



## New government must act to stop 'horrifying' spread of solar farms

We are selling off our land to people who don't pay taxes, former head of National Farmers' Union laments

Anita Singh

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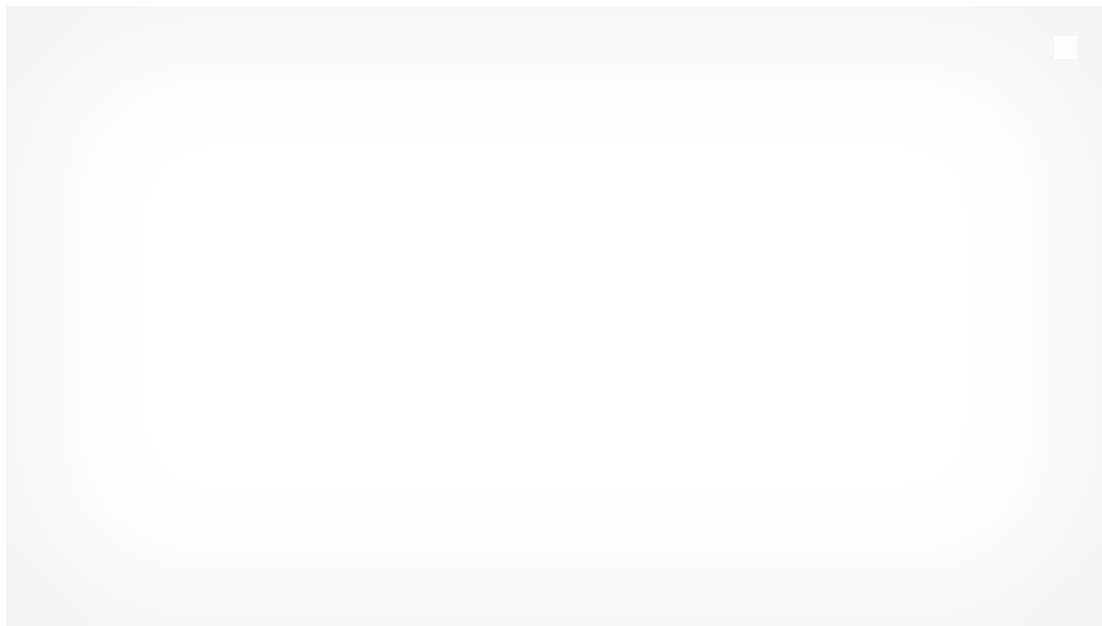
The next government must act to stop the "horrifying" spread of solar farms in the countryside, the former head of the National Farmers' Union has said.

Minette Batters said it is understandable that landowners want the financial benefits of solar farms but that “everyone else in that community will be opposed to them”.

Claire Coutinho, the Energy Security Secretary, said earlier this month that she wanted agricultural land to be protected from solar farms, and urged councils to consider the impact on local villages.

Labour has promised to treble solar power in its first term, saying that blocking solar projects would “rob the UK of potential for cheap power that could bring down bills for households”.

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Ms Batters said: “The trouble with solar farms is that there is one beneficiary, and everyone else in that community will be opposed to them.

“We are seeing horrifying examples of some landowners taking substantive areas of land back from tenants to put into solar. But until we get a meaningful land use framework that faces into this challenge, it will continue.

“The Conservatives certainly know how divisive this is because you saw Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss say in their 2022 leadership hustings, ‘we are going to stop solar on land and put it on rooftops’”



Minette Batters, former head of the National Farmers' Union | CREDIT: Heathcliff O'Malley

However, the practice is still going on and politicians “have failed horribly”.

Ms Batters expressed doubt about Labour’s plans for a government-run energy company, GB Energy, pointing out that it is uncosted.

Environmentalists argue that clean energy sources must grow if the UK is to become a net zero carbon emitter by 2050, a target both the Tories and Labour support.

Speaking at the Hay Festival, Batters also warned that Britain is “selling out to private equity”.

“It doesn’t matter whether it’s the vet practice, the care home – there’s every chance that we won’t have a British-owned supermarket here in 10 years’ time.” Ms Batters pointed to the recent sale of Morrison’s supermarket to a private equity firm, CD&R.

She went on: “Private equity has now moved very firmly into the area of land ownership and new markets, and it is the greatest threat that we face because we are a country that is up for sale.

“We’re selling off land to people who aren’t even paying their taxes here and it really has to change.”



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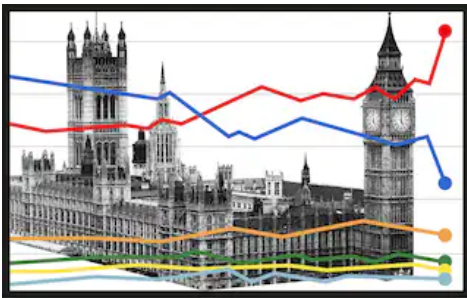


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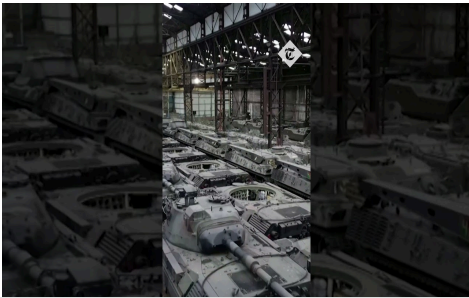
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