Impact Report 2023
Green Revolution
About Us

As an established trade association working for and representing the entire solar and energy storage value chain, Solar Energy UK represents a thriving member-led community of over 300 businesses and associates, including installers, manufacturers, distributors, large-scale developers, investors, and law firms.

Our underlying ethos has remained the same since our foundation in 1978 – to be a powerful voice for our members by catalysing their collective strengths to build a clean energy system for everyone’s benefit.

Our mission is to empower the UK solar transformation. Together with our members, we are paving the way for solar to deliver 70GW by 2035 by enabling a bigger and better solar industry.

These three values go to the heart of what we’re about and they are clearly reflected in our determination for change, our partnership orientation and the robust positions we have become known for.
A look into 2023
Chris Hewett, Chief Executive

2023 was an incredible year for solar energy in the UK and worldwide. The combination of high gas prices, the need for energy security, and the response to climate change meant the number of residential installations has been the highest in the UK since 2011. The pipeline of new solar farms and battery storage projects has also grown exponentially. By the end of the year, 16GW of solar farm proposals were granted planning permission and a grid connection, and another 9GW was being considered for planning. The UK is estimated to have over 17GW of solar capacity, and the government’s target is 70GW by 2035.

Delivering that target is the subject of a joint Government and industry Solar Taskforce, which was established in May 2023 and is due to conclude in Spring 2024 with the publication of a Roadmap to 70GW by 2035. This task force has been the centrepiece of work for Solar Energy UK and a genuine collaboration between industry and government. It is now jointly chaired by myself and Andrew Bowie MP, Minister for Renewables and Nuclear, with Graham Stuart MP serving as joint chair for much of 2023. Both Ministers have given the solar and energy storage sector much support during this period, with Graham Stuart being a guest speaker at Solar Energy UK’s Summer Reception—a marked change in attitude from the brief premiership of Liz Truss.

Our membership has grown in size and level of engagement throughout the year, with over 370 members and increased attendance at our working groups, steering groups, and other events online and face-to-face. Positive solar coverage in the media has increased, and our LinkedIn following is now over 20,000.

We have been delighted to develop our partnership with Solar & Storage Live, which had over 17,000 visitors in October. This year, a new Recruitment Zone was highlighted to help the industry attract the best candidates to our rapidly growing teams.

Skills development and workforce capacity have been significant themes for the year and ones on which the task force has been focusing. The other major barrier to growth in all parts of the industry has been the difficulty in securing grid connections in a timely manner. Reforming how the grid is managed and how connections are allocated are other big focuses of Solar Energy UK and the Taskforce.

As well as pressing for change from the government or the networks, Solar Energy UK has been able to demonstrate leadership in the industry in areas such as biodiversity with the publication of Solar Habitat, our annual ecological survey of solar farms.

The Solar Stewardship Initiative has been established jointly with Solar Power Europe to ensure high standards of supply chain transparency across Europe. Our partnership with MCS has been the foundation for promoting high installation standards and consumer protection.

We also worked with the insurance sector to improve the RC62 document so that the commercial PV rooftop technology and practice changes are properly reflected in the requirements placed on commercial property with solar.

As ever, I must thank our members for their generous support, which has allowed Solar Energy UK to expand its activities and grow the team during 2023. Final thanks go to the team whose dedication and hard work have resulted in the achievements in this annual report.

“The unprecedented surge in solar energy adoption reflects a pivotal moment for the UK and the world. As we navigate towards a greener future, our collaborative efforts with industry and government are driving tangible progress, propelling us closer to our ambitious goal of 70GW by 2035.”
Our 2023 in numbers
Throughout the year, our services and team have expanded significantly, and the hard work of everyone has been demonstrated in the following figures:

- **76** New Members
  - a net increase of 40

- **90GW** of Solar Projects In The Pipeline

- **58%** Increase in Media Exposure

- **1.2m** Rooftops With Solar Technology Installed

- **600m** Media Impressions

- **33.5K** Total Followers On Social Media

2023’s highlights

**JANUARY**

- **Scotland Unveils Solar Strategy Amid Energy Crisis**
  - The Scottish Government unveiled a draft energy strategy to increase solar power deployment, citing a pipeline capacity of 767MW. While not immediately committing to the industry’s 4-6GW target by 2030, the Government sought input on setting ambitious yet feasible goals to integrate solar with other renewables for a more sustainable energy system, aligning with UK-wide objectives.

- **Solar Industry Calls for Solar Power Mandate in UK Homes**
  - In a House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee session, solar industry leaders emphasised the imperative of making solar power a standard feature in new UK homes to achieve an 80% emission reduction goal. Discussions also highlight the need for grid access reforms, financial incentives, and addressing skills gaps to accelerate solar adoption.

- **Skidmore Conducts Review Propelling Solar Revolution for Net Zero Goals**
  - Chris Skidmore MP conducted a pivotal review endorsed by Solar Energy UK, emphasising solar energy’s crucial role in achieving net zero targets while fostering economic growth. The review called for collaboration with the solar industry to establish a roadmap for significant capacity expansion by 2035, addressing grid access issues and promoting investor certainty.

**FEBRUARY**

- **UK Solar Safety Guidelines Updated**
  - Released by RISCAuthority, MCS, and Solar Energy UK, the updated RC62 document provides a comprehensive guide for safe commercial and industrial rooftop PV installations to mitigate fire risks and ensure consumer confidence. The collaboration underscores the commitment to prioritising safety in solar energy installations.
Rooftop solar power installations double in a year
In February 2023, data showcased that UK rooftop solar doubled in 2022 to 130,596 systems, driven by energy costs and sustainability. Despite challenges, the surge reflects rising interest in renewables amid higher electricity prices. With 1.2M+ installations, totalling 15GW, the sector aims to meet energy security and climate targets.

