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County at risk of becoming 'Solarshire' due to number of photovoltaic panels planned

on 25th October 2023

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Gloucestershire is "at risk of becoming Solarshire" because the county is being "bombarded" with applications for photovoltaic panels.

The Forest of Dean District Council has been approving plans for solar farms on a case by case basis.

But there has been an accumulation of planning applications to develop such sites on fields either side of the B4215 road between Newent and Highnam.

And if they are all approved it could create a corridor of one million solar panels.

Councillor Gill Moseley (LD, Newent and Taynton) raised the issue at the Forest of Dean District Council meeting on October 19 while civic chiefs debated a strategy for their new Local Plan.

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for development across the district until 2041, once adopted.

"In the north of the district, between Newent and Gloucester, we are in danger of becoming Solarshire not Gloucestershire," she told the meeting.

"It would be fair to say we've been bombarded with applications for solar farms partly due to the existence of National Grid infrastructure which crosses the area.

"Guidance on where best to locate solar and wind farms is thin. Can we please look at our local plan to provide some spatial policy."

She asked why the council does not do a call for sites to be assessed for renewable energy sites just like they do with housing.

"It's wild west territory at the moment for solar farm companies who are heavily targeting farms that have access to the grid," she added.

Local plan cabinet member Sid Phelps (G, Lydbrook) said he agreed with Cllr Moseley and that it was worth looking into. "We just need to do it," he said.

During the meeting, the council agreed to prepare a draft Local Plan based on their new strategy for future approval and consultation in 2024.

Elsewhere in the county, Stroud District Councillors are concerned about the proliferation of solar farms in Berkeley Vale.

By Carmelo Garcia – Local Democracy Reporter

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