



The Rt Hon Liz Truss MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
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27 September 2022

Dear Prime Minister

Congratulations on becoming Prime Minister. The thriving UK solar industry looks forward to working with your Government on the energy and cost of living crisis, which are crucial issues affecting the country.

We are aware of concerns relating to the use of land by solar farms for clean energy generation, and are writing to address these. We are committed to the delivery of a net zero economy by 2050, and recognise the importance of supporting sustainable countryside development. This includes working with farming communities to support agricultural practises, now and for future generations.

The British Energy Security Strategy provides a welcome commitment to increasing the UK's solar capacity. The Climate Change Committee has estimated that the UK will need between 75-90GW of solar by 2050. Solar Energy UK analysis shows the level of solar farm deployment consistent with this would account for around 0.3% of UK land. This is far less, for example, than the amount currently occupied by golf courses.

Installing a solar farm is a temporary and reversible form of land use, and helping to meet the UK's energy security and climate change objectives through their deployment will have minimal if any impact on Britain's food security. The opposite is true: solar farms directly address climate change, which Defra has identified as the most important threat to UK food security. Solar farms also generally utilise previously developed land, such as brownfield sites and land of lower agricultural quality.

British solar and British farming have gone hand in hand since the beginning of the UK solar industry. Solar is a flexible technology, which can be installed on rooftops – such as agricultural sheds – and on the ground, and the solar industry supports both types of project.

The UK farming industry also benefits from both, and the industry works closely with farmers and landowners on their solar projects: to manage land under solar farms for continued agricultural use, to improve soil quality and other ecosystem services, such as flood mitigation, and to promote biodiversity gains. Solar farms in the UK can be used for sheep grazing, and solar developments installed on land previously



used for arable cropping can diversify local land use, adding ecosystem services such as pollinator habitats and contributing to nature recovery networks.

As well as supporting the reduction of carbon emissions and improving long-term land quality, solar farms can also deliver significant local environmental benefits. Well designed and well-maintained solar farms have been shown to support thriving wildlife habitats, providing a range of biodiversity gains for the duration of their lifespan.

The UK solar industry, in collaboration with the NFU, ecological consultants, academia, and other stewards of the countryside, has developed a Natural Capital Best Practice guide to help ensure solar farms deliver these benefits. The guide provides a clear framework to ensure good practice on all solar farms, facilitating multipurpose land use, and supporting income diversification for farmers. The guide has been endorsed by Natural England, the UK Government's adviser for the protection and restoration of the natural environment.

The Natural Capital Best Practice Guide also builds on the "11 Commitments" of best practice in solar farm development, established by the industry in 2014 and updated this year. These include being sensitive to protected landscapes and enhancing the ecological value of land.

Solar farms, which can provide an important additional revenue stream that helps provide financial stability for UK farmers, are one of the most affordable, efficient, and popular net zero carbon electricity generation technologies available. This has been repeatedly demonstrated by a range of industry, government and private sector polling. For example, according to the latest BEIS public opinion poll, an overwhelming 81% of the public would be happy or not mind having a solar farm constructed in their local area.¹ Deploying solar farms is also a fundamental way to help address the cost-of-living crisis. The results of the UK's 2022 renewable power auction show that solar farms generate some of the most affordable electricity in history, and this new solar capacity will be vital to help reduce the pressure on bills created by generating power from fossil fuels.

It is important and we are committed to ensuring that our countryside remains a dynamic space, producing food and energy for the nation while supporting environmental benefits. The solar industry and our countryside communities stand ready to work together in support of this: promoting multi-functional land use, creating jobs, increasing biodiversity, reducing bills, and addressing climate change. Solar farms help achieve all these goals.

Yours sincerely,

Solar Energy UK and

¹ [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1082719/BEIS PAT Spring 2022 Energy Infrastructure and Energy Sources.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1082719/BEIS_PAT_Spring_2022_Energy_Infrastructure_and_Energy_Sources.pdf)