MARCH

Steering Groups
In March, Solar Energy UK launched a new suite of Steering Groups, providing more opportunities for members to engage in our work.

These specialist groups focus on policy and regulatory issues in addition to our existing Working Groups. They enable in-depth discussion and problem-solving on the most pressing problems—harnessing members’ specialist knowledge and expertise – to feed back into Working Groups.

A Brighter Future
Solar Energy UK released a guide highlighting diverse career opportunities within the solar energy sector, coinciding with the conclusion of the Solar Skills London project. The guide emphasises the industry’s rapid growth, job prospects, and various pathways for entry, including apprenticeships, education, and direct recruitment, amid increasing demand for skilled professionals to meet the UK’s renewable energy targets.

Solar Lobbying Wins VAT Change on Battery Storage
Chancellor Jeremy Hunt responded to lobbying efforts by Solar Energy UK, proposing a VAT exemption extension to battery storage systems retrofitted to solar PV or fitted as standalone units. Additionally, the Budget introduces ‘full expensing’ for solar energy investments. Still, it needs to catch up in grid upgrades, emphasising unproven fossil fuel solutions over solar and wind energy, causing concerns regarding grid reinforcement and investment discrepancies.

Mission Zero: Solar Taskforce Launched
The UK government announces the formation of a joint taskforce to accelerate the expansion of solar energy, in line with recommendations from the Net Zero Review. Solar Energy UK welcomes the initiative, aiming to work collaboratively to overcome barriers and achieve a five-fold increase in solar capacity by 2035.

APRIL

Solar Energy UK Supports MPs’ Call for Decarbonised Power Plan
Solar Energy UK endorsed MPs’ demand for a comprehensive strategy to eliminate fossil fuels from the UK’s electricity system by 2035, citing the lack of a clear roadmap highlighted in a House of Commons report. The report emphasised the urgent need for grid infrastructure improvements to accelerate solar industry growth and meet government targets.

SPowering-Up Britain
The UK Government, marking ‘Energy Security Day,’ unveiled plans to enhance energy security and achieve net zero by 2050, focusing on solar energy. Central document ‘Powering Up Britain’ highlights solar’s potential for decarbonization, while the Energy Security Plan reaffirms commitment to 70GW by 2035 and the creation of a ‘solar taskforce’ to ensure target delivery and publish a roadmap by 2024.

Skidmore Conducts Review Propelling Solar Revolution for Net Zero Goals
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MAY

Delays Threaten UK Solar Capacity Goals
Solar Energy UK welcomed the Commons Environmental Audit Committee’s demand urging the Government to address lengthy delays in connecting solar and battery projects to electricity networks. The committee warned of potential shortfalls in meeting the Government’s 70 gigawatt solar capacity target by 2035 if action isn’t taken promptly, highlighting underinvestment, inefficient application management, and regulatory shortcomings as key issues hindering progress.
SSI Launches Consultation for Sustainable Solar
The Solar Stewardship Initiative (SSI), launched by SolarPower Europe and Solar Energy UK in 2022, initiated in May 2023 a public consultation to gather feedback on its development. With a focus on environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance across the solar value chain, the SSI aims to establish transparent mechanisms through its SSI Code, collaborating with over 60 industry organisations and supported by sustainability experts and the finance community.

Unlocking the Ecological Potential of Solar Farms
Solar Energy UK, in collaboration with Clarkson & Woods, Lancaster University, and Wychwood Biodiversity, published a groundbreaking pilot report that outlines the results from 37 operational solar sites surveyed in 2022 across the UK. This comprehensive study delves into the positive relationships between solar farms and ecology, with a specific focus on botany, invertebrates, mammals, and birds.

Commercial Rooftop Solar Takes Center Stage at Solar Taskforce First Meeting
The inaugural meeting of the UK’s Solar Taskforce, comprising Solar Energy UK and the Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, highlighted the untapped potential of commercial buildings for solar power. Discussions focused on driving actions to achieve the government’s ambitious target of 70GW solar power by 2035, emphasising cost reduction, skills development, and grid accessibility to support the solar energy revolution.

JUNE

UK’s 2050 Net Zero Target
Solar Energy UK welcomed the Government’s decision to grant Ofgem a ‘principal objective’ in helping achieve net zero, anticipating faster grid-scale solar project rollouts, potentially leading to lower consumer bills, faster decarbonisation, and increased investment and job creation. The new amendment reflects the trade association’s close relationship with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, working together to run the new Solar Taskforce.

Labour’s Solar Strategy Praised by Industry
Labour’s ambitious clean energy plan, including reforms to the Contracts for Difference (CfD) mechanism, received applause from the solar industry. The plan aims to boost investment, create jobs, and accelerate the transition to renewable energy while addressing national security concerns amid global volatility.

Quarter 3

Solar Taskforce Tackles Grid, Skills, Rooftop, Supply Chain
The government–industry Solar Taskforce, chaired by Energy Minister Graham Stuart and Solar Energy UK Chief Executive Chris Hewett, has established four issue–specific sub-groups focusing on grid access, skills, rooftop market, and supply chain. These sub–groups aim to address regulatory barriers, develop necessary skills, tackle rooftop deployment challenges, and foster innovation within the solar industry to achieve the goal of 70GW generation capacity by 2035.

Solar Farms Are Popular
A study by Copper Consultancy and Solar Energy UK revealed that over 42% of people near solar farms strongly support their development, contrasting sharply with less than 1% strongly opposed. Despite myths about solar farms’ popularity and environmental impact, the study underscores the urgent need for increased solar deployment to meet net zero targets, highlighting the necessity of bridging knowledge gaps and dispelling misconceptions.

