

Good Morning,

I am Richard Smith from Naseby and my first job is to declare an interest to the panel. Part of the proposed solar farm is on my brother and sister-in-laws farm, which for the record I have no financial interest in.

My wife Cheryl and I own and operate Auto Super Shoppe Ranfurly. We are a Toyota Parts and Service dealer, Husqvarna Sales and Service agent, we provide a towing service for roadside break downs and crashes, and we provide crash and impound services for the New Zealand Police. All of this operates in conjunction with our mechanical workshop here in Ranfurly.

This is my 32nd year in business so I have seen the true economic hard times for the Maniototo. The economic slowdown we have just had recently is only a blip on the screen compared to what we have been through previously. Droughts, low commodity prices, not forgetting Ranfurly's \$100 sections. Houses for sale for years and there were mortgage sales and the main street that looked deserted. I believe that in business you must spread your risk and diversify, but as a local economy the Maniototo relies on farming and tourism with a few small other contributors around the fringes which puts us at great economic risk as a community.

This Solar project will not only give us an economic boost during the build process, but it allows farming to continue once it's up and running. It's a double win as the farmland is dryland and has limited production currently. The landowners have significant stock resources to keep grass growth in check to reduce fire danger. With no cropping, extra soil moisture retention from the shading panels, and roading infrastructure acting as fire breaks there is a likely hood the fire risk will be less than with standard farming practices. This project also provides jobs once it is completed, ensuring a long-term income source for our community. We lost a generation of young people in the 1980's and 90's, they all left town for employment elsewhere and very few if any have returned.

As a former Community Board elected member and past chairperson, I'm a great believer in democracy and process. We live in an awesome community, it has a good heart and when the chips are down people step up to help you as past and recent fundraisers have shown. We are a hugely proud employer and a community orientated business trying to bring the best service and products to Ranfurly and the significant investment by Helios in our community will help everyone's bottom line.

I don't believe that there would be anybody who has travelled past the site more than myself most days for 42 years and yes it will change but I'll still see the glorious open vista and stunning views we all love. I would however like to see some gaps in the perimeter, so you can see the proposed solar farm working and the farming continuing within the area.

In finishing I would like to offer my support to the Helios Solar Project and say thanks for choosing the Maniototo. Our economic future looks a lot brighter with the significant investment we will see with this project. It will also offer us more energy security, I don't

know about anyone else's business, but we can't do anything without power. We need that security not only as a community but as a country.

Thank you for your time and due consideration of the project in front of you.