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We don't need to glaze over country to get green energy

Monday April 15 2024, 9.00pm, The Times

So far, just the two dukes are involved in plans to glaze entire regions of the country with super-sized solar farms. These vast new expanses would eclipse all existing solar-panel landscapes, including the relatively modest 2,000-panel solar farm the King has just announced for Sandringham.

The Duke of Beaufort is offering up part of Gloucestershire for the Lime Down project. Meanwhile the Duke of Marlborough's people at the Blenheim Estate aim to convert a swathe of agricultural Oxfordshire into Botley West solar farm, a sea of glass the size of Heathrow airport with more than 2.5 million panels sprawling through 12 villages.

Given the rapid growth of these huge solar schemes, an increase in the number of interested dukes looks inevitable, possibly exponential. The Department for Energy's view on these new empires of the sun seems ambiguous; its decision over the Sunnica plan to glass over some of Suffolk and Cambridgeshire has just been postponed for the fourth time.

But it's not all about dukes. Let's not overlook the important role sheep have been playing (albeit unwittingly) in the planning process. If those sun-drenched bucolic scenes in the planners' brochures are to be believed, sheep simply adore grazing and nuzzling among miles of panels. But if those ewes had a voice, they might first question why they should be expected to live amid glass expanses so large as to be confined to desert wastelands elsewhere in the world.

And even the most naive of Oxfordshire spring lambs might raise an eyebrow at Blenheim Estate's claim that its decision reflects a commitment to green energy rather than to loads of extra cash. Such is Blenheim's pious devotion to green and solar that, on a merry gambol through its two new local housing estates recently, I could not find a single solar panel installation on any roof.

The British Isles should plainly focus more on new wind turbine technology and on tidal and bio-fuel energy sources. Solar panels should still play a part, but preferably on roofs and brownfield sites where they would not be at the expense of food production, attractive countryside and of all the life-form resident there. This country needs a coherent green energy strategy, not a destructive, uncoordinated gold rush

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