Inaugural Summer Reception
Solar Energy UK celebrated a summer reception for the first time – an industry insider celebration bringing together influential solar and storage industry business leaders. The event was hosted at the association’s brand-new headquarters on the rooftop of The Conduit, Covent Garden, where members enjoyed a relaxed setting and engaged in meaningful conversations with like-minded industry leaders for a remarkable networking, celebration, and collaboration evening.

AUGUST

Fast Grid Upgrade for Net Zero
Solar Energy UK expressed strong support for the recommendations made by Electricity Grid Commissioner Nick Winser to overhaul the power grid management. The proposed changes aim to expedite the development of electricity networks, crucial for achieving net zero goals and reducing energy bills. SEUK emphasised the need for swift government action to ensure transmission infrastructure is delivered within seven years, highlighting its importance in facilitating the integration of renewable energy sources and creating green jobs.
Solar: Government’s Cost-Efficient Choice
A Government report confirmed that solar farms offer the most cost-effective power generation method, with levelised costs projected to decrease significantly by 2040. Solar Energy UK highlighted this as a crucial endorsement for renewable energy and urges increased investment to drive down energy bills further.

More Homes Turning To Low-Carbon Technology
New data from MCS revealed a 62% increase in heat pump and solar panel installations in the first half of 2023 compared to the previous year, with over 120,000 certified installations recorded. Analysts predict nearly a quarter of a million homes could adopt renewable energy by year-end, signalling a shift towards renewables amid expert declarations that the future lies in low-carbon alternatives.

UK Solar Projects Exceed Forecast in CfD Allocation
Solar Energy UK reported that 56 solar photovoltaic projects secured support under the fifth round of the Government’s Contracts for Difference scheme, with a total capacity of 1,928 megawatts, illustrating solar’s resilience compared to offshore wind amidst economic turbulence. Despite the imbalance favouring solar, changes are sought in future rounds to boost all renewables deployment, including grid-scale energy storage systems.

Solar industry celebrates rooftop record
The UK solar industry celebrated a milestone as rooftop solar installations in 2023 surpassed the total for the previous year, setting a new annual record. With over 138,000 installations registered, this growth signals increasing consumer confidence in home-grown energy solutions amidst rising electricity costs and climate change concerns.

The Future Is Green
For the first time, at Solar and Storage Live, Solar Energy UK brought a brand-new feature along with SSE Renewables, featuring 12 of the UK’s leading renewables businesses and providing over 100 job vacancies and new career paths within the industry.

New Standard Boosts Solar Supply Chain Transparency
The Solar Stewardship Initiative (SSI) released the first solar supply chain Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Standard tailored for the solar PV sector following successful pilot testing and public consultation. This landmark standard aims to enhance transparency, promote sustainability, and guide the solar industry’s ESG commitments, inviting stakeholders to join its Advisory Group and apply for membership before its official launch in December 2023.

Scotland commits to 4–6GW of solar by 2030
The Scottish Government announced a substantial commitment to boost solar energy generation in Scotland by 2030. With a minimum target of 4GW and an ambitious goal of 6GW, it marks a remarkable tenfold increase in the number of solar panels to be installed in Scotland. Solar Energy UK welcomed this statement of intent from the Scottish Government to fully exploit the potential of solar energy, in line with the ambitions that the industry has been advocating.

UK Government Increases Support for Solar Power
In response to inflationary pressures affecting the solar sector, the UK Government announced a significant increase in the maximum price for renewable generation assets under the Contracts for Difference (CfD) regime. The administrative strike price for solar power was set to rise by 30%, aiming to bolster growth and confidence in the CfD system, providing a secure income stream for solar energy investors amidst market uncertainties.
New Membership Tier Announced
Eight industry-leading businesses joined Solar Energy UK’s highest membership tier, reinforcing our commitment to driving the solar industry towards 70GW of generation capacity by 2035. All are leading companies in the solar and storage industries and have long been valued and active members of the association: EDF Renewables, GivEnergy, LightsourceBP, NextEnergy Group, RWE, Schroders Greencoat, Segen, and SSE Renewables. This strategic partnership will enhance advocacy efforts, address regulatory challenges, and foster collaboration for sector advancement.

Navigating Business Rates for Solar Assets
Solar Energy UK published “Business Rates – Advice and FAQs”, – a briefing guiding understanding rates liabilities on solar assets, explaining how liabilities are assessed by the Valuation Office and calculated by the Billing Authority based on Rateable Values. It highlights the ongoing 2023 Rating Revaluation and directs readers to updated resources for further information.

Autumn Statement Sparks Investment
Solar Energy UK welcomed the Autumn Statement’s commitment to permanent full expensing, speeding up planning decisions, and investing in power grid infrastructure, providing a significant boost to solar power and renewable energy investment. The statement also exempted new renewable generation projects from the Electricity Generator Levy and designated solar farms as critical national priority infrastructure. However, the omission of VAT rebate extension for residential battery energy storage systems was noted.

Solar Panel Rollout Gets Easier with New Rule
The UK Government announced the introduction of new planning rules aimed at simplifying the process of installing rooftop solar panels for homeowners and businesses, reducing delays and costs associated with the planning system. The change is expected to incentivise more people to adopt solar energy, leading to decreased energy bills and reduced harmful emissions.

Victory: UK Drops VAT on Retrofitted Battery Storage
Solar Energy UK’s long-standing advocacy efforts claimed victory in December 2023! The campaign to remove VAT from retrofitted domestic battery energy storage systems (BESS) succeeded, benefiting over a million solar homes. The exemption now extends to BESS retrofits, aligning with other energy-saving equipment to boost residential energy storage growth and progress towards net zero emissions.

Solar Panels Set to Shine on England’s Buildings
The UK Government announced plans to make solar photovoltaic (PV) panels a default inclusion in new homes and buildings to meet upcoming energy efficiency regulations. The proposal aims to ensure significant carbon savings, affordable long-term running costs, and the avoidance of future costly retrofits by prioritising solar energy alongside high-efficiency air source heat pumps and stringent fabric standards.

