

**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**28 October 2024**  
**Public Questions**

Barry Warren – Local Resident.

My questions refer to agenda item 10 which starts on page 57 of your bundle.

In section 1 is a paragraph in italics which sets out what was asked for by Scrutiny Committee.

The report does not answer the questions posed by committee but refers to Government figures which may well be out of date. It makes great reference to a 2018 report, 6 years out of date and prepared for a project that is no longer relevant.

**1. Where in the report does it deal with the question as to the *quantity of sites* that are up to date for Mid Devon?**

Response: Table 1 of the report deals with “the number of installations in Mid Devon”, which deals with this point – noting that it deals with PV cells rather than sites. The data is drawn from accredited and official data collated by DESNZ (Department for Energy Security and Net Zero) and the most recent data set is from 2023. It is therefore also considered to be current and robust.

**2. Where in the report does it deal with the question as to *how much land was devoted to renewable energies*?**

Response: Paragraphs 1.11 and 1.12 of the report deal with the exact point of land devoted to renewables energies and, extrapolating an estimation in relation to wind and solar land-take from data provided, the report states; “less than around 0.13% of land is currently in use for either solar or wind power generation within Mid Devon at this time”. Whilst this does not deal with all ‘renewables’, it is considered to give a flavour for land-take by renewables.

Paragraph 2.1 advises ‘*currently only occupy a small amount of land and significant potential exists for further development of new installations*’.

**3. How can such a statement be credible when Committee cannot be advised of up to date information as to how many particular sites there are, their locations and areas of land used?**

Response: As set out above; the data is official DESNZ data which is up to date (2023 data), the data specifies number of sites (or PV panels) and the report provides indicative figures in relation to land use/occupation. The statement is therefore credible.

Not only is this information not available in the report as requested but the answers to questions in an earlier meeting also support the fact that MDDC do not know what is going on. Please see minutes of 23 January 2024 meeting of Planning, Environment & Sustainability PDG minute 47 where no detailed information was given in response to questions.

The current report lacks the information requested and if the Scrutiny Committee are giving attention to renewable energy and the impact on land and the amount of land used then the following questions may also assist.

**4. Why is there no reference to the use of BESS [Battery Energy Storage Systems] or SMR's [Small Modular Reactors]?**

Response: No request was made to include information about BESS or SMR's and is not included within the DESNZ data.

Virtually all planning applications for solar sites include the area of land to be used and the expected output. These details are in the application, approved plans and, where appropriate, conditions.

**5. Why has this information not been collated to give more information and relevance to the questions asked?**

Response: As you will appreciate, this information is not available from the DESNZ data and so collation would have to be undertaken manually in-house. This has not been undertaken as the Council does not have the resources available to readily undertake such tasks and much information is already available and contained within the public domain.

Virtually all planning applications for AD Plants include the areas of land to be used for the provision of feedstock and the expected output are given. Invariably locations and areas for the spreading of digestate are also approved. These details are in the approved plans and where appropriate conditions.

**6. Why has this information not been collated to give more information and relevance to the questions asked?**

Response: This question around information is understood to relate to AD plants and associated land-take as set out in the supporting text to the question. As you will appreciate and as set out in the response to the previous question, this information is not available from the DESNZ data and so collation would have to be undertaken manually in-house. This has not been undertaken as the Council does not have the resources available to readily undertake such tasks and much information is already available and contained within the public domain.

In Section 1 of the report the recommendation is that 'Members note the report.'

**7. How can Scrutiny Committee discharge its function by noting a report that does not answer the questions asked?**

Response: As set out above; it is considered that the report addressed the original request as set out. The report is necessarily high-level but draws on up-to-date and relevant information drawn chiefly from accredited statistics provided by DESNZ. To draw further data from Council systems would require significant additional time and resources and would risk

mixing data sources. The Scrutiny committee discussed the report at their 28<sup>th</sup> October meeting and it was agreed to note the report.