whether you are in favour of the project or not, an EIA will consider the best place for it and will help the council define conditions they might put on it to lessen any impact on the environment."

Comsol says that the photovoltaic panels would be mounted in fixed arrays with an electricity generating power of up to 5MW.

The arrays would be between 2.4 and four metres above ground level, with the proposed development also including ground mounted electrical inverters, a substation and a short access road.

A spokesperson for the firm added: "Solar farms are by nature a temporary land use, usually having an operational life of 25 years so the proposed development will result in minimal disturbance to land cover.

"The structures on site would be ground mounted using ground screws, which offers the advantage of avoiding excavation and foundation work, minimising the impact of the proposed development."

Councillor Ian Murdoch has also backed calls for an EIA - and has raised concerns around how the planned project would benefit the Cumbrae community.

He said: "In my opinion an assessment is the first thing the company should be doing. I worry what it will bring to the people of the island."

Comsol this week reiterated that it believes the site's environmental impact will not be significant and believes that an EIA is not necessary.

More details on the application can be found on the North Ayrshire Council planning portal.

ONLINE
24 Feb:
Herald
Deborah
Anderson
1 of 2

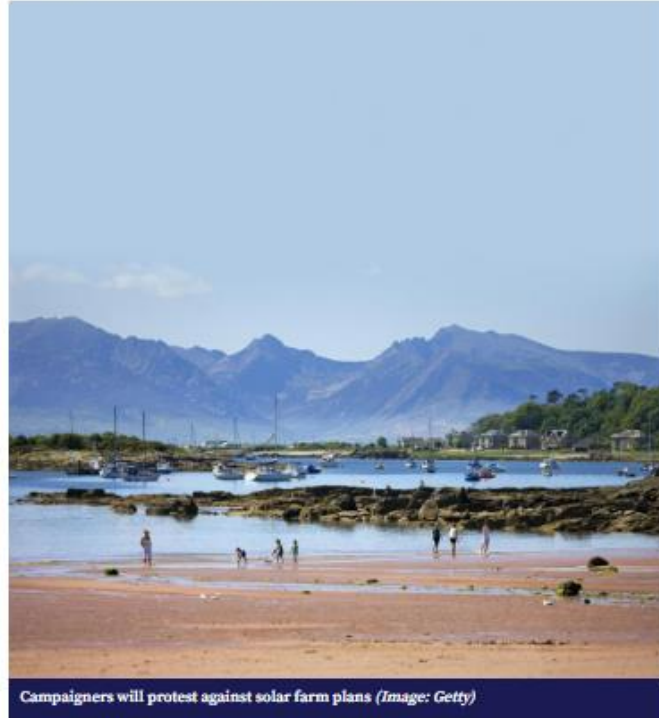
Isle of Cumbrae residents to mount protest against solar farm plans

24th February

ENVIRONMENT

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT



Campaigners will protest against solar farm plans (Image: Getty)



By Deborah Anderson

Deputy Head of Content

@DebsLAndersonHT

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2 Comments

Campaigners against plans for a controversial solar farm which they say will blight a beauty spot on the Isle of Cumbrae will stage a protest.

On Saturday islanders will march to the top of the island to the proposed site which they say is not the right location for a solar farm.

Campaigners say ironically the proposed site looks across the Clyde towards the proposed XLCC Factory site, one of the largest buildings in Scotland which will manufacture undersea cables to transport solar energy from Morocco to the UK.

They also questioned the logic for building a solar farm on an island where it rains 183 days a year.

A 5MW scheme was first proposed by Comsol Energy Limited in 2016, but was not built.

Critics of the scheme say the proposal did not include any benefit to the local community, all the power was to be taken off island and fed into the national grid.

A subsequent application submitted in July 2022 provoked the submission of 263 comments (96% objections) to North Ayrshire Council. The application was withdrawn by Comsol Energy Limited.

Comsol held an event at the end of last year signalling their intent to submit another planning application which included battery energy storage systems and associated infrastructure, giving a total output of 19MW.

North Ayrshire Council was asked whether they would have to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), but despite protests from Cumbrae Community Council and local MSPs, North Ayrshire Council said an Environmental Impact Assessment was not needed.

The proposed site is adjacent to the highest point viewing and picnic area and the core path – one of the main walks on the island. It is within the Great Cumbrae Special Landscape Area and the Barbay Hill Local Nature Conservation Site.

Cumbrae Community Council feels local people's views are being completely ignored.

They claim the planned solar farm, the size of 22 football pitches, covering 1.3% of the total area of the island, at least merits a proper assessment.