Celebrating The Industry
Members of the UK’s solar and battery storage industry came together to celebrate their achievements over the year, foster collaboration, make new contacts and look forward to further growth in 2023 at Solar Energy UK’s members’ winter reception. The industry came together at The Conduit in Covent Garden, London, after an all-day round of last sessions of working groups – a new format that will repeat itself in December 2024.

As we reflect on the achievements of 2023, it becomes evident that the solar energy industry in the UK has reached a pivotal juncture in its journey towards sustainability.

With continued dedication, innovation, and collaboration, Solar Energy UK and its members are poised to lead the charge towards shaping a cleaner, more sustainable energy landscape for the nation.

Special mention to the team behind Solar Energy UK, whose unwavering commitment and tireless efforts have been instrumental in driving the industry’s success in 2023.
**Working group activity**

Our working groups are an integral part of our mission to foster collaboration and innovation within the industry. We are incredibly grateful for your unwavering support throughout 2023. Your contributions have been instrumental in propelling our industry towards transformative change.

In 2023, our working groups were well attended throughout the year, even when members faced significant travel challenges such as rail strikes. This year also saw the introduction of steering groups and the Solar Taskforce. Discussions with members and speakers’ contributions have helped inform the actions of these new groups and the work of SEUK’s policy and advocacy team.

Also, in 2023, we were able, for the first time, to use our new offices in central London to host working groups and our summer and winter receptions. We introduced as well a new format hosting our winter working groups alongside the winter reception all in one day, and it was great to see the entire industry come together to discuss the issues and opportunities we are all facing. We look forward to another productive year and welcoming you back to our working groups in 2024.

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**Utility-Scale Commercial Working Group**

The Utility Scale Commercial Working Group was formed to lead in building a more favourable regulatory environment for existing assets, improving market conditions for new solar farm development, and maximising value from large-scale PV through innovative approaches to asset management. In 2023, the group focussed much of its discussions around the ongoing problem of grid connection and reform.

At the beginning of the year, we had a speaker from National Grid who discussed transmission connection reform, which looked at how National Grid intends to improve the delivery of transmission connections by accelerating dates, compressing the queue, improving the transmission connection offer and supporting longer-term connections reform.

In July, we returned to the topic with a speaker from National Grid ESO to discuss grid connection reforms and, this time, about a consultation that Solar Energy UK had responded to on behalf of the industry. Grid connection is an issue that hasn’t gone away, and Solar Energy UK and the working group will keep an eye on how these reforms are implemented.

Community Energy South provided another highlight for the group in 2023 when they presented to the group on bridging the gap between communities to deliver the energy transition. The presentation covered an overview of Community Energy South and its current partners and discussed the concept of community energy pathways.

Guidance was provided on how developers can best work with local community energy groups who want to be included in the development of renewable energy projects by purchasing a small part of the solar farm, thereby promoting local energy and profits to put back into the community.

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**Utility-Scale Technical Working Group**

In 2023, the group welcomed a new vice chair, John Davies from 2DegreesKelvin. Throughout the year, this forum has been a hub for Solar Energy UK members to discuss day-to-day technical asset management, operations, and maintenance, and our chair and new vice chair have been very proactive in recruiting speakers that address important topics to our members.

The main discussion for the first technical working group of the year was around the concept of ‘technical debt’. Technical debt is the implied cost of future reworking required when choosing an easy but limited solution instead of a better approach from the start. The conversation focused on understanding members’ challenges regarding technical debt and its impact.
In July, the Technical Working Group focused on skills and recruitment. During this meeting, the working group was able to link up with the Solar Taskforce for the first time, inviting the chair of the skills and a recruitment subgroup to discuss the issues being raised there. We heard from a recruitment specialist about the challenges and skills shortages the solar industry and many others face and how we could solve them.

A common topic throughout the year has also been solar recycling. Policy around the recycling and collection of PV panels has been on the group’s radar from the start of the year as DEFRA released a paper on the WEEE (waste electronic and electrical equipment) collection targets for 2023, which include PV panels. In the final working group of the year, a panel of four experts in the field of solar recycling spoke to and took questions from the group. Recycling will likely be a topic of growing interest to the group as solar farms begin to reach the end of their lives.

Natural Capital Working Group

Solar Energy UK constructed this forum for members to address project-specific challenges, highlight our government and advocacy work and communicate current political issues around land use in the UK.

In 2023, the Natural Capital Steering Group and Planning and Land Use Steering Group joined the Natural Capital Working Group in these objectives. Following their establishment in May, the steering groups presented updates from their work to the working group members.

As the steering groups mature, the relationship and interaction between steering and working groups will get the most from members and become a powerful mechanism for achieving our objectives.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) has been a policy area of interest to the group. We invited a representative from Natural England to present BNG and how it would work from a solar perspective. Many questions remain over how BNG will work from a solar perspective, as it goes live in 2024, this will likely remain a topic of interest.

The Natural Capital Working Group has followed the evolution of the Solar Habitat report and the collaborative work between Solar Energy UK, Clarkson Woods, Wychwood Biodiversity and Lancaster University following the launch of the standardised approach to ecological monitoring in 2022. In 2023, the working group got a first sight of the results of the ecological data collected for the pilot Solar Habitat report presented by Hollie Blaydes, PhD Researcher at Lancaster University and Ecological Research Analyst on the project.

The group has also been regularly updated on the progress of the second edition of the Solar Habitat report, due for release in 2024. We look forward to this report remaining a regular agenda item for the Natural Capital working group and for members to continue giving feedback and participating in the data collection.

Residential & Commercial Rooftop Working Groups

The Rooftop Working Group looked at various domestic issues and opportunities in 2023. Solar Energy UK members were kept up to date with the latest innovations in rooftop solar as they received technical presentations from our manufacturer members.

