Picts Lane Solar & Battery Storage Frequently Asked Questions

Why is Cowfold Solar Farm and BESS needed?

Achieving net zero requires replacing fossil fuels like coal, oil, and gas with clean, renewable electricity. This shift is critical because the energy sector currently accounts for around 75% of global greenhouse gas emissions*. The UK government aims for 95% of electricity to be low carbon by 2030**, with the goal of reaching 100% by 2035, ahead of the 2050 deadline the country is legally bound to through the Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019.

As the UK transitions to net zero, electricity will play a larger role in powering homes, transport systems, buildings, and industries. This means electricity demand is set to double by 2050***. To meet this demand, we need to significantly increase the amount of clean electricity we produce, and solar is a key part of this effort.

Solar energy is the most affordable form of renewable energy in the UK****, and it is reliable, scalable, and can be deployed quickly compared to other renewable technologies. Solar farms have an operational lifespan of around 40 years, after which the land can be restored to its original use.

Cowfold Solar Farm and BESS will make a significant contribution to building a cleaner, more secure energy system, supporting the UK's net-zero ambitions.

How large is the solar farm site?

The site spans approximately 45 hectares and benefits from excellent solar irradiation, making it an ideal location for solar power generation. Solar panels will not cover all of the land, and a good portion will be reserved for delivering biodiversity net gain.

How long will it take to build the solar farm?

When planning permission is granted, it should be fully built within 12-18 months, only three to four months of which should cause any real noise or disruption.

* International Energy Agency website
** Department for Energy Security and Net Zero Clean Power 2030 Action Plan 2024
*** International Energy Agency World Energy Outlook report 2024
**** Department for Energy Security & Net Zero, Electricity Generation Costs Report 2023

Do solar panels work in the UK given we don't get much sun?
Yes, solar panels generate power from daylight, not just direct sunlight. Even on cloudy days, they still produce electricity.

I'm concerned about glint and glare from the panels. Will this be a problem?
Solar panels are designed to absorb as much light as possible, not reflect it. However, in certain conditions, some glint (reflected light) may occur. One of the reasons we picked this site is that it is already well screened but to mitigate against possible glare, we plan to use additional natural screening such as trees and hedgerows, which are highly effective. We will also conduct a glint and glare assessment as part of the planning process to ensure there are no unacceptable effects. With only a few nearby neighbours, we do not anticipate significant impact.

Will there be noise from the site?
During construction, there will be some noise from construction traffic and the installation of the solar panels. The main noise will be from the 'piling' part of the construction, which should not take longer than three to four months. However, once operational, the site will be very quiet, with minimal noise that would be continual. You would need to listen carefully to hear any sound, and the site itself is already well-screened by trees and hedges which will provide a buffer.

Will the solar panels be visible from my property?
We are conducting assessments to determine how visible the solar panels may be from surrounding areas. Existing trees, hedgerows, and the natural topography of the land will help screen many long-range views. We have specifically designed the layout to minimise the visual impact, and additional planting for screening will be considered.

What about the wildlife on the site?
Ecology surveys are being conducted to assess the potential impact on local wildlife. We will work closely with the council to implement a mitigation plan that ensures wildlife protection during both construction and operation. We plan to enhance habitats by protecting existing

hedgerows and trees, as well as planting more native plant species, ensuring improved biodiversity.

An increasing amount of research by the likes of Solar Energy UK and the RSPB is finding evidence of the positive impact that solar farms can have on soil health, invertebrates and ground nesting birds.

Will the project damage the land?
After the solar farm's operational lifespan of approximately 40 years, the land can be restored to its original use, often in better condition than before the project – due to a combination of the general biodiversity improvements we will implement, and as the soil will have had decades free from pesticides and fertilisers.

Cowfold is in an Air Quality Management Area - will it impact the air quality?
All construction and maintenance vehicle arrangements will comply with the Management Plan – this will be agreed with the planning officers at Horsham District Council.