They argue an EIA would trigger important questions such as whether an alternative site might have less environmental impact than the current proposal, which is adjacent to the main viewing point and picnic area on the island and is within the Great Cumbrae Special Landscape Area and the Barbay Hill Local Nature Conservation Site.

ONLINE 24 Feb: Herald Deborah Anderson 2 of 2

A Cumbrae Community Council spokesperson said: "While we support the move to a carbon neutral island and we are in favour of renewable energy, we have serious concerns about this particular application.

"Surely a proper assessment should be carried out to work out whether a solar farm is right for our island, and, if so, whether this is the best location. That doesn't seem to be much to ask when the proposal affects such a huge area of our island. We rely on tourism for a significant portion of our **economy** and the solar farm will blight one of our main beauty spots."

The community council said the proposal pre-empts the Carbon Neutral Islands project which will undertake an assessment of the needs of the island and how they might best be met.

The spokesman added: "Involving community consultation, this is likely to include options for renewable power generation, however the work hasn't been carried out yet. We believe that the proposal undermines this national policy initiative and would send a stark warning to the other islands selected to be carbon neutral, that the views of the community will not be considered, and that proposals will be implemented without proper evaluation and with no local benefit whatsoever.

"We are concerned that the Carbon Neutral Islands project will be used to force this project on us whether it is right for the island or not."

Comsol Energy, the firm behind the application, claims the project will be beneficial for the island and will help reduce energy bills in the future.

ONLINE 24 Feb: Glasgow World Liam Smillie

News

Isle of Cumbrae Community Council to protest massive solar farm proposed to be built in popular beauty spot

On the same island as Millport, the community council worry that the solar farm the size of '22 football pitches' could affect tourism



By Liam Smillie
Published 24th Feb 2023, 15:35 BST



Cumbrae Community Council are hosting a protest this weekend as a controversial solar farm has been proposed to be built in a popular beauty spot.

Described as 'highly contentious', the proposal would see a massive solar farm built at the highest point of Cumbrae - a **popular beauty spot** for both locals and tourists alike. The community council has been fighting proposals to cultivate green energy on the island since 2016 - as they argue the proposals bring 'no benefit to the local community'.

The protest will go ahead tomorrow, Saturday February 25, in which islanders will climb to the top of the Cumbrae and put umbrellas up - meant to signify to developers that this site is 'not the place' for the solar farm.

The planned solar farm is the size of 22 football pitches and would cover 1.3% of the total area of the island - according to the Cumbrae Community Council.

Comsol Energy Limited have been trying to get a solar farm built on Cumbrae for the last seven years - initially proposing a 5MW scheme in 2016 which was rejected as all power was to be taken off the island and fed into the national grid.

Comsol Energy withdrew an application to [North Ayrshire Council](#) in July of 2022 after 263 comments (96 per cent of which were objections to the proposal) were left on the planning application.

At the end of 2022, Comsol held an exhibition signalling their intent to submit yet another planning application, this time including battery energy storage systems and associated infrastructure, giving a total output of 19MW. According to the Cumbrae Community Council, no Environmental Impact Assessment was carried out despite protests from the Cumbrae Community Council and local MSP's.

In response the community council says the local communities views are being 'completely ignored'.

A spokesperson for the community council said: "The rush to go for green energy is being used to push through a poorly-thought out proposal for a highly-contentious solar farm which will blight a beauty spot on the Isle of Cumbrae.

"Ironically, the proposed site looks across the [Clyde](#) towards the proposed XLCC Factory site, one of the largest buildings in Scotland which will manufacture undersea cables to transport solar energy from Morocco to the UK. Compared to this, the logic for building a solar farm on an island where it rains 183 days a year seems highly questionable.



A real family favourite, the 10 mile route around the Isle of Great Cumbrae is a picturesque treat for all ages. Just hop on the short ferry ride from Largs to Millport where you start and finish the cycle.

"An Environmental Impact Assessment would trigger important questions such as whether an alternative site might have less environmental impact than the current proposal, which is adjacent to the main viewing point and picnic area on the island and is within the Great Cumbrae Special Landscape Area and the Barbay Hill Local Nature Conservation Site.

"While we support the move to a carbon neutral island and we are in favour of renewable energy, we have serious concerns about this particular application. Surely a proper assessment should be carried out to work out whether a solar farm is right for our island, and, if so, whether this is the best location.

"That doesn't seem to be much to ask when the proposal affects such a huge area of our island. We rely on tourism for a significant portion of our economy and the solar farm will blight one of our main beauty spots.

