

PLANNING FOR SOLAR INFRASTRUCTURE 2026

15 JANUARY | LONDON



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Ahead of [Planning for Solar Infrastructure](#) (taking place on 15 January, London) **Simon Wheeler** **Director of Development Enso Energy** shares insight on how developers move solar projects forward while navigating planning policy changes.

WHAT STEPS DOES THE SOLAR INDUSTRY NEED TO TAKE IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS TO MEET THE 2030 CLEAN POWER TARGETS?

The industry has built a significant pipeline of projects and is well on the way to meeting the targets set out in the Government's Clean Power 2030 goals. There is still a long way to go however to achieve those goals. In order to convert this pipeline to operational assets we need to continue to work with the network operators, Ofgem and DESNZ to ensure the path is clear for projects to progress from development to construction. The biggest impediment for developers at the moment is grid connections.

The industry also needs to ensure that it maintains a social license and broad community support. Responsible development that acknowledges the issues and challenges we face in areas such as land use, food production, biodiversity, and the landscape is imperative.

The industry also needs to ensure that opportunities for all forms of solar development are being progressed - rooftop, carpark, floating, domestic, commercial, utility-scale.

HOW CAN DEVELOPERS MOVE SOLAR PROJECTS FORWARD WHILE NAVIGATING PLANNING POLICY CHANGES?

Planning policy is always changing, and should be doing so to ensure that it is keeping pace with the issues society is facing. Planning is a balancing exercise - weighing up the benefits and impacts of developments. How much weight is applied to either side of the equation should be something that is being constantly reviewed and challenged.

Development will respond to these changes - our aim is to always ensure that the benefits of our developments always far exceed the impacts.

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HOW CAN THE UK'S SOLAR SECTOR EXPAND AT SCALE WITH LIMITED LAND AVAILABLE FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT?

I don't see land availability as a limitation to solar development in the UK. Achieving the ambitious increase in PV capacity set out in the Government's plans would result in 0.3% of land in the UK being occupied by solar farms. We have choices about how we use land, and there are tradeoffs associated with these choices. Most would agree that the best quality farm land should be used to produce food, however there are other factors that determine whether the location of a solar farm is feasible and appropriate. Productive land also relies on stable weather patterns, something which is being impacted by climate change. Solar farms and agriculture can co-exist to deliver both food and energy in a sustainable way.

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