

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [new\\_case@beis.ecase.co.uk](mailto:new_case@beis.ecase.co.uk)  
**Subject:** FW: \*Not a constituent\* FW: The Big Solar Co-op: ethical, community-led rooftop solar - CPRE  
**Date:** 13 December 2023 10:52:35  
**Attachments:** [REDACTED]

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**From:** Secretary Of State (Energy Security) <[Secretary.State@energysecurity.gov.uk](mailto:Secretary.State@energysecurity.gov.uk)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 11, 2023 10:59 AM  
**To:** BEIS Correspondence <[correspondence@energysecurity.gov.uk](mailto:correspondence@energysecurity.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** FW: \*Not a constituent\* FW: The Big Solar Co-op: ethical, community-led rooftop solar - CPRE

Hi team,

Please log for TO response.

Thanks,

[REDACTED]  
Amaya Pinnock (*she/her*)  
Business Manager to the Secretary of State  
[@energysecurity.gov.uk](mailto:amaya.pinnock@energysecurity.gov.uk)

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**From:** COUTINHO, Claire C <[claire.coutinho@parliament.uk](mailto:claire.coutinho@parliament.uk)>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 11, 2023 10:31 AM  
**To:** Secretary Of State (Energy Security) <[Secretary.State@energysecurity.gov.uk](mailto:Secretary.State@energysecurity.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** \*Not a constituent\* FW: The Big Solar Co-op: ethical, community-led rooftop solar - CPRE

**Lewis Ilsley | Senior Parliamentary Assistant**

Office of Claire Coutinho MP | Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero | Member of Parliament for East Surrey  
House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA | [REDACTED]

You can follow Claire on [REDACTED]

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**From:** S J Boyce <[sjboyce@btinternet.com](mailto:sjboyce@btinternet.com)>

**Sent:** 09 December 2023 12:24

**To:** [REDACTED]

**Cc:** CPRE <[office@cprecambs.org.uk](mailto:office@cprecambs.org.uk)>; [REDACTED]

**Subject:** The Big Solar Co-op: ethical, community-led rooftop solar - CPRE

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [@btinternet.com](mailto:[REDACTED]@btinternet.com); [REDACTED]

The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP, Lucy Frazer MP and Claire Coutinho MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

9 December 2023

Dear Matt, Lucy and Claire

Sunnica solar farm

Before I start, I must tell you that I am no nimby. This development won't affect me, but as I have said before, I hate seeing small communities with next to no voice being bulldozed into submission.

I don't know why there has been yet another delay in making a decision about this proposal, but I can only hope that there is a doubt in Claire's mind. I do know that both Matt and Lucy along with Suffolk and Cambridge county councils, all local district councils, all local

parish councils and pretty well all villagers in this area are against it. It is not genuine and does not benefit the local community in any way; the reverse is true and it will devastate the lives of local people for a generation. Long term Sunnica says it will employ a handful of people, but what they don't say is how many more people they will put out of work, how their properties will be devalued and how a way of life will be ruined.

There are so many alternatives to covering agricultural land in solar panels that it is extraordinary that this massive proposal was ever given the time of day and that so much public money has been wasted on it. I appreciate that the alternatives (warehouse rooftops, new houses, carparks, disused airfields, railway lines and embankments, etc, etc, etc) are probably more expensive than using agricultural land, but in the long run it must be cost effective to cover unused and "unuseful" spaces.

Today I received this from CPRE. It makes so much sense and surely must influence Claire's decision....??

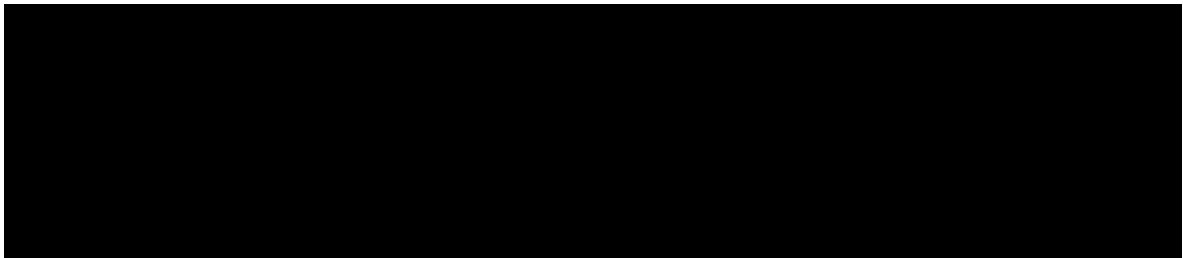
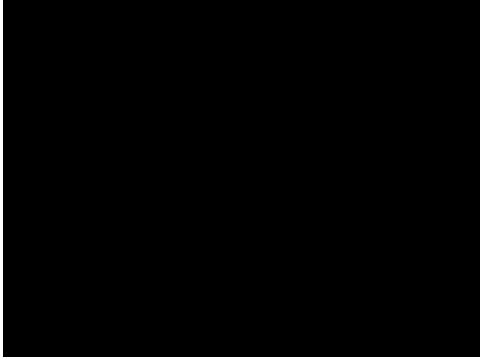
<https://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-care-about/climate-change-and-energy/renewable-energy/our-rooftop-solar-campaign/the-big-solar-co-op-ethical-community-led-rooftop-solar/>

Please don't opt for the cheap choice. Claire, if you haven't, please visit the site and the Say No to Sunnica committee. Please don't be responsible for ruining so many lives.