"We are concerned that the Carbon Neutral Islands project will be used to force this project on us whether it is right for the island or not."

Related topics: [Proposals](#) [Community](#) [Glasgow](#) [Renewable Energy](#)

ONLINE 28 Feb: The Scotsman Ilona Amos 1 of 2



Environment

Clyde islanders protest against plans for massive solar farm at popular beauty spot and wildlife site on Cumbrae

Residents of a tiny Scottish island have gathered with umbrellas raised to protest against plans to build a massive new solar farm at one of the outpost's best-loved beauty spots.



Locals from Great Cumbrae, a popular tourist destination in the Clyde since Victorian times, fear construction of the 19MW green energy scheme could damage important wildlife and habitats as well as ruining an iconic viewpoint at the highest hilltop on the 2.5-mile-long island.

They have expressed disbelief that Cumbrae, which has 183 rainy days each year, could be a suitable location for such a project.

An application for planning permission to construct the development, which includes 12,000 solar panels and a 12MW battery storage facility, has been lodged with North Ayrshire Council. It will cover an area of around 37 acres – about the same size as 22 football pitches, and more than 1 per cent of the island's total land area.

The location is near the main viewing point and picnic area on the island, at the top of Barbay hill, and is within the Great Cumbrae Special Landscape Area and a Local Nature Conservation Site.

Home to only around 1,200 people, the island has a “fragile” economy that is largely based on tourism. Cumbrae is among six other locations selected to be part of the Scottish Government's Carbon Neutral Islands project.

A group of protesters marched to the site of the proposed solar farm to demonstrate their opposition.

Cumbrae Community Council, the statutory group responsible for representing the island on planning issues, has said locals are generally supportive of renewable energy and moves to slash greenhouse gas emissions, but there are serious concerns the solar farm could destroy the local environment in a bid to help save the planet.

ONLINE
28 Feb:
The Scotsman
Ilona Amos
2 of 2

They are calling for an environmental impact assessment to be carried out to investigate the impact of the scheme on the island's landscape and wildlife.

A spokesperson for Cumbrae Community Council, said: "While we support the move to a carbon-neutral island and we are in favour of renewable energy, we have serious concerns about this particular application. Surely a proper assessment should be carried out to work out whether a solar farm is right for our island and, if so, whether this is the best location.

"That doesn't seem to be much to ask when the proposal affects such a huge area of our island. We rely on tourism for a significant portion of our economy and the solar farm will blight one of our main beauty spots."

A 5MW scheme was first proposed by Comsol Energy in 2016, but was not built. A later application, submitted in July 2022, provoked 263 comments, mostly objections. The application was withdrawn.



Now Comsol Energy submitted an updated proposal, this time including battery energy storage systems and associated infrastructure, with a total output of 19MW.

The firm asked planners whether an EIA would be required, but despite strong protests from Cumbrae Community Council and local MSPs, councillors ruled it was not needed.

The community council spokesperson said the situation should serve as a "stark warning" to other islands selected for the carbon neutral project that "the views of the community will not be considered" and "proposals will be implemented without proper evaluation and with no local benefit whatsoever".

ONLINE
2 March:
Largs and Millport
News
Calum Corral

Millport solar farm protest is 'brolly good' effort

3rd March

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

MILLPORT



IT was a 'brolly good show' from Millport protestors as a colourful cavalcade of campaigners marched to the top of the island to call for a solar farm plan to be halted - armed with their trusty umbrellas.

All ages ascended to the summit of the island, as drones buzzed overhead to capture the unique protest.

Members of the public staged the demonstration in a bid to block a new solar farm being built at the scenic viewpoint.

Residents were urged to come out in force to protest against the proposal by Comsol Energy after a fresh planning application was submitted to North Ayrshire Council.

Cumbrae Community Council urged residents to bring an umbrella as part of the demonstration to highlight the fact that it rains 183 days a year on the island - making it unsuitable for a solar farm.

Alex Harvie, chair of the council, told the News that she was delighted by the turnout on Saturday morning.

She said: "Thank you to the over 100 people who came along - and to Millport Motors for helping people get to the top of the island."

<https://www.largsandmillportnews.com/news/23351723.millport-solar-farm-protest-brolly-good-effort/>

Furious locals slam plans for massive solar farm on Scots island

Local campaigners are protesting an application to build the giant 38-acre site on a 'much loved' beauty spot at the top of the Isle of Cumbrae.

