



The countryside charity  
Cornwall

Cornwall Matters November 2025

**CPRE Cornwall newsletter**

issue 19: November 2025

This month, we focus on two important battles for Cornwall, both of which are crucial for the protection of our countryside. One is to prevent the spread of inappropriate up-market housing developments, and the other is to halt the rapid expansion of solar installations on farmland. Both eat up our precious greenfield land, degrading the historic beauty of our landscape and drastically cutting down its food-producing capacity. In addition, of course, there is the damage done to the ecosystems and biodiversity we rely on for our wellbeing and to help counter climate change.

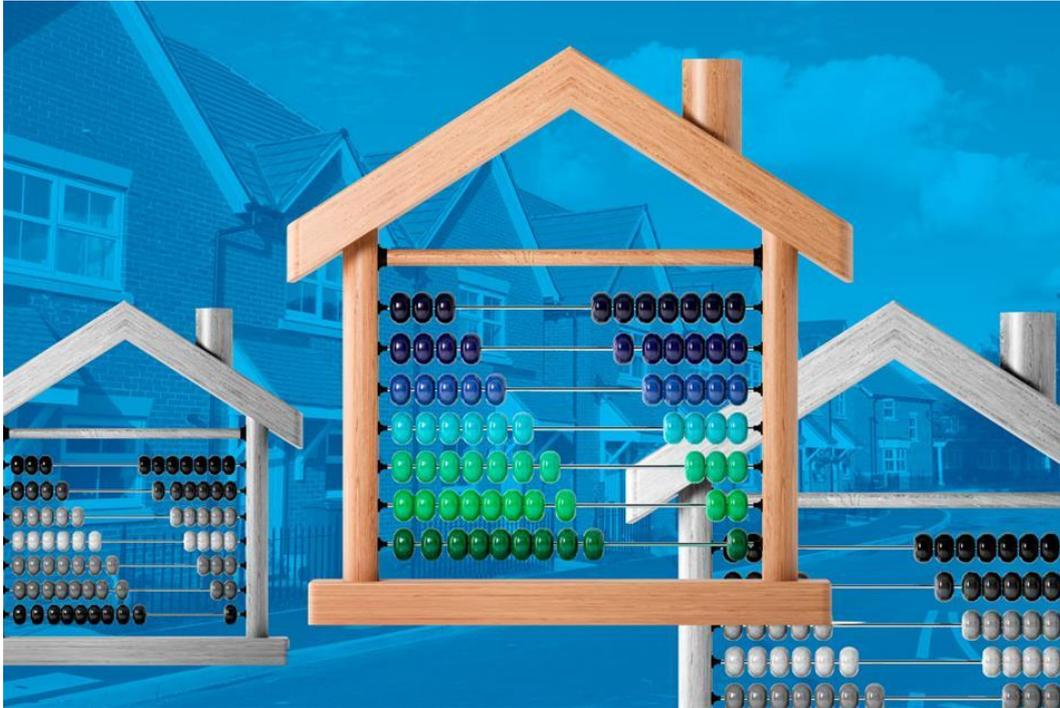
Among relevant factors in the loss of our countryside is the apparent inability of planning authorities to get social housing or genuinely affordable homes built, or to site developments on brownfield land. In September this year, the CPRE published a Brownfield Land report, showing that the nation has enough brownfield land to build 1.4 million homes. Furthermore, of these potential sites, more than half had full or 'in principle' planning permission, so that of the 1.4 million, a potential 770,000 homes already have planning permission.

For another perspective, the well known campaigner George Monbiot very kindly gave us his permission to include his trenchant letter on housing (originally published in the *Guardian* and we thank them for their kind permission too).

On the question of solar installations on greenfield land, John Killick provides an authoritative state of play and a critique of how the planning process is working—or not working—to prevent the loss of productive farmland. One of CPRE's most important campaigns has been to get solar installations onto rooftops instead of green fields. We have had some success: in the future, all new homes will have rooftop solar panels, but we fight on for all large buildings to be covered.

We are working to revise and, we hope, improve our website—we welcome feedback from our members to inform this process. And please do check out our social media posts—we like to be "liked"; it is good for our morale.