The Working Group discussed issues across the residential and commercial landscape, including extensively on how to best engage with DNOs and energy suppliers, particularly in the context of G98/ G99 applications – with the Smart Export Guarantee being a significant area of work.

Members also kept abreast of the latest on consumer protection, industry standards, and deployment figures via the MCS while celebrating policy victories for the sector, such as the broadening of Permitted Development Rights in England and Wales, with the removal of the IMW capacity restriction and the approval for flat roof installations without planning permission.

This was another exciting year for rooftop solar, residential and commercial, due to the skyrocketing demand, which we are confident will continue for years to come.

Scotland Working Group

In 2023, Solar Energy Scotland experienced a pivotal year marked by significant policy achievements across the Scottish solar sector. These successes were built upon enhanced advocacy efforts and industry-wide relationship building. Among the notable victories was the announcement of the Scottish Solar Ambition aiming for 4-6GW by 2030. This ambitious goal is subject to a new Community Benefit agreement aimed at benefitting both communities and the industry. The formalisation of this plan is expected in the Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan by the summer of 2024.
Throughout the year, our Working Groups extensively deliberated on various topics including consumer protection, industry standards, skills development, and specific grid challenges unique to Scotland. Our membership and Working Group have expanded significantly, encompassing diverse stakeholders from the Scottish solar industry, regulatory bodies, DNO/TOs, and the Scottish Government.

Looking ahead to 2024, it promises to be another significant year for solar in Scotland. Our quarterly Working Group will continue to play a leading role in shaping policy discussions and initiatives.

The unprecedented surge in solar energy adoption reflects a pivotal moment for the UK and the world. As we navigate towards a greener future, our collaborative efforts with industry and government are driving tangible progress, propelling us closer to our ambitious goal of 70GW by 2035.

Webinars

Along 2023, we continue providing our members with industry updates through our webinar’s programme.

- AGM 2023 + Impact Report
- Scotland: Consultation response to the Scottish ESJTP Solar Vision
- Solar Habitat: A Look into ecological trends on solar farms in the UK
- Community Energy and Community Benefit with Scottish Government
- The Commercial Benefits of Onsite Solar
- Solar Taskforce: Progress and Roadmap to 70GW by 2035
- Solar Stewardship Initiative: A Progress Update

70% of webinar attendees said that webinars were a valuable way to learn new information. Solar Energy UK’s highest attendance webinars have been those providing new data and insights on specific topics.

The most attended and rewatched webinar of 2023 has been on the ‘Solar Taskforce: Progress and Roadmap to 70GW by 2035’.
Solar Energy Scotland

Scotland has a legally binding commitment to deliver net zero by 2045, five years ahead of the rest of the UK. Its interim target is to provide at least a 75% reduction by 2030 and a 90% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2040.

However, as of the end of 2020, Scotland had only around 3% of the UK’s total deployed solar generation capacity – far below the per-capita deployment for the rest of the UK. Back then, we launched “Scotland’s Fair Share: Solar’s role in achieving net-zero in Scotland”, a paper outlining key policy recommendations the Scottish Government should adopt to help solar energy deliver its potential and stimulate investment so that Scotland gets its fair share of solar.

2023 was a year of achievement for Solar Energy Scotland; the progress made since those recommendations were made has been outstanding.

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<th>Ask</th>
<th>Progress</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Scottish Government adopts an ambition of 4-6GW of solar deployed in Scotland by 2030</td>
<td>Complete – with delivery in progress</td>
<td>Minister Lorna Slater announced at the Scottish Green Party Conference on October 28th that the Scottish Government had adopted a proposed ambition of 4-6GW of solar deployment by 2030, contingent on the industry maintaining its commitment to biodiversity and working with Scottish Government to create a community benefits package that ensures the benefits of solar are enjoyed by people across Scotland.</td>
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<td>The role of solar energy is explicitly stated in the Scottish Government’s Energy Strategy</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>The draft Energy Strategy and Just Transition Plan, published in January 2023, included the first ever Scottish Solar Vision which explicitly recognised the role of solar energy, stating “Solar has an important role to play, as part of a diverse energy mix, in Scotland’s decarbonisation journey. Our (Scottish Government’s) aim is to maximise the contribution solar can make to a just, inclusive, transition to net zero.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permitted Development Rights are extended to all rooftop solar projects</td>
<td>Complete – Delivery in progress</td>
<td>In the phase three review of permitted development rights, Scottish Government proposed no upper installation limit on permitted development rights for commercial rooftop solar installations.</td>
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<td>Solar qualifies for non-domestic rates on at least a twelve-year rolling exemption, if not indefinitely</td>
<td>Complete</td>
<td>Non-domestic rates relief was extended to solar energy in December 2022. The policy took effect in April 2023.</td>
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UK SEES 90% RISE IN MCS INSTALLATIONS IN FIRST HALF OF 2023
In the first six months of 2022, the UK saw a 90% increase in new MCS-scale solar PV installations compared to the same period a year before. More than 106,000 were installed, compared to 56,400 in the first half of 2022.

1.45 MILLION
That’s the total number of MCS solar installations since the scheme’s inception, 83% of all the technologies under it. More than 1.2m homes are now powered by the sun.

MCS INSTALLATIONS PEAKED
There are signs that the rate of MCS installations peaked, reaching more than 20,000 in March 2023, the highest monthly value since the end of 2015. The record figure remains at 56,411, seen in November 2011. However, the pace has stabilised, roughly 15,000 a month in the second half of the year.

190,000 INSTALLATIONS OVER 2023
MCS data shows that under 190,000 installations were made in 2023, a new post-subsidy record and up 38% in 2022. Plus, more installations were made by the first week of September than in 2022. The tally for 2023 is close to the record of 203,129, achieved at the height of the feed-in tariff era in 2011.