NEWS By [Dan Vevers](#)

04:30, 15 MAR 2023

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Plans to build a massive solar farm on a Scots island beauty spot where it rains half the year have been slammed by furious locals.

Campaigners said the application to build some 12,000 panels on Glaid Stone, the "much loved" top point of the Isle of Cumbrae, was "badly thought out".

And they say the proposal, by Indian firm Comsol Energy, won't benefit the local community - and would see the site built on precious wetland which supports 20 [endangered bird species](#).

Activists also highlighted that on Cumbrae, which sits off the Ayrshire coast, it clouds over and rains an average 183 days a year.

The [proposed solar farm](#) and battery storage facility would take up a whopping 38 acres - the length of 22 football pitches - and also be ringed with a two-metre high fence, 31 CCTV towers and other outbuildings.

But residents say Glaid Stone - the uppermost point of the island, with a picnic area and views out to [Largs](#) and Fairlie on the mainland - falls within two nature-protected areas.

In a summary document explaining their opposition to the plans, Cumbrae Community Council also said all power would go off island to the national grid, meaning it would bring no local energy benefit.

They said: "We support the move to a carbon neutral island and we are in favour of renewable power. However we are against this application.

"It is badly thought out - the wrong location for such a large-scale industrial installation... it would be a permanent eyesore on this tourist island."

The memo added: "We believe the choice of location is a commercial decision with no alternatives considered.

"This development would take 1.3 per cent of the island's area, with major visual and environmental harm to the island. It would impact tourism and damage the local economy."



Locals on the island of Cumbrae stage a protest over plans to develop huge solar farm on their island.

ONLINE

15 March: Daily Record Continued...



Protesters marched from Millport up to the Glead Stone area on February 25.

The Glead Stone site falls within both the Great Cumbrae Special Landscape area and the Barbay Local Nature Conservation Site.

The wetland habitat supports 20 rare and threatened birds including Lapwings, Skylarks and Cuckoos along with more than 30 other species.

The 7MW solar farm scheme - an increase from previous plans for 5MW - would see four-metre high panels set up with 375 arrays of 32, coming to 12,000 cells. Battery storage facilities would add an extra 12MW of capacity, totalling 19MW.

In its planning application, submitted last year, Comsol claimed it had addressed community concerns and insisted the development wouldn't obstruct views "to a significant degree".

Keith Hammond, secretary of Cumbrae Community Council, said the original blueprint for solar technology on the island had been to build on landfill, not on a nature site.

He claimed if the project is green-lit it will be a "symbol of betrayal" to islanders and show "people and the environment do not matter".

Dozens of locals took part in a protest against the plans last month, marching from Millport to the top of the island.

ONLINE
19 March:
Largs and Millport
News
Adam Lyon

'Ruinous' Cumbrae solar farm plan must be rejected says

MSP

19th March



By Adam Lyon
Trainee Reporter
@Adami_99

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2 Comments

MSP Katie Clark has urged North Ayrshire Council to reject plans for a 'ruinous' solar farm on Cumbrae.

The Scottish Labour MSP for the west of Scotland believes the proposed site, which would cover over one per cent of the island, does not meet the needs of residents living there.

The plans have been put forward several times over the past decade, with the latest application currently under consideration by council officials.

Campaigners held a public protest at the proposed site last month, with over 100 residents turning out to show their anger.

In a formal objection, the MSP has raised concern at the lack of consultation, the lack of an environmental impact assessment and the impact on tourism she believes that it will have.

She said: "From the outset, islanders have been clear they are not opposed to renewable energy generation on Cumbrae. What they are opposed to do is the complete failure to engage with islanders on this project or listen to concerns.

"The site proposed is completely unsuitable. It falls within a conservation area and will ruin a beauty spot which attracts thousands of tourists every year.

"Residents are concerned that the proposed location of the site will affect the community's ability to enjoy public spaces like the core path and negatively impact on tourism to the island."

Katy also noted the proposal pre-empts the Carbon Neutral Islands project, which will see islanders consulted on future options for renewable energy on Cumbrae.

She explained: "I understand that residents have been denied information about survey work which the applicant claimed to have undertaken before selecting this specific site.

"Residents also believe that this proposal is fundamentally at odds with the national carbon neutral islands being pursued by the Scottish Government."

The MSP says the council must reject or pause the application until a proper assessment of its impact on the island can be carried out.

She added: "Given the sensitive location of the proposed site, residents are surprised at North Ayrshire Council's decision to waive the need for an environmental impact assessment.

"It is concerning the council seem to be waving through this proposal.

