

# PLANNING FOR SOLAR INFRASTRUCTURE 2024

11 JANUARY | LONDON

Ahead of [Planning for Solar Infrastructure \(taking place on 11 January, London\)](#) **Ross Wolhuter, Head of Development – UK at Eden Renewables** shares insight on the benefits and challenges facing solar, and some guidance to solar developers.



**ROSS WOLHUTER**  
HEAD OF DEVELOPMENT – UK  
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## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF SOLAR IN THE UK? HOW CAN THESE BE EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATED THOSE DIRECTLY INVOLVED WITH SOLAR?

Solar is so much more than simply generating clean power to reduce carbon emissions. It is a fantastic source of homegrown energy that is boosting our energy security and our economy, brings multiple benefits for local communities, and helps reduce everyone's energy bills.

It's also hugely beneficial for biodiversity, helping to tackle both the climate and ecological crises.

We as an industry need to be clear and consistent in our messaging both to those working in the industry and to those we engage with to deliver i.e. local communities and politicians at all levels of government to drive this home.

## WHAT CHALLENGES DO SOLAR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS CURRENTLY FACE? HOW CAN THESE BE OVERCOME?

Solar faces three main challenges:

1. Connecting to the electricity grid - the lack of capacity after decades of underinvestment is going to make it all but impossible to achieve the Government's solar deployment target of 70GW by 2035. Projects in planning which have already secured grid connections **MUST** be supported.
2. The planning process and lack of resources in local authority planning departments, which haven't recovered to full strength since the pandemic. It can sometimes take more than two years to get consent through the TCPA for a solar project (where the target should be 3 months). This is holding back some very good projects that can be ready to build quickly, and again threatens the UK's ability to achieve our Net Zero targets. Much more investment should be made in Local Authority planning departments to help ease the capacity constraints.

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3. Public misunderstandings and misconceptions around solar. While solar is the most popular energy generating technology, with incredible support of up to 90% in the general population, there are still myths and misinformation being perpetrated about some local projects. And it is usually a small number of opponents who shout the loudest in communities and make it their business to spread inaccurate information locally. People who support solar need to make their voices heard too and speak up for action against climate change, and developers need to engage early and effectively with them providing the tools to help them do that.

## WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO SOLAR DEVELOPERS SEEKING TO NAVIGATE THE CONSENTING PROCESS IN THE UK?

Early, effective and thorough engagement with all stakeholders is critical. Be transparent and responsive in your communications with local communities and work hard to encourage supporters to come forward and have their say as well as countering the nay-sayers. Above all, listen to what people want and take a flexible approach to designing the project where possible.

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