



Department for Energy Security & Net Zero

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Cllr Jim Martin
Leader, Folkstone & Hythe District Council

Our ref: MCB2025/07397

Email: Sharon.Hayles@folkestone-hythe.gov.uk

30 May 2025

Dear Cllr Martin,

Thank you for your letter of 9 May to the Secretary of State, regarding the strategic co-ordination of solar developments in your district. I am responding as this matter falls under my Ministerial portfolio.

The Government is committed to achieving clean power by 2030. This is an ambitious mission, which has enormous potential to create good jobs, protect billpayers, ensure energy security, and reduce our exposure to volatile fossil fuel markets. The scale of this challenge is such that, as part of the rollout of various renewable energy sources, we will need to see significant increases in the deployment of both ground-mounted and rooftop solar.

It is of course important that Government strikes the balance between the need for increased clean energy generation and impacts on local communities. That is why the planning system is designed to take account of these issues. The planning system sets out how decision-makers should consider cumulative impacts where a number of solar projects are deployed in close proximity. We encourage the effective use of land by focussing large scale solar projects on previously developed and non-greenfield land, and that projects are designed to avoid, mitigate and where necessary compensate for impacts.

Local planning authorities in England are responsible for most renewable and low carbon energy development of 50 megawatts (MW) or less installed capacity, including solar farms. Solar projects above 50MW capacity are decided by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero through the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) regime. We have recently announced an increase of the threshold for solar projects determined under the NSIP planning regime from 50MW to 100MW, which would mean decision making for larger projects will be determined at a local level, returning the power to local communities and enabling them to have more say in solar developments happening in their local area. This change is expected to come in at the end of this year.

The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) are the lead department for the Government's Land Use Framework, and officials in DESNZ are supporting their work to ensure most effective utilisation of land. As part of our efforts to become a clean energy superpower, we are commissioning a Strategic Spatial Energy Plan (SSEP), which will be the first ever GB-wide spatial energy plan.

The SSEP will support a more actively planned approach to energy infrastructure across England, Scotland and Wales, land and sea. It will do this by assessing and identifying the optimal locations, quantities and types of energy infrastructure required for generation and storage, across a range of plausible futures, to meet our future energy demand with the clean, affordable and secure supply that we need. The first iteration of the SSEP is due for publication in late 2026.

I hope you find this reply helpful.

Best wishes,



MICHAEL SHANKS MP
Minister for Energy