"We need to move to renewable energy, but this does not mean that every proposal should be agreed to.

"The council need to listen very closely to the message being sent by the island."

Comsol Energy, the firm behind the application, claims the solar farm would be beneficial for the island and could reduce energy bills in the future.

Cumbræ solar farm: Campaigners worry for endangered birds



Campaigners fighting against a solar farm on Cumbræ claim 20 endangered and protected bird species exist on and around the proposed site.

Cumbræ Community Council has compiled a list of birds observed on and around the site at Wee Minnemoer since January 2017.

The group, which organised a protest at the site earlier this year, says of the 59 species observed in the area, 20 are on the RSPB's red and amber lists.

Comsol Energy, in documents submitted as part of the planning application, say a survey undertaken on their behalf found just one red listed species at the site.

John McHenry, vice-chair of CCC, believes the survey undertaken by Comsol only captured a fraction of the true number of bird species that would be affected by the development.

He said: "One of the big worries is that they picked up just one of these birds in the survey, even though we know there are actually 12 red list birds and eight amber list birds at or around that site.

"Some of them show breeding or nesting behaviour, which makes it even more crucial to keep the site as it is.

"The company's reports mention that more extensive surveys might be needed, but there is no indication any plans are in the works to do this.

"The birds' presence on the island is well documented by locals, but the consultants who did a desk survey and one visit never picked them up.

"There are a lot of twitchers that come onto the island to spot birds, it's actually a big part of the tourism here."

In the application's environmental report, the presence of red-listed dunlins is noted, but none of the other species mentioned by Cumbræ Community Council, such as skylarks, are included.

The report reads: "There is suitable habitat for nesting, over wintering and foraging birds is present within individual trees, woodland and grassland habitats within the site boundary."

Mr McHenry added: "A number of birds were recorded as present during the survey, including five dunlin which are on the Birds of Conservation Concern red list.

"If they can miss birds, what else are they missing?"

The campaign against the proposed solar farm is growing after more than 350 residents submitted comments, with 98 per cent of those against the plans.

Mr McHenry said that while the island community is not against solar power, residents believe that the site at Wee Minnemoer is not suitable - and that no evidence has been provided to the contrary.

He said: "About a quarter of the island have put in responses, and we are determined to have these logged as individual responses rather than a survey.

"Key questions still remain about the plans that haven't been answered since the ideas was first put forward seven years ago.

"At the start they didn't say how power would be taken off the island. Now they have said there are two places they can hook into the national grid.

"However they would have to dig holes or trenches over farmers' land, near houses or the golf course, and when are we seeing the planning permission for that?

"There are still so many concerns that we have and unfortunately the company is just not answering them to our satisfaction."

A spokesperson for Comsol Energy said: "We have already engaged with an independent company who assessed the site and produced a professional ecological report which showed no evidence of habitation by the birds suggested.

"The Community Council can be assured that this was a detailed assessment by a reputable and experienced company who undertake such surveys on an almost daily basis.

"In addition, we are preparing a robust response to clarify the misinformation currently circulating regarding the proposed site which will also hopefully further reassure our best intentions for the island and the community."

The application is expected to come to North Ayrshire Council's planning committee later this month.

ONLINE 19 April: Largs and Millport News

Cumbræ solar farm plans: Decision 'likely to be delayed'

19th April



A decision on the fate of controversial plans for a huge solar farm on Cumbræ is set to be delayed.

It had been thought the planning application would be considered by members of the North Ayrshire Council planning committee at their meeting on April 26.

However, Cumbræ Community Council (CCC) says it believes the plans will not be discussed at next week's meeting - with planners set to visit the site at Wee Minnemoer, at the top of the island, later this week.

Comsol Energy Ltd **withdrew its original plans last year** after a public backlash - but the firm's revised proposals have also attracted significant opposition.

More than 230 responses against the plans were sent to the island's community council earlier this year - with just three in favour of the proposed development.

A CCC spokesperson said: "We have been told that it is likely that the solar farm application will be deferred from the April 26 planning committee.

"We have also been told the planners will visit the island this Friday to look at the site.

"We will let you know when we have more information."

West Scotland Labour MSP Katy Clark recently **urged the local authority to reject** what she described as the "ruinous" proposals.

More than 100 people [staged a protest at the site](#) in February.

Comsol Energy recently **told the News** that it was "preparing a robust response to clarify the misinformation currently circulating regarding the proposed site which will also hopefully further reassure our best intentions for the island and the community".