Selina Boyce

<https://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-care-about/climate-change-and-energy/renewable-energy/our-rooftop-solar-campaign/the-big-solar-co-op-ethical-community-led-rooftop-solar/>

## The Big Solar Co-op: ethical, community-led rooftop solar



[This is the Big Solar Co-op](#) from [shareenergy](#) on [Vimeo](#).

### People-powered solar

The Big Solar Co-op is owned by its members – that is investors and volunteer members dispersed across the country. In its decentralised model, volunteers benefit from a democratic set-up, a professional support team and a fully digital workspace which can be accessed 24/7. This not only allows for mobilising local people, but it also helps to avoid unnecessary travel and to improve access to volunteering opportunities for people with disabilities or caring responsibilities.

'We're a small project with big ambitions but anybody can get involved from anywhere in the UK'

*Noël Lambert, Community and Content Lead*

Taking the notion of local and slightly exploding it, the co-operative makes the most impact by focusing on

large building rooftops and taking advantage of economies of scale. In doing this, they have stronger purchasing power and are able to provide support and training for volunteers. This means volunteers are able to spend their time searching for sites, and designing and installing panels rather than in endless administrative tasks.

Delivering solar installations without delay is vital for the Big Solar Co-op's self-sustaining financial model. After having received startup grants and loans in the beginning, they launched a community share offer with supporters buying shares from as little as £100. The Big Solar Co-op installs the solar panels for free and charges the building occupier a reduced fee for the clean electricity they use.

## **Embedded ethics**

Even with its distinctive volunteering and financial model, it is the co-op's exceptional ethical nature that sets them apart from most other community solar groups. The Big Solar Co-op is committed to ensuring their ethical sourcing policy is implemented throughout the life cycle of each of its projects. This means that not only do the panel installers adhere to ethical practices and the highest safety standards, but the panels are sourced from a European manufacturer with a market-leading ethical supply chain. Both the solar panels and the raw materials they are made of come from suppliers who don't use forced labour and are produced using clean energy. Although this increases their price, clients are guaranteed the best quality, efficiency, and durability in their rooftop solar installations.

'To make change happen, you have to start somewhere, and this is where we choose to start with ethical solar'

*Jon Halle, Sharenergy CEO*

## **The bigger picture**

Despite the Big Solar Co-op's pioneering work, there must be a larger national effort to improve the roll out of rooftop solar. The government can play a crucial role in maximising the impact of community solar initiatives. Noël highlights the need to stimulate demand for responsibly sourced panels and implement manufacturer regulations to ensure that ethical and carbon considerations go into producing panels. This is essential to offer consumers more choice beyond the cheapest option and would encourage better decision-making.

'If you measure everything solely in money terms, as in which panels are the cheapest, you're not going to let schemes like ours come through, which have the ethical and democratic aspect'

*Noël Lambert, Community and Content Lead*

She also stresses that the government should pave the way with renewable energy; with an estate comprising of [over 130000 built assets](#), there is more than enough roof space on state-owned buildings for an extensive rollout of rooftop solar.

Image removed by sender. An industrial roof with solar panels on a clear blue day

Noël Lambert believes the government should pave the way for rooftop solar

Local authorities could also contribute to decarbonisation through solar by amending planning regulations to reduce barriers such as restrictive procurement processes, and by enabling rooftop solar installations on heritage buildings. They can also work with community energy groups to learn about renewable energy schemes and promote them to local businesses. Efforts to do this have been made by councils like [Kensington & Chelsea](#) and Fenland District Council in its [Fenland for Business](#) scheme.

The Big Solar Co-op is an excellent example of how it is possible to implement community-owned and ethically sourced rooftop solar at the national scale. In other European countries, national co-operatives with similar models have made laudable progress in reducing carbon emissions through community-owned renewable electricity.

In the UK, community energy co-ops have traditionally been local scale, administratively top-heavy and ethical sourcing has been usually been too costly to implement. The Big Solar Co-op's model has the potential to have a great and far-reaching impact by freeing up time and sharing expertise so local people to go out and find new sites and get more sustainable solar installed in their area.

## **A rooftop revolution**

At CPRE, we believe that much more can be done by the government to amplify the benefits of solar energy for the environment and local people. This is why we are calling on the government to fully realise the potential of rooftop solar by [asking MPs to become Rooftop Solar Champions](#) and support our work in parliament. Find out more and [join our call for a rooftop revolution](#).

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