♥ AND A BIG THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUING SUPPORT ♥



**Home Truths: the only thing Labour is building is a bigger, more dysfunctional housing market.**

George Monbiot

Private developers offer politicians a simple solution for bulldozing through this crisis – build more. But it won't work.

Build, baby, build. That's about the intellectual limit of the government's housing strategy. Millions are under-housed, so let's bulldoze the planning system and build more homes. But it's not nearly so simple.

As soon as anyone challenges the policy, the government brands them a nimby – another of the crude truncations that pass for debate on this issue: nimbys versus yimbys. So, before I go further, let me state that I want to see lots of new social and genuinely affordable housing built as part of a massive programme to solve the

worst housing crisis of any wealthy country. I've been making similar calls for years, not least in the report I co-authored for the Labour Party in 2019: *Land for the Many*. I oppose Labour's current approach for a different reason. It will fail.

The plan to build 1.5m homes over five years now depends on just six volume house-builders. No other mechanism is proposed at scale: Labour's extension of the home-building fund to incentivise small and medium housebuilders will deliver only 12,000 homes. But volume housebuilders have an incentive to limit construction to the 'market absorption rate': in other words, they won't dent their profits by building enough homes to reduce the selling price. They also minimise the release of affordable homes: they tend to promise them, then pare down their promises as development proceeds. Unaffordable homes are more profitable. The government has proposed no measures sufficient to change these incentives.

Moreover, in the absence of policies to reduce the cost of housing, even if 1.5m new homes were magically built, this would have little impact on the key determinant of whether or not people are well housed – price. One study suggests that building 300,000 homes a year in England for 20 years would reduce prices by only 10%. That is, to put it mildly, a highly inefficient means of solving the problem.

Why is price so unresponsive? Because 'effective demand' for housing (demand backed by purchasing power) bears little relationship to need. As the professor of economics and finance, Josh Ryan-Collins, points out, since 2016, more homes have been bought as 'additional dwellings' (second homes, holiday homes, Airbnbs, buy-to-lets and so on) than by first-time buyers. Almost 1m homes in England are left empty and the number of vacant properties has risen 32% since 2016. The measures the government proposes to address this scarcely touch the sides.

Many of those buying homes for investment are based overseas – foreign property buyers alone have increased house prices in the UK by 17% since 1999. The financialisation of housing is a major driver of the fivefold increase in prices since the 1980s. You cannot simultaneously ensure that housing remains a lucrative investment and that everyone is well housed – yet this is what the government seeks to do.

Yes, extra supply is urgently needed. But there will be no significant change in affordability unless demand is also addressed by using the tax and planning systems to suppress demand from investors, releasing homes for first time buyers and social renters. This would make homes for people on low incomes available far more quickly, cheaply and efficiently than new construction.

People find this hard to believe, but there is a massive housing surplus in this country. We have a higher ratio of bedrooms to population than ever before. The problem is that it's woefully maldistributed: prosperous couples and single people knock around in mansions while families are crammed into tiny flats. Most of the expansion of housing supply in the UK since the 1980s has created extra space for wealthy people, rather than new homes for those who need them. About 8.8m homes in England are underoccupied. There's already more than enough housing, by a wide margin, to meet everyone's needs, if effective incentives for redistribution were created. But the government tells me it has no such plan.

Among the reasons for these dysfunctions is our farcical property tax system: council tax banding is stuck at 1991 levels, which means that there is now almost no relationship between the value of a property and the amount that the occupiers must pay. If, for instance, all property were taxed at a percentage of its value, with rebates for poorer or younger families, this would create a powerful incentive for the over-housed to downsize, releasing larger homes for those who need them.

Moreover, without either a capital gains tax on the value of primary residences or rent controls, housing is almost a one-way bet – a near guarantee of making money without effort. Rent controls are dismissed out of hand by ministers, who claim they would reduce the size of the sector. But experience in other countries suggests this is a myth. Instead, as private rents continue to soar, the government has frozen local housing allowance, ensuring that people on low incomes will struggle even more to find a decent home. So much for its housing policy being driven by concern for the poor.