ONLINE 27 April: Vanessa Taaffe 1 of 2


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Plans for 38-acre solar farm branded 'a travesty community'

Locals warned the solar farm will come at a cost to local wildlife and the environment.



Residents on the island of Cumbrae say plans for a solar farm the size of 22 football pitches will be disastrous to the local economy and wildlife.

If approved, around 12,000 solar panels, CCTV towers and fences will cover a site at the top of the island.

Energy company Comsol say they've consulted with the community and the site won't impact the beauty of the island.

The island is home to just over 1,000 people and offers panoramic views that attract tourists and nature lovers alike.

Plans for a 38-acre solar farm have raised concerns about how the local infrastructure would cope with such a development.

Vanessa Taaffe
27th Apr 2023

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Jackie Wilson said Cumbrae is 'the jewel in the crown of the Clyde' and fears for the local environment if plans go ahead.

Local resident Jackie Wilson told STV News: "This is a local beauty spot. Cumbrae is the jewel in crown of the Clyde.

"We love our island and we love when the tourists come but we want to protect what is ours. I'm worried about the traffic.

"The ferries are already under stress with all work already going on in island for the flood defences and it's getting more difficult for actual local people.

"I don't know how many lorries it'll take to construct this solar farm and the road up to top of the island is about one car wide. The thing about this project is the local community is not going to benefit in any way."

Cumbrae is one of six islands that are part of Scottish Government plans to become carbon neutral by 2040.

While it's thought the proposed solar farm will reduce the island's carbon footprint by 40%, there are concerns here that that will come at a disastrous cost to the local environment as the proposed site is home to a number of endangered and rare birds.

ONLINE 27 April: Vanessa Taaffe 2 of 2



Keith Hammond said the solar farm could have a "detrimental" impact on local wildlife

Cumbrae Community Council secretary Keith Hammond said: "Islanders have a duty not to let the island be spoiled but we also have a duty to wildlife, birdlife and fauna.

"If the project had been under control of the community, we'd have insisted it was positioned more sensitively, that it didn't have a detrimental impact on island or island wildlife.

"We can't avoid change and we're part of energy crisis like everyone else but there's been no concession on Comsol Energy's part to help the island out."

Residents like Linda think the solar farm will detract from the local views and landscape.

She said: "It's going to detract from the view and impact tourists coming over with lorries set to come over. It's massive from pictures I've seen".

Scott Ferris said he's worried the solar farm will harm tourism on the island.

He told STV News: "It will put people off the top of the island. The last thing people want to be staring down on is something the size of this proposed solar farm. They want to see nice views, not a construction site."

Tim Ferris said: "The size of the proposed site is out of all proportion to the size of the island.

"We're not against solar farms at all, we're pro solar farm but on this small jewel of an island, to have it on that site would be a travesty."

Comsol Energy maintain the proposed site is hidden and doesn't impact on the beauty of the island.

In a statement they said: "The application for the solar farm remains within the identified red zone boundary which was previously granted planning permission.

"The site, which is poor grazing ground used by cattle, is hidden and does not form part of the beauty spot often misreferred to in media reports.

"The plans to carry the energy off the island have followed a legally binding and strict process which is independently assessed by engineers and has been meticulously thought through following the Gride Code and SSE's compliance requirements."

North Ayrshire Council said they're expecting a decision on the future of the site next month.

They said: "A planning application (ref: 23/00114/PP) has been received in respect of the 'Installation of a photovoltaic solar farm, with associated battery energy storage systems and associated infrastructure,' at a site to the north east of Wee Minnemoer, Isle of Cumbrae.

"The public had the opportunity to comment on the current application until March 22 2023. All comments received will be taken into consideration when determining the application.

"The application will be determined against the Council's Local Development Plan policies and all other material considerations, including the Carbon Neutral Islands project.

"The proposal has been screened in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017. No EIA was found to be required. The proposal was also screened prior to the previous planning application. No EIA was found to be required previously."

ONLINE
18 May:
Herald Scotland
Ema Sabljak

Cumbræ islanders fear solar farm concerns going ignored

ISLE OF CUMBRÆ ENTERTAINMENT NATURE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT



By Ema Sabljak
Reporter
@emasabljak

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Islanders facing looming proposals for a solar farm the size of 22 football pitches fear their concerns have fallen on deaf ears.

Great Cumbræ could see 12,000 solar panels at a site at the top of the island if plans are approved next week.

However, residents fear the development would blight one of the island's main "beauty spots" as well as possibly impact the wildlife present there.