RAPID RISE IN CONTRACTORS
At year-end, 1,453 new contractors registered with MCS for solar installations, up 154% from 2022 and 226% from 2021. This eightfold increase in two years underscores sector demand for staff, with Cornwall boasting the highest concentration of 71 contractors, followed by North Yorkshire, Glasgow, Somerset, and Dorset.
Solar Energy UK
Members Receptions

In 2023, we launched a brand-new showcase series of networking events. These industry insider celebrations brought together influential solar and storage industry business leaders to enjoy a relaxed setting and engage in meaningful conversations with like-minded industry peers for remarkable networking, celebration, and collaborative evenings.

- Summer Members Reception
- Solar Networking Celebration at Solar & Storage Live
- Winter Members Reception

Throughout the year, members of Solar Energy UK came together to foster collaboration, make new contacts and look forward to further growth in the industry.

These networking receptions are not just events; but a platform for dialogue, partnership, and progress.

“To launch 3 brand-new showcase networking events this year was an ambitious goal. Through great teamwork between the whole Solar Energy UK team, sponsors and contributing members, we are extremely proud to have delivered upon that promise, resulting in a significant enhancement to our membership benefits. Following their successful launch, benefits now include a series of rich networking experiences each year for us all. Networking plays a critical role in further stimulating our industry through our members forging strong, new, and existing relationships via our new effective community networking events.”

Sturge Mazzocchi, Head of Partnerships & Business Development
Securing a Sustainable Future: The Solar Taskforce’s Vision for Solar Energy

Collaboration and Strategic Planning
For the first time, leading players from both the utility-scale and rooftop sectors, along with ministers and senior government officials, are convened to devise a comprehensive plan to achieve the target of 70GW of solar capacity by 2035.

The Solar Taskforce will meet regularly until spring 2024, with a primary focus on addressing industry-identified barriers. These include expediting grid connections and ensuring the availability of skilled professionals to support the scaling up of solar activities.

Engaging Key Stakeholders
The Solar Taskforce comprises Solar Energy UK, MCS, the Energy Networks Association, and the UK Infrastructure Bank, all of which play crucial roles in delivering the necessary expansion of solar power in the coming decade.

Additionally, sub-groups have been established to allow further participation from industry representatives and stakeholders.

Throughout 2023, Solar Energy UK has leveraged its working groups and steering committees to gather input from the wider industry, ensuring diverse perspectives are considered.

Mature and Informed Discussions
The establishment of the Solar Taskforce represents a departure from previous ill-informed debates surrounding solar farms and their impact on food security.

The taskforce recognises the urgency of deploying solar energy swiftly and acknowledges that land use concerns are not the focus of its discussions.

The government, across all political parties, now emphasises the importance of rapidly adopting solar power as the most popular and cost-effective energy source, both in rooftop installations and solar farms. The expansion of energy storage is also seen as a critical complement to this effort.

Action Over Rhetoric
While a taskforce can sometimes be seen to delay decision-making, the Solar Taskforce intends to prioritise action.

Industry leaders within the taskforce are eager to make tangible progress, setting high expectations for swift and decisive actions.

Solar Energy UK, as a representative trade association, remains committed to holding the government accountable for their promises and calling out any perceived delays. Quick wins along the way will be crucial to maintaining momentum and satisfying the ambitions of shadow ministers advocating for solar expansion.

Seizing the Opportunity
The Solar Taskforce presents a significant opportunity to accelerate action and overcome structural barriers hindering the growth of solar technology. With a clear understanding of the obstacles ahead, Solar Energy UK is determined to drive the necessary changes and unlock the full potential of solar power in the United Kingdom.

By engaging with all sides and fostering open dialogue, the association aims to deliver tangible results and ensure a successful transition towards a more sustainable and renewable energy future.

Members of the Taskforce will continue to meet into early 2024 and are working at speed to compile a series of recommendations for the roadmap. The final roadmap towards 70GW is expected to be published by Spring 2024.
Research

Fferydd Solar wedi ei gosod ar y ddaear a thir amaethyddol: y flentiau
Mae unrhyw awgrym bod fferyddiau solar yn peryglu diigoelwch bwyd yn flug. Mewn gwirionedd, mae’r gwrrthwyneb yw wir, ac mae’r papur brifio hwn yn eglur rol fferyddiau solar o ran cefnogi’r cyflenwad bwyd yng Nghymru, yn ogystal â d’dy cyfryniad at armanion economaidd a newid hinsawdd ethagach.

Be Part of A Brighter Future
Solar Energy UK’s ‘Be Part of A Brighter Future’ Careers Booklet, funded by the Mayor of London’s Solar Skills London program, aims to help residents pursue careers in the solar energy industry. It outlines job opportunities, emphasises the industry’s increasing need for skilled workers, and covers various solar system types and components, from residential rooftops to utility-scale farms.

Powering Up Britain
On 30 March 2023, the UK Government released plans to enhance and protect the country’s energy security, seize economic opportunities of the net zero transition and deliver on net zero commitments. Solar Energy UK developed a high-level analysis of the central documents (Powering up Britain – Main Summary, Powering up Britain – Net Zero Growth Plan and Powering up Britain – Energy Security Plan).

Solar Habitat: A Look into ecological trends on solar farms in the UK
In collaboration with Clarkson & Woods, Lancaster University, and Wychwood Biodiversity, we published a groundbreaking pilot report that outlines the results from 37 operational solar sites surveyed in 2022 across the UK. The study delves into the positive relationships between solar farms and ecology, with a specific focus on botany, invertebrates, mammals, and birds.

2023: A Transformative Year for Solar
Our latest research in collaboration with Copper Consultancy reveals that 42% of people near existing, proposed, or under-construction solar farms strongly support the sector’s development. Only 1% are strongly opposed, with 94% showing supportive or neutral attitudes. This shows the widespread public backing for solar farms, which are essential for our country’s net zero ambitions.