Just as mindless is the government's belief that housing can be made more affordable through mortgage market liberalisation. Only last week, in response to government pressure, the Financial Conduct Authority proposed that mortgage rules should be further loosened to increase home ownership and promote growth. But if you flood an asset with money when returns are guaranteed, its price will rise.

Are ministers really so simple-minded, or do they just pretend to be?

So what the government intends to do is leave the dysfunctional system intact while building more homes. Result? A larger dysfunctional system. Oh, and massive environmental damage. Again, where we might hope for thoughtful and effective policy, we hear crude and ignorant pronouncements. For instance, the housing minister [in January 2025] Matthew Pennycook, talks of targeting 'low-value scrub land'. Denigrating scrub is a sure sign of ecological illiteracy. It's a rare habitat of great ecological value, essential for a wide range of treasured species, such as nightingales, song thrushes and dormice. But a bulldozer policy demands bulldozer rhetoric. I suspect these are intelligent people posing as morons for political purposes.

The government's housing policy creates an impression by tearing up the countryside while, thanks to a perennial fear of upsetting powerful economic interests, failing to address the underlying causes of the problem. The likely result is trashed landscapes, unmet housing need and soaring rents. Had it set out to destroy people's faith in democracy and hand the next election to the far right. It could scarcely be doing a better job.

*George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist. This piece first appeared in the Guardian on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> January 2025. It is reproduced here by courtesy of the author and with the kind permission of Guardian Newspapers Ltd.*

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## **Solar and Wind Energy**

John Killick

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The government and the public agree that we must combat climate change by rapidly building new renewable energy infrastructure. The tricky questions are where to put it, and how to select the best trade-off between the in-place effects of the required equipment and the necessity to protect our vital agriculture and landscapes. Of course, Cornwall Council should support renewables – possibly

up to 100% of our needs - but there are reasonable doubts about how much more than that.

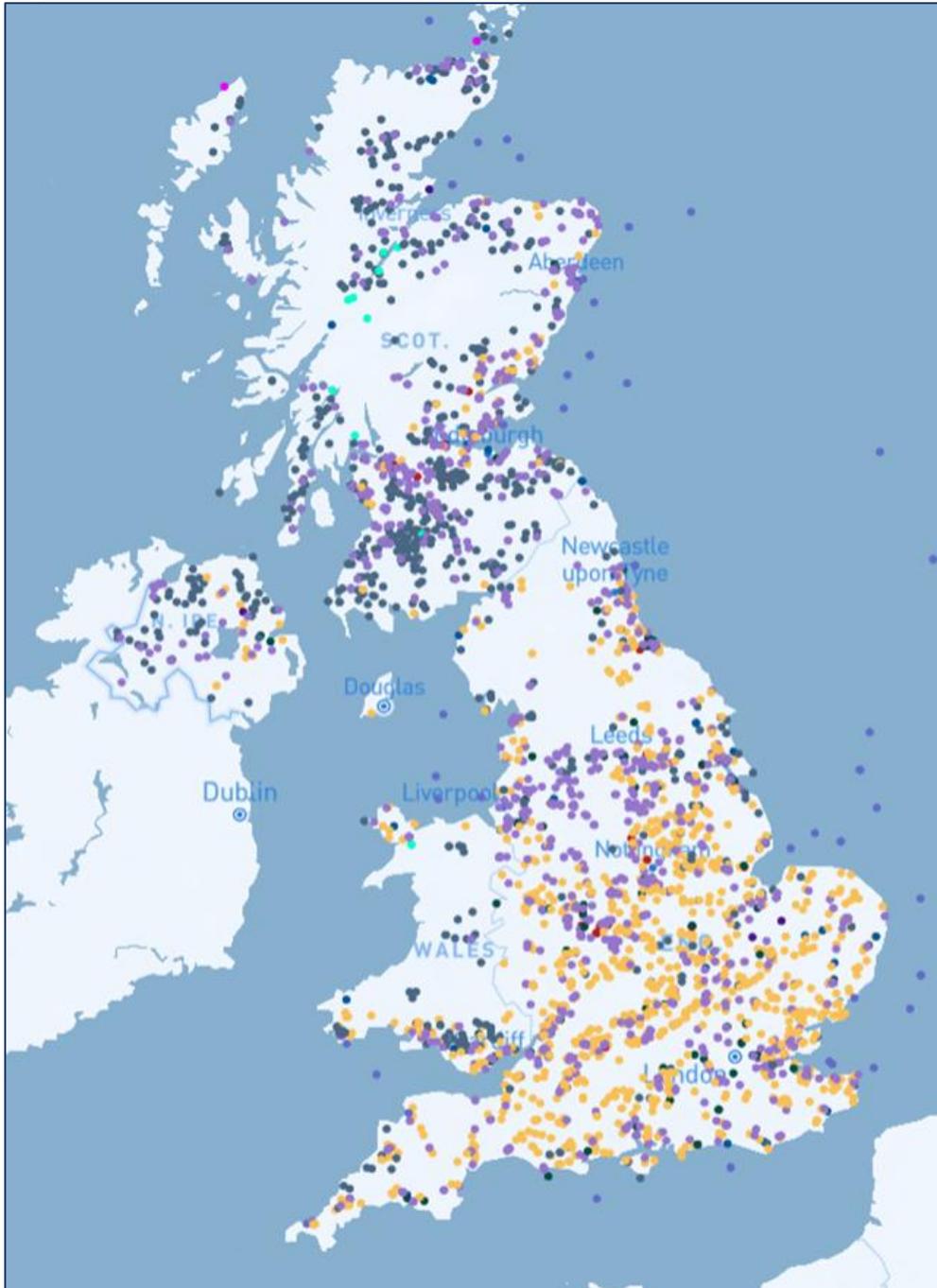
Renewables have developed rapidly since 2000. First, before 2010, came more onshore wind applications, then from about 2012, solar and offshore wind. There was a short pause between 2015 and 2018 - for landscape and financial reasons - but then, a new surge of solar farms and battery installations as temperatures rose and the government pressed harder.