After the consultation period ended, developers Comsol submitted a 17-page report which they described as a "rebuttal" to the concerns raised by the Cumbræ Community Council.

Artist and qualified architect Dr Gregor Harvie, who lives on the island, advises the Cumbræ Community Council on planning matters.

"The applicant has been pursuing this proposal for seven years, so they have had ample time to engage with the community and tackle our concerns, but they have made no genuine attempt to do that," he said.

"They haven't particularly taken on board our concerns; they have just refuted all of them.

"They have basically said 'we're right and you're wrong', which isn't the kind of constructive dialogue that we would have hoped for."

There are also many questions still left "unanswered" about the development, including how the small island would benefit.

Cumrae: Community council 'disappointed' over solar farm documents

19th May



The application is due to be heard on Wednesday, May 24 (Image: Newsquest)

Community councillors on Cumrae have spoken of their "disappointment" that the firm behind controversial plans for a solar farm has submitted extra documents after the consultation has ended.

Comsol Energy, who have lodged a planning application for the site at Wee Minnemoer, submitted extra drawings and details at the end of April.

The application is due to be heard on Wednesday, May 24, with hundreds of objections lodged to the plans.

However, Alex Harvie, chair of Cumrae Community Council, believes the late submission of the documents means there is no chance for them to be scrutinised by the island community.

She said: "We are extremely disappointed that the applicant has been permitted to submit five drawings and a 17-page report after consultation has closed, with no opportunity for public scrutiny.

"The correct time for democratic debate and responding to concerns is before a planning application is submitted not after the opportunity for democratic objection has ended.

"We note that the additional documents submitted do not include a single change to their proposals in response to the comments made by the community, and all the objections laid out still stand."

The island community say concerns still remain over several key issues, including the location of the site, the environmental impact, and the lack of engagement and benefit on Cumrae.

Comsol Energy has submitted a document outlining their response to the community's concerns, but Alex believes it did nothing to address the issues raised.

She explained: "This has been our experience of the applicant throughout the seven years that this proposal has hung over the island.

"During this time they have failed to take on board a single one of the many hundreds of formal comments that have been submitted.

"Their latest report they describe as a 'rebuttal' of every comment. This is in no way the constructive dialogue that we would have hoped for.

"Rebutting our comments and making vague suggestions of mitigation after the consultation period has ended is entirely inappropriate and does not address any concerns which were submitted."

Comsol Energy declined to comment on the addition of extra documents when contacted by the News.

ONLINE 19 May: Largs and Millport News

Controversial solar farm on Cumbrae recommended for approval

19th May



Solar farm on Cumbrae recommended for approval (Image: Newsquest)

A controversial solar farm planned to be built on Cumbrae has been recommended for approval by council planners.

The planning application is due to be decided upon by the council's planning committee on Wednesday next week.

In their pre-decision document, planning officials at the council have recommended to the committee that the application is approved with conditions.

The planned site at Wee Minnemoer has been met with anger from the majority of islanders, who say the proposed placement is wrong, with concerns also raised about the environmental impact of such a development.

Planning officials say that the application by Comsol Energy has addressed these issues, and has recommended it be given the green light.

Conditions recommended to be imposed on the application include the need for further details on road upgrades, as well as the need for an archaeological survey before work begins.

A spokesperson for Cumbrae Community Council said: "We are disappointed that the planners have not taken on board our objections and are recommending approval of the solar farm."

ONLINE
22 May:
Herald Scotland
Ema Sabljak

Cumbrae solar farm plans could be accepted despite concerns

22nd May

ISLE OF CUMBRAE ENVIRONMENT LOCAL GOVERNMENT NATURE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT



Part of the site for a proposed solar farm (Image: Colin Mearns)



By Ema Sabljak
Reporter
@emasabljak

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No Comments

A 15-hectare solar farm could be imposed on islanders "without community consent", an MSP warned.

Islanders facing looming proposals for a solar farm the size of 22 football pitches fear their concerns have fallen on deaf ears.

Great Cumbrae could see 12,000 solar panels at a site at the top of the island if plans are approved next week.

However, residents fear the development would blight one of the island's main "beauty spots" as well as possibly impact the wildlife present there.

After the consultation period ended, developers Comsol submitted a 17-page report which they described as a "rebuttal" to the concerns raised by the Cumbrae Community Council.

Artist and qualified architect Dr Gregor Harvie, who lives on the island, advises the Cumbrae Community Council on planning matters.

"The applicant has been pursuing this proposal for seven years, so they have had ample time to engage with the community and tackle our concerns, but they have made no genuine attempt to do that," he said.

