

23 May 2023

**PRESS RELEASE: Rooftops and car parks can power Sussex to solar energy targets**

- ***Majority of required solar capacity could be installed on existing buildings and car parks, with almost universal public support***
- ***Decarbonising the grid requires far less land than previously feared***
- ***Installing solar panels should be a requirement of planning permission for all car parks, new buildings and major renovations in Sussex***

More than half of solar panels required to hit government net-zero targets could be fitted on rooftops and car parks according to a major new report.

Research commissioned by CPRE and carried out by the UCL Energy Institute found decarbonising the grid requires far less land than previously feared.

**CPRE Sussex director Paul Steedman said:** “Climate crisis is the biggest threat to the countryside which means we need to decarbonise fast. This is a particularly big opportunity in Sussex where we have lots of hours of sunshine. There is enormous potential to make use of our rooftops, both commercial and domestic, car parks and other developed spaces to generate renewable energy while protecting valuable landscapes.”

The government has set a national target of 70GW of solar energy generation by 2035.

Analysis of the solar photovoltaic capacity of rooftops and car parks across England found installing solar panels on existing rooftops and land such as car parks could provide at least 40-50GW in England by 2035.

With further investment, by 2050 there is potential for up to 117GW of low carbon electricity to be generated from roofs and other developed spaces.

**Mr Steedman said:** “CPRE Sussex wants to see all suitable new developments required to have rooftop solar as standard. We also want to see a massive programme of climate-proofing existing buildings through insulation, rooftop solar and low-carbon heating.”

With the right policies, rooftop solar could hand power back to the people. A decentralised future of renewable energy cooperatives, supported by the government, is a realistic option in a net-zero world.

For those looking to start their own solar revolution, there are already group-buying discounts available through schemes like Solar Together, [solartogether.co.uk/sussex/landing](https://solartogether.co.uk/sussex/landing).

Read the full report and sign a petition backing the rooftop renewable revolution at [cpre.org.uk/news/rooftops-can-provide-over-half-our-solar-energy-targets-report-shows](https://cpre.org.uk/news/rooftops-can-provide-over-half-our-solar-energy-targets-report-shows)

Find out more about how CPRE Sussex is supporting renewable energy at [cpresussex.org.uk/what-we-care-about/climate-change-and-energy](http://cpresussex.org.uk/what-we-care-about/climate-change-and-energy)

### **Case study 1 – University of Sussex**

In 2017 the University of Sussex made a strategic decision to reduce its carbon footprint by installing rooftop solar panels. The university's flat roofs were an ideal starting point. With rooftop solar seen as a practical and cost-effective option, it was an easy first step on its decarbonisation journey.

It installed 3,144 solar panels which produced more than 4GWh of renewable energy for the campus. While the solar panels may not fully meet the energy demands of the university, they have helped reduce its reliance on non-renewable energy with a corresponding reduction in energy bills. The initiative has been welcomed by the university community.

### **Case study 2 – Energise Sussex Coast, Community Solar Projects, Hastings**

Since launching in September 2019 this scheme has installed solar PV systems on educational and community sites in Hastings and St Leonards. They include five University of Brighton Academies Trust schools, including one of the biggest single solar arrays on any school in the country at The St Leonard's Academy. Solar systems have also been installed for the Hasting Furniture Service charity, at the church hall of Christ Church Ore and the Innovation Centre on Churchfields industrial estate.

### **Case study 3 – Brighton Energy Cooperative**

Brighton Energy Cooperative has more than 80 community-owned solar arrays. Partners range from schools to businesses, and from blocks of flats to a football stadium. Solar systems are funded by hundreds of members who have joined the scheme over the past 10 years. Members receive a return on their investment and the chance to join a dynamic, progressive organisation committed to the development of community-owned renewables.

### **Case study 4 – REPOWER Balcombe**

The aim of REPOWER Balcombe is community-owned, locally generated energy through clean, renewable technologies, and encouraging the move away from climate-changing fossil fuels. It disperses funds to local schools and charities for energy-saving projects such as LED lighting, electricity storage batteries, solar panels, and community fridges.

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For press inquiries and interview opportunities contact [sheena.journalism@gmail.com](mailto:sheena.journalism@gmail.com).

### **Notes for editors:**

#### **About CPRE Sussex**

CPRE Sussex is shaping a greener future for Sussex. Our priorities are:

- Beautiful landscapes, rich in nature and greener towns and cities
- Countryside and green spaces which are accessible to all, enriching lives and health
- Sustainable development for thriving communities
- Effective responses to the climate emergency

We engage with decision makers, influencing them and challenging them to protect the Sussex countryside and green spaces. We inform on environmental issues and empower individuals and communities with robust evidence to defend and enhance the green spaces they love. We believe in collaborating with others to ensure a greener future for our county. We research and provide advice on planning issues. Together we can shape a greener future for Sussex.

### **Background on Rooftop Revolution report**

To better understand the full potential of rooftop solar energy in this country, CPRE commissioned experts at the University College London (UCL) Energy Institute to undertake an independent review of the land use implications of meeting targets, drawn from a series of well-established net zero greenhouse gas emission scenarios. Using this data, UCL has produced assessments of the total energy that could be generated from solar photovoltaic (PV) panels on rooftops across England as well as the land area that may be required for wind, ground-mounted solar and biomass in England in net zero scenarios.

While the study was primarily focused on the potential of rooftop and car park solar, it also looked at the land use implications of onshore wind, bioenergy and reducing demand through energy efficiency measures.

### **Key recommendations to reach the government target of 70GW of solar energy by 2035:**

- A new rooftop solar target: at least 40GW by 2035 delivered through the lowest cost opportunities on new builds, commercial buildings and car parks
- Land use framework: a national strategy to balance the competing needs for buildings, carbon sequestration, energy and infrastructure, food security and nature recovery on a finite amount of land
- 'Roof first': local communities can audit solar potential on available south-facing roofs and then will be able to prioritise solar panels on suitable brownfield land and avoid best and most versatile agricultural land
- Grid capacity: work with Ofgem to require Distribution Network Operators across the country to invest in local grid capacity to better accommodate increased generation from solar and heat pumps.