In the last two years it has become evident that renewables can be usefully complementary. On sunny days, the daytime surplus can be stored for night. In winter weather, higher winds offset more clouds. Taken together with back-up gas, nuclear, imported supplies, and batteries, the system should provide an effective low energy combination at a reasonable price.

## **2. LOCATION AND VOLUME OF RENEWABLES**

So far, the most substantial wind farms are in Scotland, Northern Ireland, south Wales and the Pennines, and most substantial solar farms are in central, southern and eastern England. Cornwall – windy, sunny and stuck out into the Atlantic – has a flurry of both: see Figure 1. The map shows planning applications – of between 10 and 100 mega-watts (MWs) capacity submitted and completed between 2010 and 2025.

**Fig 1. Location of Solar and Wind Farms in the UK.**



*source: Department of Net Zero 2025, blue = wind, yellow = solar*

Inserting different cut-offs, for instance 1 MW instead of 10 MW, produces widely different visual effects. A 10 MW solar farm occupies 15 hectares. The ten 2 MW wind turbines at Carland Cross produce 20 MW and occupy 50 hectares.

Figure 2 below shows Cleve Hill Solar farm in Kent, currently, at 373 MW, the largest solar farm operational in England. It was built on a former salt marsh, later used to graze sheep, beside the Swale, adjacent to the Thames Estuary.