Will access to the site be restricted?
We are committed to protecting the amenity of local footpaths and creating new public routes for the community where appropriate. Our proposals have been informed by these considerations.

Is the land currently farmed?
The site is largely grassland with crops to feed birds grown in some areas, these crops are dependent on government grants. Crops are not currently farmed for human consumption, and the site itself is not high-grade land so the installation of solar and battery storage will not impact UK food production. There are also ample opportunities to deliver wildlife and biodiversity enhancements on site.

Is battery storage safe?
Yes, battery storage technology is safe and uses well-established technology found in everyday devices, such as electric cars. We incorporate safety measures into our battery storage designs, including self-contained units for each battery, as we do at other EDF-managed sites.

We will work closely with the local Fire Service for reassurance on both sides.

We already have a solar scheme near Cowfold, why do we need a second one?
This Solar Farm is a standalone project. While there are other proposals in the local area, they are separate projects with their own grid connections and are not part of the EDF Renewables Picts Lane plans.

The area is a prime location for solar due to:

- Proximity to a grid connection at Bolney sub-station
- The site can be well screened by existing vegetation and with new planting
- There are no statutory designations on the land such as National Landscape (previously known as AONB) or Green Belt
- Potential to substantially enhance biodiversity and ecology on the site
- High irradiation in the south of England
- Alignment with UK Government strategy to install 1.1 GW solar in the south-east of England by 2035 (Clean Power 2030 Action Plan - GOV.UK)

Who will manage the solar farm after it's built?
EDF Renewables UK will own and operate the site throughout its lifespan. EDF Renewables runs nearly 50 renewable sites across the UK, including solar and wind farms and battery storage sites. The panels will be remotely monitored, and technicians will visit regularly for maintenance.

What happens at the end of the lifespan of the farm?
After approximately 40 years, the solar panels will be safely decommissioned and removed from the site. Around 80% of the components of solar panels can be recycled, and recycling methods continue to improve to minimise environmental impact. The land itself will be reinstated to its current use.

Why are there so many solar projects being developed now?
Several factors are driving the increase in solar projects, including the UK's commitment to decarbonising its energy sector and meeting government targets. This region enjoys high levels of solar irradiation, making it ideal for solar development. As the UK moves toward net-zero emissions by 2050, the demand for renewable energy projects is growing.

The South of England is generally less suitable land for food production, and so renewable projects are more likely to develop in this area.

Why can't you put solar panels on roofs instead of using land for solar farms?
Both rooftop installations and ground mount solar farms are needed to meet government renewable energy targets. Solar farms are essential for providing the large-scale energy generation required to transition the UK to net-zero emissions.

EDF Renewables UK does also install solar panels on commercial rooftops, such as those of Tesco supermarkets.

Will EDF Renewables UK use local contractors?
Yes, during construction, we will look to work with local contractors and suppliers who have the necessary skills and experience. EDF Renewables UK will discuss these opportunities with local businesses. Possible areas of work for local contractors include fencing, drainage, landscaping, habitat management, and ongoing site maintenance.

I'm concerned about the extra traffic on the roads
Once the solar farm is built, there will be very little associated traffic.

During construction, we will ensure the safety of all road users, including pedestrians and cyclists. There will be plenty of signage and the construction drivers will drive slowly and carefully in accordance with local conditions. There will be a Construction Environmental Management Plan agreed with the Council to show how the construction will be managed to minimise negative impacts. If the vehicles cause any damage to the verges, this will be 'made good' after construction is complete.

We will carry out a series of highways improvement works to enable the smooth construction, which will be a permanent improvement for residents using the roads.

How will you achieve the improvements to biodiversity?

This will be through a combination of enhancing existing plants and habitats, and a series of planting and habitat creation. The 2023 State of Nature report showed one in six species amongst plants, animals, fungi and lichens are at risk of extinction, but through habitat restoration and mitigation for climate change these declines can be reversed.