Solar Stewardship Initiative
The solar industry is fully committed to accelerating the transition to clean, green energy and will be instrumental in reducing carbon emissions and reaching the UK’s net zero and climate targets. The purpose of this briefing is to help members of the public, Government, industry and others interested in sustainability to understand better how the industry is working to drive transparency and sustainability in the global solar supply chain.

Solar Taskforce Briefing
The Solar Taskforce stems from a recommendation in Chris Skidmore MP’s Review of Net Zero: “Set up a Taskforce and deployment roadmaps in 2023 for solar to reach up to 70GW by 2035”. This report called for a solar revolution, cross-cutting actions on skills and supply chain issues, and broader measures, including network reform. This briefing aims to provide an update on the work the many subgroups of the taskforce have undertaken.
Partnerships

In 2023, our collaborations with various organisations and solar industry groups continued to expand our presence in the sector. These partnerships provide us with expertise, abilities, and contacts in the industry, strengthening our status as the top UK trade association. We are delighted to have partnered one more year with:

**MCS**

By partnering with MCS, Solar Energy UK continues to provide all solar MCS installers with access to our informative newsletters, educational webinars, and insightful briefings. Expanding our services is part of our mission to create a clean energy system that benefits everyone. We have continued to liaise and coordinate with MCS on all relevant policy aspects – including supporting media appearances and events, aligning consultation responses, endorsing joint policy positions, and engaging wherever possible on behalf of the overall solar industry.

**Solar and Storage Live**

Solar Energy UK has teamed up with Terrapin for ten years to jointly host Solar Storage Live, bringing together 200+ exhibitors and providing insightful conferences and networking opportunities. Joint efforts proved Solar & Storage Live 2023 to be the most attended show in the event’s history and have become the UK’s largest ever renewable energy exhibition. Over three unmissable days, 17,000 professionals from the solar industry gathered in Birmingham to share market knowledge and innovation and create new businesses across the entire value chain. The comprehensive conference provided a voice for every section of the renewables sector, and the sold-out exhibition presented a platform for over 450 sponsors & exhibitors to showcase the latest innovations and products from across the industry.

**Installer SHOW**

In 2023, we partnered with the Installer SHOW to bring a Solar Innovations attraction – a feature designed to give visitors the information and tools they need to succeed in the growing solar sector, vital for decarbonising UK homes and businesses. In partnership with MCS and sponsored by City Plumbing, the Solar Innovations attraction had an event timetable packed with expert speakers that saw fantastic engagement, and this is undoubtedly an area which will continue to thrive as demand increases.

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**Solar Energy UK at Events**

**Solar Finance & Investment | London 1-2 Feb**

The 10th Solar Finance & Investment Summit, organised by Solar Media, took place in February 2023. As media partners, our team attended this event, during which our CEO, Chris Hewett, led the session ‘A United Kingdom of Solar’.

This session covered the economics of solar development in an uncertain European economic climate, discussing the increase in technological developments in the UK and highlighting how we can expect the UK’s solar and storage to increase to an estimated 10% in the energy mix by 2025.

**Energy Storage Summit | London 22–23 Feb**

As media partners with Solar Media, Solar Energy UK had the opportunity to attend the 8th Energy Storage Summit. Organised by Solar Media, the Summit is recognised as Europe’s largest networking event for the energy storage industry. This well-attended event, designed for industry professionals, provided insights into the shaping of European energy storage deployment, innovation, investment, and policy.

**Planning Conference 2023 | Glasgow 23 Feb**

Solar Energy Scotland attended The Planning Conference in Glasgow. The conference brought together leading experts and decision-makers to analyse the evolving policy landscape, assess business opportunities, and identify obstacles in achieving net-zero targets.

Solar Energy Scotland had the opportunity to gain insights into industry planning and deployment levels, deliver the latest updates on the Energy Strategy’s impact on renewables, understand the influence of NPF4 on project consenting, and much more. The conference aims to provide valuable thought leadership for the year 2024.

**Distributed Energy Show | Telford 14–15 Mar**

Our Solar Energy UK Business Development Team attended The Distributed Energy Show in 2023, which emerged as the UK’s foremost exhibition of flexible and renewable onsite energy innovations. This free-to-attend conference and exhibition proved indispensable for commercial and industrial energy users striving to curtail heating and power costs while aligning with Net Zero targets.

The event served as an excellent platform for networking and provided valuable insights into innovative solutions for addressing energy challenges.

**All Energy + Decarbonise | Glasgow 10–11 May**

Solar Energy Scotland attended All Energy Scotland, a leading renewable energy event held annually that is dedicated to showcasing the latest innovations, technologies, and strategies driving the transition to sustainable energy in Scotland and beyond. Our team moderated a panel, ‘Planning and Environmental: Social guidance – Natural capital and biodiversity’, which examined how solar farms lead the renewable sector in responsible stewardship and challenges the radicalism of the NPF4 in the climate crisis.
The Installer Show 2023 | Birmingham 27-29 June
The InstallerSHOW attracts 20,000 installers, specifiers and decision-makers working across the heat, water, air and energy sectors. Following increased demand from installer visitors at the show calling for education on solar and storage. In 2023, InstallerSHOW, Solar Energy UK and MCS produced a brand-new, dedicated Solar Innovations feature to showcase our industry’s energy generation technologies, installation methods and insight. A collaboration of our members presentations made for a successful attraction that’s due to return in 2024 and beyond.

Segen Showcase | Tortworth 18 June
The Annual Segen Showcase is a significant event in the solar industry. 2023’s showcase emphasised our progressive solar and storage community, featuring insightful talks by industry leaders and major brands and networking opportunities for like-minded individuals. Additionally, the event included an impressive guest appearance by Tim Peake, with parts of the program taking place aboard the International Space Station in Tortworth!