**Figure 2: Cleve Hill Solar Farm on the River Swale, Kent: 373 MW**

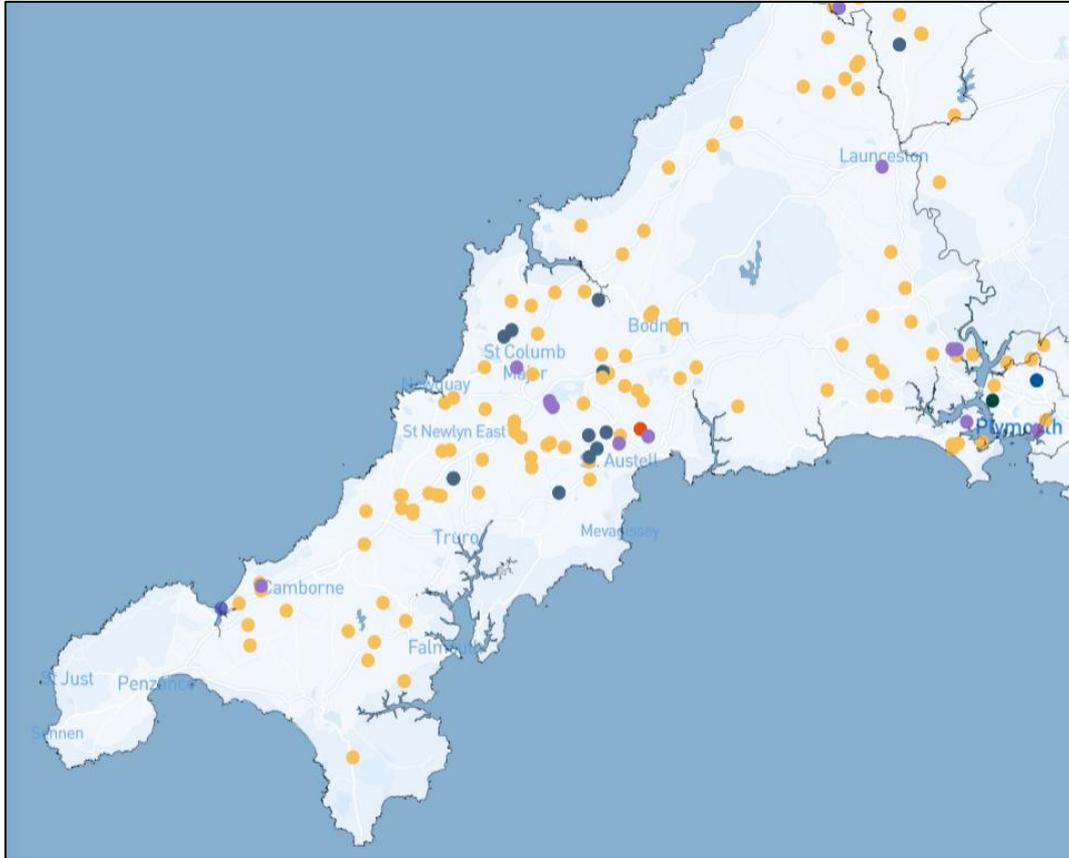


Cleve Hill Solar Park in Kent began supplying power to the grid this year © Quinbrook Infrastructure Partners

### **3: RENEWABLES IN CORNWALL**

The map below shows all current and applied for wind and solar installations above 1 MW in Cornwall, with many more in the pipeline. The first onshore wind turbines in England were installed at Delabole in 1991. By 2015 Cornwall had between 300 and 350 wind turbines but by then significant national resistance to onshore wind had grown and the emphasis shifted to offshore wind and solar. By 2020 many of the original wind turbines needed replacement - and several new onshore wind farms with huge 115m high turbines were built.

**Figure 3: Renewable Energy in Cornwall, installed & proposed.**



*source: Department of Net Zero/Energy Renewables database 2025, blue = wind, yellow = solar*

The potential for effective solar power generation had been recognised in Cornwall by 2000 because of our relatively high irradiance, and when the government introduced feed-in tariffs in 2010, solar panels on roofs and on small solar farms grew rapidly. Cornwall soon became a national leader in solar by number of sites, with 27,000, including rooftops. Inevitably, there has been growing opposition to larger installations from farmers, residents and tourist interests. More recently, there have been some very large battery applications, but for the moment, the necessary grid connections are lagging far behind.

