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Stephen Rawlings

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20/1/25

Dear Sir or Madam

Tillbridge Solar Project

I have recently been made aware of some of the discussion and debate regarding the grazing of sheep under PV panels, which is of particular interest to me, as I have been doing so successfully since 2016 here on my mixed farm in Shropshire. I thought that my experiences might be of interest.

We have approximately 20 acres of PV Solar that we have grazed with both Ewes and also older (6 month+) lambs, since the site was completed. For the first couple of years, we had sheep from a shepherd in Wales, but unfortunately his ill health prevented our continuing with this system. Since then, I have run sheep from my own flock in the Solar Farm.

The sheep are grazed all year round except for any periods when they are temporarily removed from the site or fenced off internally, to allow some maintenance tasks within the site such as the spot spraying of weeds.

My wife and I are now getting older and as we have no sheep dogs, I use temporary electric fences to make tracks for moving the sheep, and to also manage the grazing within the site. I also utilise the existing hedges in the site for this, (and they provide a great wildlife habitat.)

For any treatment or care of the sheep, I use a mobile sheep handling system inside the PV site, in concert with some fixed fencing to facilitate the mobile system, and provide a larger catching/holding area, as required.

In an ideal world, a modest sheep handling system would be incorporated within all new PV sites in my opinion.

On the benefits of sheep within a solar site, I can only give my personal experience here.

1.

It keeps semi-productive grassland in use producing food in the form of extensive grass fed sheep, using no fertilisers.

2. It is by far the best means of managing vegetation within a site, as it reduces the need for mowing and excessive spraying.
3. I now manage the routine maintenance of the site here on behalf of the management company, and all the feedback I have received over the recent years, is that it is one of the tidiest sites they work on! That is down to the sheep.
4. I have heard of larger PV sites, where the site is grazed by a “flying flock”. This is where the sheep are brought in for a shorter period by a Shepherd, and then removed when the grazing is finished, and then moved to another area within the site. This is essentially what we started off with here at our site, but on a larger scale than our modest 20 acres.

As I mentioned above, my Wife and I are getting older and I would anticipate that the grazing here on the farm is most likely to be taken up by a local Grazier. I have already discussed the possibility of this being very suitable for a younger Shepherd, perhaps someone starting out with a modest flock initially, and then being able to expand and grow their business.

I would envisage that a larger site of several hundreds of acres of panels could make for a viable standalone enterprise, and make good use of the land in, around and under the panels, for continuing sustainable food production.

I hope this information is useful in your decision making process, and if you require more information please do feel free to contact me further.

Yours Sincerely

Stephen Rawlings