



OPEN LETTER TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY SECURITY AND NET ZERO

24 September 2025

Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP
Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero
Department for Energy Security and Net Zero
55 Whitehall
London SW1A 2HP

Dear Secretary of State,

Department for Energy Security and Net Zero's solar strategy casts a long shadow over our countryside: inconvenient facts and critical questions

We represent thousands of concerned rural residents from the East Riding of Yorkshire to the Cotswolds, from the Isle of Anglesey to the marshes of Kent.

We support solar power in the right places. But we cannot simply stand by while the government's solar strategy results in a rushed rollout of so-called Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, a new breed of ground-mounted mega solar, threatening to damage our countryside for decades – or for good.

As you know, these colossal new NSIP proposals typically have the footprint of an international airport. When clustered and conjoined – as many mega solar plans are – they would take up as much local land as a town. These schemes are unlike anything we have yet seen in the UK. If the planned facilities are built, it would make us the only country in the world with low photovoltaic power potential to opt for a fleet of such vast solar facilities on farmland.

We know that solar's poor performance in the UK climate ranks it bottom of DESNZ's list of renewable generators. We know that developers are planning to make billions by flooding field after field with cheap Chinese imports. And we also know that it is not logical to target rural landscapes with industry-scale solar facilities when other countries ahead of us on their Net Zero journey have already demonstrated that it is not necessary.

The government's current strategy on solar needs a re-set. Significant concerns are being ignored and serious questions remain unanswered:

- **The World Bank rates the UK one of the worst in the world for solar power potential – ranking us 229 out of 230. Our climate means that annual average photovoltaic output per installation is around half that of Spain. Yet no other country in Europe is encouraging solar developers to target huge tracts of farmland so aggressively – some have even banned it altogether.**

Why is the UK alone in prioritising farmland instead of mandating and incentivising a full suite of built environment-based solar applications? Why has the government chosen not to facilitate far more private wire and domestic rooftop arrays so that some power is produced at the point of demand rather than generating such generous returns for grid-scale solar developers?

- Months after Clean Power 2030 had been published, and following intense lobbying from grid-scale developers, DESNZ quietly combined regional transmission and distribution targets in a technical ‘update’, giving powerful mega developers the bigger connection capacity targets they pushed for, and making the coveted grid connections more likely.

Why did your Department bow to private sector developer pressure, knowing it would crowd out many of the more logical – and popular – commercial rooftop solar systems, car park canopies and community-based land solar projects you simultaneously promote in your Solar Roadmap?

- **Modelling shows that installing 35GW solar capacity would contribute just 12.8% to annual UK electricity demand. But doubling that capacity to 70GW – the 2035 target – would contribute around 15.5%, only a few per cent more.**

Why is DESNZ planning such high targets for solar power when inferior capacity factors, and the massive mismatch in solar output with electricity demand, mean that switching more and more farmland to solar parks is self-evidently an illogical strategy?

- **Existing smaller solar sites and NSIP-scale ground-mounted plans alone are set to replace an area of farmland bigger than Merseyside. Solar sector data suggests that the full pipeline is over 131GW, which would represent land the size of Derbyshire at risk of development in this rural land grab. Breadbasket counties so essential for our food security like Lincolnshire, or distinctive landscapes like Romney Marsh, could witness from 6% to 10% of good farmland taken out, yet communities are powerless to stop plans for these vast solar zones.**

Why do DESNZ ministers persistently quote misleading figures on total UK land-take when the reality is that between 2% and 5% of UK cropland is under threat of solar development? Why does DESNZ choose to gloss over the fact that heavy clustering of schemes into solar zones means that agricultural activity would be at risk of further decline or disappear altogether in some areas?

- **Nearly a quarter of the farmland selected by NSIP-scale developers for solar development in England alone is the top quality Grades 1 and 2 – 66% is at Grade 3, including Grade 3a Best and Most Versatile land.**

Why, if as you say “the biggest threat to nature and food security is the climate crisis, which threatens our best farmland, food production and the livelihoods of farmers”, and despite guidance on avoiding BMV, are developers emboldened to target our very best food-growing land? Why are national planning inspectors directed to follow ever more extreme pro-renewables policies that make it clear Net Zero trumps everything, and that development consent for fertile farmland will simply be rubber-stamped?

- **The lithium-ion battery energy banks used for short term storage for intermittent solar come with toxic explosion and fire hazards that risk contaminating the air, land and water over large areas around battery container compounds – there have already been three emergency incidents in the UK this year.**

Why is there no specific legislation around this risky new tech? Why is there a complete lack of new rules protecting homes, schools, hospitals and businesses? With the UK battery storage pipeline now stretching further than last year’s entire global installed capacity, has this government not learned lessons from the Grenfell Tower tragedy?

- **Lithium-ion battery storage banks will give every developer unprecedented opportunities to make multimillions from lucrative energy arbitrage. Scheme owners will be profiteering, not providing cheap low carbon energy – and consumers will end up paying the price.**

Why is DESNZ encouraging developers to build out battery storage at speed when the primary motivation for developers is the substantial profits they will make by trading stored energy at peak demand, both from any associated renewables and from the grid from any source?

There is so much more – from deep-pocketed developers’ aggressive treatment of vulnerable residents caught up in their site plans, to the toll on tenant farmers evicted from the land that is both livelihood and home; from the impacts on unique rural landscapes and heritage assets, to fears over multi-year construction programmes that will bring HGV chaos to our rural roads; and from the significant environmental, ecological and wildlife harms, to concerns over the troubling legacy of these oversized schemes.

Every question being raised by rural communities up and down the UK is being ignored in the relentless drive to build mega solar power plants at scale and at any cost in our countryside. That’s why we are now bringing these concerns direct to you as Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero. We would very much welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss them.

We believe that standing up for our countryside is the right thing to do – and that Net Zero strategies should not be at the expense of everything else we value.

We look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Stop Oversized Solar

stop.oversized.solar.uk@gmail.com

cc: Rt Hon Sir Keir Starmer MP, Prime Minister
Opposition energy spokespeople and shadow ministers

Stop Oversized Solar Community groups opposing Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) solar proposals in Anglesey, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Cambridgeshire, Kent, Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Suffolk, Wiltshire and Yorkshire: Block East Pye Solar • Claydons Solar Action Group • East Riding Against Solar Expansion • Fields of Glass • Grwp Cadw Tir Môn • Hands Off Our Marsh • Kingsway Solar Community Action • Mallard Pass Action Group • Say No To Sunnica • Springwell Solar Action Group • Stop East Park Energy • Stop Greenhill Solar • Stop Lime Down • Stop Mylen Leah • Villages Against Solar Threat