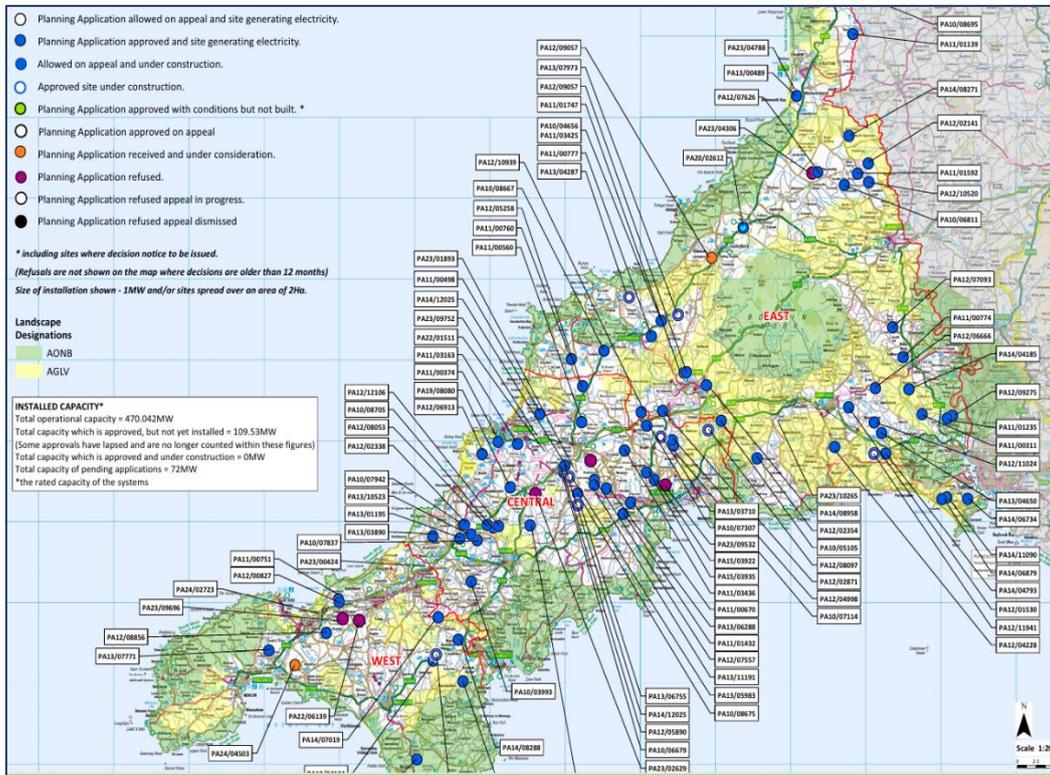
#### **4: CORNWALL COUNCIL REGULATION.**

Cornwall Council recognised earlier than most other local authorities the need to encourage renewables without harming its agriculture, landscape, tourist, and resident interests. It declared a Climate Emergency in 2019, committing to become carbon neutral by 2030 (later changed to 2045), and began preparing a Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP), which was formally launched in 2023.

The LAEP produced a Climate Emergency Development Plan Document (CEDPD), which supplements the Cornwall Local Plan with specific energy policies. These define sensitive areas such as National Landscapes (formerly AONBs), provide criteria for assessing new proposals, and map and monitor likely sites. There is no enforced cap on total renewable capacity, but in addition to the protection for National Landscapes, Landscape Character Assessments, Areas of Great Landscape Value (AGLVs), heritage sites, and wildlife habitats must be taken into account.

These plans are being tested by the huge increase in applications since 2023; Figure 4 below shows planning applications from about 2010 to 2025, listed in blocks. The green areas are AONBs around the coast and on Bodmin Moor, which have high protection and virtually no applications. The yellow areas are Areas of Great Land Value (AGLVs) and have very few applications. The AONBs occupy 30% of Cornwall, and the AGLVs a further 20%.

**Figure 4: Cornwall Solar Applications for Larger Sites, 2025**



source: Cornwall Council planning applications for larger sites, 2025

These, together with the need to be near the central grid line adjacent to the A30, push applications away from the coast. Applications over 1 MW approved, or approved on appeal and under construction, are shown as blue dots. Rejected applications are dark red. Total operational capacity is now about 500 MW, with about 100 MW more approved but not yet installed. All our renewables together could now provide between 40 and 70% of Cornwall’s electrical demand, depending on how it is calculated. The proportion could be higher with greater battery capacity, implying fewer panels are needed.

**5: FOUR LARGE TEST CASES, 2023-24**

These four large contentious applications of 25 to 85 hectares each are listed below. All were rejected by Cornwall Council against officer advice – after heated pressure from local residents and farmers.