"They haven't particularly taken on board our concerns; they have just refuted all of them.

"They have basically said 'we're right and you're wrong', which isn't the kind of constructive dialogue that we would have hoped for."

There are also many questions still left "unanswered" about the development, including how the small island would benefit.

ONLINE
24 May:
Largs and
Millport News
Adam Lyon

Decision made on proposal for Cumbrae solar farm

24th May



A proposal for a controversial solar farm on Cumbrae has been rejected by North Ayrshire Council's planning committee.

Comsol Energy had submitted the application for the site, which sits at Wee Minnemoer next to the island's highest point.

It would have covered around one per cent of the island on moorland that is currently used for grazing.

More than 100 residents staged a protest at the proposed site in February.

North Ayrshire Council's planning committee met this afternoon to consider the proposal, with council planning officers recommending it be approved.

Councillor Tom Marshall spoke on behalf of the North Coast ward and its councillors, and called the application "speculative" and "inappropriate" for the island.

Dr Gregor Harvie then spoke on behalf of Cumbrae Community Council, and pointed out that 350 written comments were received on the application, with 98 per cent of those against the proposal.

Dr Harvie pointed out the island community's key objections to the application, including the location, environmental impact and the effect on Cumbrae's tourist trade.

Representatives from Comsol Energy then put forward their pitch, asking elected members to support their application.

They hit back at some of the issues raised by campaigners, and pointed out that a similar proposal was approved back in 2016.

They acknowledged there were objections from the community, but said these concerns had been answered and urged the application be given the green light.

Councillor Jim Mongomerie questioned why homes in Millport are not permitted to put solar panels on their roofs without planning permission, but that a solar farm should then be allowed to be built.

Councillor Cameron Inglis asked the applicant why Cumbrae was the best area to put the solar farm, and representatives said the site was chosen as it was suitable for the development in their view.

Councillor Ian Murdoch asked how the applicant could claim little impact on the land, when the solar farm takes up an area of around 20 football pitches.

The applicant explained that mitigation would be put in place including screening to decrease its visual impact.

A vote was then taken on the application, with Councillor Timothy Billings proposing a motion that the application was not supported. Cllr Murdoch seconded the refusal.

The motion was backed by the rest of the planning committee.

ONLINE
24 May:
STV Calum
Loudon &
Vanessa Taaffe

News / Glasgow & West

Plans for 38-acre solar farm on island rejected by council

North Ayrshire Council have rejected energy company Comsol's plans to build a solar farm on the island of Cumbrae.



Plans for a solar farm the size of 22 football pitches on the island of Cumbrae have been rejected by North Ayrshire Council.

Energy company Comsol wanted to build a site made up of around 12,000 solar panels, CCTV towers and fences at the top of the island.

Residents on the island, which is home to just over 1,000 people, objected to the plans – arguing it would be disastrous to the local economy and wildlife.

On Wednesday, it was announced the planning committee found favour with the residents, noting that the application would have a detrimental impact on the island's habitat, visual amenity and tourism.

They also noted that the application lacked key information. Comsol now have the option to appeal the decision.

A spokesperson for North Ayrshire Council said: "At its meeting of May 24, the Planning Committee refused an application for a solar farm and battery energy storage system at Wee Minnemoer, Cumbrae.

"The application, which had been recommended for approval by officers of the council, was assessed against policies set out in the Local Development Plan and against the National Planning Framework 4, and took into consideration site specific aspects such as visual amenity, history, noise, biodiversity/ecology, traffic impact, tourism and public access and its contribution to renewable energy targets.

"In making its decision the Planning Committee acknowledged that there was a pressing need to address the climate crisis however, on the balance of harm versus benefit, that this was not the right site for this development.

"The Committee agreed unanimously that the application be refused specifically on the grounds of habitat concerns, effects on the tourism economy and the overall visual impact on the landscape."

Cumbrae is one of six islands that are part of Scottish Government plans to become carbon neutral by 2040.

It was said the proposed solar farm would reduce the island's carbon footprint by 40% – but concerns were raised that it would come at a disastrous cost to the local environment as the proposed site is home to a number of endangered and rare birds.

Scott Ferris, a Millport shop owner and chair of the Tourist Association told STV News: "This is good news as the build would have caused major troubles for tourism. I had concerns about how much of an impact the solar panels would have had on an area of outstanding natural beauty.

"Relieved, I am not against green energy. There are better places to put solar farms than on the top of a small island in an beautiful area. All the talk of security cameras and gated areas made me a touch nervous."