

19/03/2013

Dear Dame Helen

I recently read in the National Trust Spring magazine that the Trust now has 'Good Energy' as its principle energy partner.

It is unfortunate that the Trust has fallen for Good Energy's propaganda regarding its commitment to the environment, along with the cash incentive.

I would like you to hear another side of the story. Good Energy is targeting Cornwall where I live, and have been riding roughshod over communities with their rush to build wind turbines and so called 'Solar Parks'. These solar installations have no place on unspoilt countryside and farms, and yet they are being sanctioned at an astonishing rate by the planners, who are anxious to follow the government guidelines on renewable energy targets.

Little consideration is being given to local communities who do not want these ugly industrial sites in their midst. A huge installation of turbines and solar panels by Good Energy is just about to be given the go ahead at Week St Mary in Cornwall, in spite of huge protest from residents.

In my own community of Trispen, St Erme and St Allen near Truro, Good Energy is about to submit plans for a massive solar installation of over 250 acres, one of the biggest in the country. There is huge opposition from the small communities in this area, leaving people helpless and frustrated.

The site near my house will consist of 71 acres of panels on the side of a beautiful unspoilt valley, clearly visible from many properties, footpaths and roads. To make matters worse, it will 'steal' a third of the land from a tenant farmer who has been working the farm since 1945. Good Energy approached the absentee landlord with the lucrative proposal, with no consultation with the tenant farmer. Naturally, the farmer is afraid to upset his landlord, but is totally opposed to the solar installation, which will threaten the viability of his farm.

These are just two examples of what Good Energy is doing here in Cornwall. Most right thinking people would agree that these industrial installations should be on brown field sites, or at the very least on land that has no farming potential.

I would just like to add that I came late in life to National Trust membership, and have enjoyed it immensely for the last two years, with the intention of being a lifelong member. Regrettably I have now cancelled my subscription, as I cannot accept the idea of the Trust partnering such a company that flouts the very ethos of the National Trust.

Yours sincerely



National
Trust

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Dear

Thank you so much for your letter detailing your concerns both with the solar project in your area as well as with our decision to partner with Good Energy. Your letter has been passed to me from the Director General's office to respond to directly. I am the person responsible for managing the Trust's relationship with Good Energy. I hope that I can address the root of your questions by explaining the Trust's position and our relationship with Good Energy.

As you would expect, we took a great deal of care in choosing Good Energy as a partner, and we remain confident that we made the right choice. Our main criteria were that the partner delivered the best possible product and service for our Members and supporters, and not only delivered investment to the Trust, but had an overall approach to energy that reflected our own energy ambitions. Good Energy stood head and shoulders above their competition with regard to these criteria which included sustainable development policy and practices. In addition, since commencing our relationship with Good Energy they have been rated by *Which?* as the best for customer satisfaction for the second year in a row.

The Trust's position with regard to energy is clear. We believe that we face significant challenges, as energy demand escalates, fossil fuels become scarcer and more expensive, and the need to avoid dangerous climate change becomes ever more pressing, particularly as we look to protect the natural and historical environment in our care.

We need to move towards a better, more sustainable approach to energy use, based on energy conservation, localisation, and greater use of renewable sources. At the same time,

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we need to treat historic buildings and green spaces in ways that are sympathetic to their beauty and historical significance.

As a consequence, we tend to prefer small and medium scale developments, sensitive to the specific landscape, but rooted in the community where the energy is consumed so that people have a greater connection and ownership of the energy they use.

Good Energy share this approach. In fact, not only is the energy that they supply matched by 100% renewable energy production, 70% of this is sourced from a growing community of small and medium-sized renewable generators spread the length and breadth of the UK, rather than simply investing in their own larger developments.

However, the National Trust and Good Energy are entirely independent organisations, and just as we are not answerable to them for our actions, nor are we accountable for their decisions.

Where developments occur away from our own land, we play a role in influencing the national debate around the planning system. In the case of individual projects, sometimes we have been the developer, sometimes a supporter and sometimes an objector. Where a project is being developed by Good Energy, it will be subject to the same scrutiny as if it were under the control of any other developer. We work with a wide variety of organisations in order to deliver our objectives, and our core purpose remains to look after the nation's special places for ever, for everyone.

Whilst I can't personally comment on the particular project in your area, I can ensure that my colleagues in the Trust are aware of it, and of your concerns. I have also, personally, forwarded your concerns directly to Good Energy. Consultation is at the heart of good planning, and we would expect Good Energy to take local concerns very seriously indeed.

I would urge you to continue to participate with the consultation taking place around the development in your special part of Cornwall. We will certainly continue to work to do what we can to look after the special places in our care, for the benefit of the nation.

With very best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Louise Burdett', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Louise Burdett
Corporate Partnerships Manager

cc Director General's Office