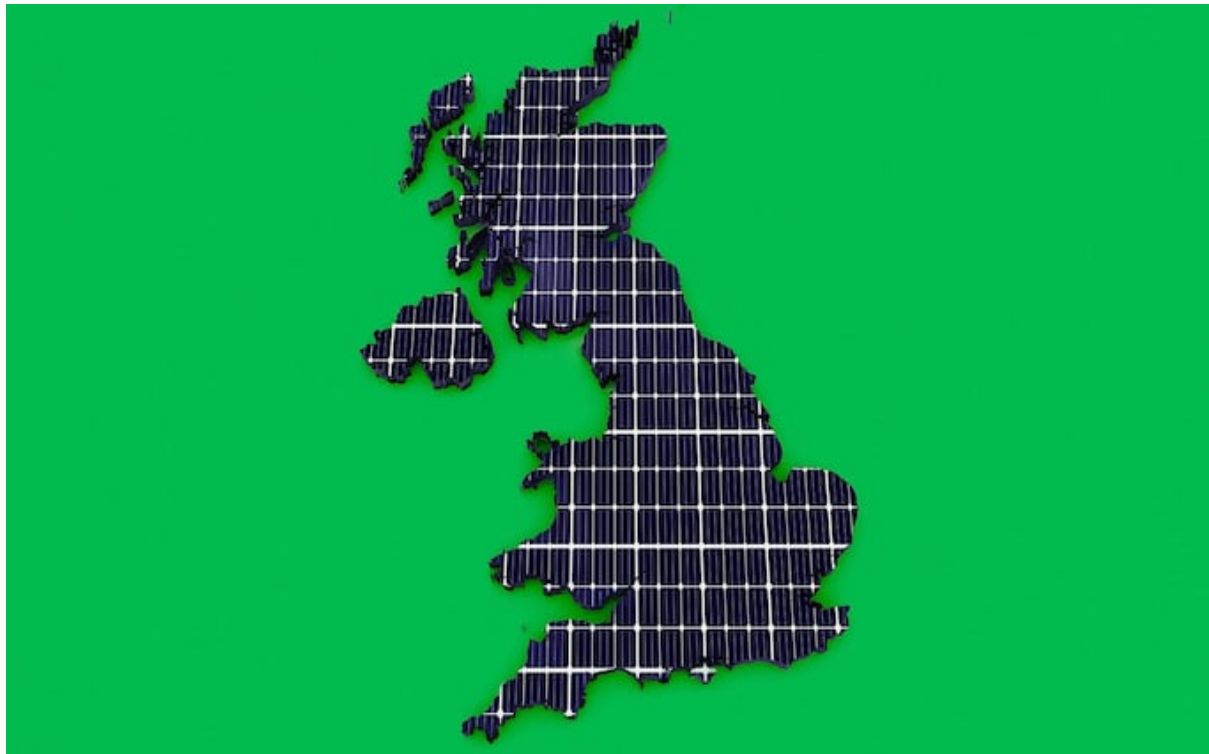


# Where Ed Miliband is plotting to build one billion solar panels across Britain

Middle England will be worst hit under the Energy Secretary's net zero blitz

[Jonathan Leake](#)

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Up to a billion solar panels will be fitted across Britain by 2035 under Ed Miliband's plan to hit net zero targets, data suggest.

The Energy Secretary's proposals will carpet the country with panels covering an estimated 750 sq miles, a bigger area than Greater London. Assuming the average solar panel is two square metres, this would mean as many as a billion are needed. Up to 5,000 wind turbines will also be built.

Figures released by the Government on Friday showed that Middle England will be hit hardest [by the solar blitz](#), with the most panels to be installed in an area stretching from Lincolnshire to South Wales plus the West Country, where Mr Miliband's plan envisages 200-300 square miles of solar panels.

For East Anglia and the South East, around London, up to 150 sq miles of panels would be needed.

Mr Miliband is plotting a massive expansion of solar voltaics – where solar energy is used to generate low carbon electricity – from 15 gigawatts (GW) today to about 70GW in a decade's time.

The aim is to decarbonise the UK's power supplies, reduce reliance on gas and eventually cut prices. But the scale implies solar panels could cover an area larger than greater London within a decade.



Much of the expansion will be in the form of solar farms on English and Welsh farmland, with the Government on Friday publishing targets for the amount of renewables it wants to see in each area of the UK.

For England and Wales, it wants solar energy to generate 64GW by 2035.

Solar energy requires 10-11 sq miles of solar panels per gigawatt, so this implies about 750 sq miles of solar panels will be needed to achieve the target.

Greater London covers about 700 sq miles. Solar panels vary but two sq metres is a typical size.

Some of this target will be met by placing panels on rooftops, which is seldom controversial.

Mr Miliband has expressed strong support for rooftop solar, but the scale and speed of the expansion he wants means a lot will have to be achieved by building solar farms.

The targets also include onshore wind – set for a similarly massive increase with an estimated 4,000-5,000 new onshore turbines to be built, mostly in England.

The machines will be fewer in number but much larger than the 9,000 already erected in Scotland and Wales. Some Welsh and Scottish wind farms [are already deploying machines up to 800ft tall](#) compared with the 200ft-300ft machines used in the past.

In a foreword to the Clean Energy 2030 Action Plan, published on Thursday, Mr Miliband said massive expansions in solar, wind and other renewable energies were essential to reverse Britain's exposure to global energy markets.

He said: "In an increasingly unstable world, our dependence on fossil fuels leaves us deeply vulnerable as a country ... The age of clean electricity is about harnessing the power of Britain's natural resources so we can protect people from the ravages of global energy markets.

"Our plan will provide the foundation for the UK to build an energy system that can bring down bills for households and businesses for good."

In Wales, the Labour government has designated 10 large areas for wind and solar development with a presumption in favour of approving planning applications in those areas.

Jonathan Dean, of the Campaign to Protect Rural Wales, said solar farms could fit into rural areas provided they were not too large.

He said: "We support solar, but highly distributed, so no single block is too big, making it incongruous in the landscape. The impact is 'shared out' and the worst quality land can be cherry-picked."

[Mr Miliband's plans are strongly opposed by Reform](#), which plans to make Labour's plans for solar farms, onshore wind turbines and pylons across the countryside its top campaigning issue.

Richard Tice, the party's energy spokesman, said: "Mr Miliband wants to carpet British farmland with solar panels roughly the size of Greater London.

"This absurd proposal will mean bigger energy bills and decimate food production. It is utterly wrong and a Reform government would stop this immediately if we win the next general election."

Asked about the scale of the expansion, Chris Hewett, the chief executive of the industry trade body Solar Energy UK, said: "Delivering the amount of utility-scale solar energy that the action plan

conjectures for 2035 would imply taking less than a quarter of 1pc of UK land – while making a dramatic difference to carbon emissions, energy independence, bills and biodiversity.”

Others disagree – among them the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE), which wants Mr Miliband to focus on putting most solar panels on roofs.

Roger Mortlock, the CPRE chief executive, said: “Rooftop solar could meet 60pc of the UK’s solar energy targets, drastically reducing loss of farmland.

“It makes no sense to put solar in protected or other tranquil landscapes or on high-quality farmland. We need a joined-up land use framework to ensure we make the best use of our finite supply of land.”

Claire Coutinho, the shadow energy secretary, said: “It’s clear that Labour’s plans to focus solely on wind and solar is not only going to ramp up people’s bills, but it’s also going to have an effect on the countryside as they require much more land to produce the same amount of power.

“The only sensible way forward, for the sake of our countryside and the cost of our energy, is much more nuclear.”