UK Solar Summit | 27-28 June
Solar Energy UK actively participated in the UK Solar Summit held in London as part of our extensive media partnership with Solar Media. This event provided a valuable opportunity to connect with stakeholders across the value chain, share knowledge, and establish new business connections within the solar sector.

As a component of the Solar Task Force dedicated to advancing net zero, Solar Energy UK played a pivotal role in an insightful panel session on Day 1. The session, led by our CEO, Chris Hewett, and Tim Warham, Renewable Electricity Senior Policy Advisor at the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, focused on “The Direction of Travel for Solar Policy in the UK.”
Solar and Storage Live 2023

Solar and Storage Live stands as the pinnacle of renewable energy exhibitions in the UK, embodying innovation, dynamism, and excitement. This event champions cutting-edge technologies driving the shift towards a greener, more intelligent, and decentralised energy landscape.

In 2023, Solar & Storage Live achieved notable success, attracting an impressive 17,000 attendees and hosting over 425 exhibitors and sponsors, effectively showcasing the industry’s dynamism.

Solar Energy UK played a key role, actively engaging in the Installer Training Hub and introducing the new Recruitment Zone, which garnered significant attention and participation. Our involvement extended to our stand and the evening Solar Networking Celebration, all of which are expected to become regular highlights of the event.

The presence of three senior politicians in 2023, including Rt. Hon Graham Stuart MP, Minister of State for Energy Security and Net Zero, Alan Whitehead MP, Shadow Minister for Energy Security, and Rt. Hon. Chris Skidmore MP, who spearheaded the Mission Zero report, added distinction to the event. Their supportive speeches resonated throughout the venue as they also visited various stands. The extensive exhibition floor showcased the strength of the UK’s solar energy and storage sectors.

While optimism for the future pervaded the atmosphere, discussions naturally turned to the challenges ahead. Grid connections remained a key focus, with a sense that these concerns have reached top decision-makers, generating anticipation for concrete actions.

The bustling activity at the Recruitment Zone highlighted a growing interest in solar-related careers, indicating momentum to attract a diverse talent pool and address existing skill gaps within the industry.

Furthermore, among the diverse global products showcased, there was a noticeable emphasis on strengthening the UK’s presence in the supply chain. The Solar Taskforce will address this imperative in the coming months, reflecting the industry’s collective dedication to nurturing a stronger domestic manufacturing landscape.

Recruitment Zone

In collaboration with Solar & Storage Live, Solar Energy UK’s initiative for the Recruitment Zone aims to facilitate the entry of diverse talent into the solar and storage industry on a large scale.

At Solar & Storage Live 2023, supported by SSE Renewables, the Recruitment Zone was a platform for connecting qualified job seekers with prospective employers through face-to-face interactions tailored to specific job openings.

This innovative approach has streamlined the recruitment process, benefitting employers and candidates.

During the event, ten participating businesses collectively offered over 100 job opportunities, engaging with more than 230 individuals possessing relevant skills or transferrable experience for the first time at the Recruitment Zone.

The primary goal was to initiate fulfilling careers within our industry, with leading member businesses actively participating.
Installer Training Hub


The Installer Training Hub 2.0 emerged as a prominent highlight, offering a conducive environment for manufacturers to unveil cutting-edge models and technologies for photovoltaic (PV) and battery energy storage through expert-led training workshops.

Within the PV mount and module installation setups, battery and inverter displays, and the dedicated training theatre, workshops at the training hub showcased best practices in installation and commissioning to enthusiastic audiences, with over 1000 installers eagerly seeking knowledge and skill enhancement.

The transformative effect of the Installer Training Hub is unmistakable, as evidenced by the remarkable doubling in the number of trained installers, soaring from 600 in 2022 to an impressive 1,230 in 2023.

Professionals nationwide converge at Solar & Storage Live to engage with the training hub, equipping themselves with crucial new skills essential for the evolving landscape.

The overwhelming demand for the Installer Training Hub has led to its return at S&L London and Birmingham 2024, where we anticipate witnessing further evolution and expansion of our training facilities.

Our Members’ Views

For the 4th year in a row, our members agree we’re the leading MUST-JOIN trade association for solar energy.

This year our members gave us top marks for

- Driving the industry forward
- Policy, advocacy and lobbying capacity
- Providing industry updates and news in a timely manner
- Networking opportunities to connect with industry leaders, potential partners, and stakeholders

What our members value most

1. In-depth discussions at working group sessions
2. Research and updates providing market news and insights
3. Working together to influence policy makers
4. Research papers and market insights

Sponsor Members

In 2023, eight leading businesses joined Solar Energy UK’s highest membership tier, reinforcing our commitment to advancing the solar industry towards achieving a 70GW generation capacity by 2035.

This enhanced collaboration enables Solar Energy UK to forge more strategic alliances with these industry leaders across utility-scale and rooftop markets. Through this partnership, all parties stand to gain from heightened expertise and collaboration in navigating regulatory challenges, fostering coordinated public advocacy efforts, and enhancing brand prominence.
Meet The Team

In 2023, our objective remained the same: harnessing the collective capabilities of our members to forge a sustainable energy ecosystem that yields benefits for all stakeholders. To foster this vision, we have curated an inclusive and diverse team comprising individuals with varied skills, styles, and approaches.

This ensemble is pivotal in catalysing daily innovation and translating concepts into tangible outcomes. Our collaborative approach has been pivotal in driving the progress witnessed throughout the year.

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Membership/Business Development Adviser

Aodha O’Carroll
Political & Legislative Adviser

Noku Sunduzwa
Marketing Officer

Madalena Miteva
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Gareth Simkins
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Emily Fare
Senior Policy Analyst

Cherry Parker
Director of Business Development

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