**Figure 5. Large Solar Applications refused by Cornwall Council**

<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Reference Number</b>	<b>Proposal Description</b>	<b>Land Extent/ Location</b>	<b>Capacity (MW)</b>
<b>Speedwell Solar Farm Ltd</b>	<b>PA23/09696</b>	<b>Installation of ground mounted solar panels</b>	<b>Approx 77 hectares. Gwinear near Hayle</b>	<b>49 MW</b>
<b>Fairpark Solar Farm</b>	<b>PA23/02629</b>	<b>Large scale solar farm development</b>	<b>Approx. 85 hectares. Hendra Valley near Mitchell</b>	<b>70 MW</b>
<b>Menear Farm Solar Array</b>	<b>PA23/09532</b>	<b>Solar array installation on agricultural land</b>	<b>Approx. 50 hectares, near St Austell</b>	<b>40 MW</b>
<b>Canworthy Water expansion Solar Farm</b>	<b>PA23/04306</b>	<b>Expansion of existing solar farm facility</b>	<b>Approx. 25 hectares. Canworthy Water</b>	<b>15 MW</b>

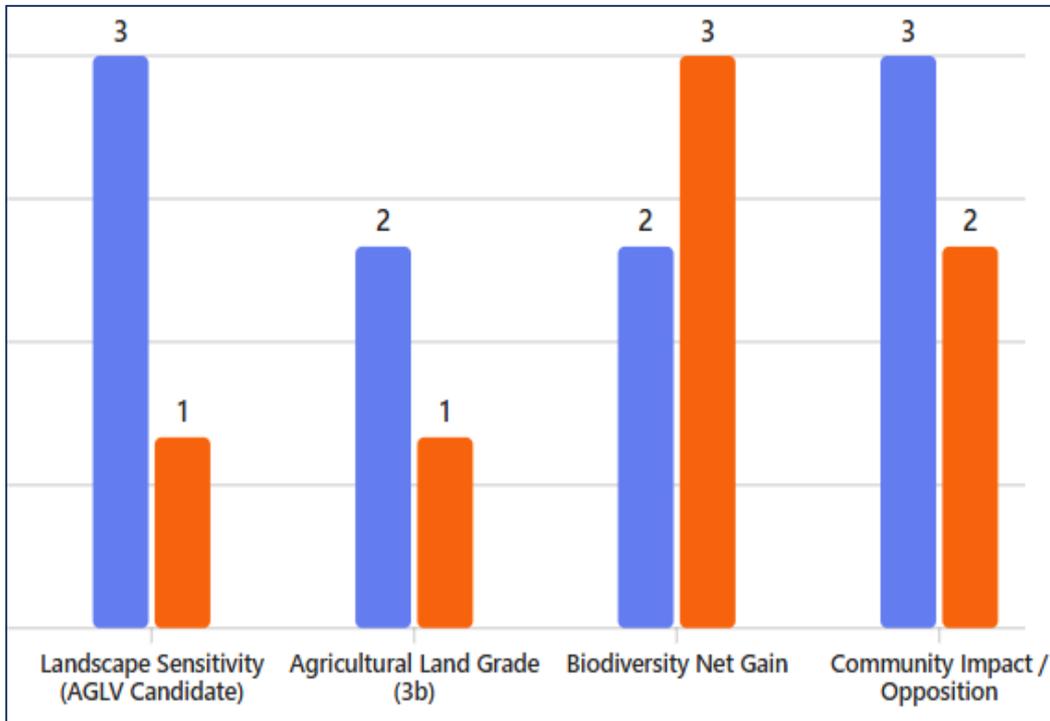
*source: Anjali Madhusani, research assistant, CPRE Cornwall*

These refusals were based on detailed policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), CC’s Climate Emergency DPD, the CC Local Plan and the relevant parts of the Gwinear, St Erme and Carlyon Neighbourhood Development Plans. The main problems were erosion of CC’s spatial policy of concentrated development, the cumulative visual impact of solar panels in sensitive rural areas, the misuse of high-quality agricultural land, threats to local businesses and residents potentially ‘imprisoned’ by panels, and harm to heritage sites.

## **6: NATIONAL POLICY CHALLENGE, 2024-25**

Unfortunately for Cornwall Council, local farmers and residents, Labour is proving far less sympathetic to rural issues than the Tories. Government seems to be in a fiscal and political trap. To revive economic growth, to reduce public debt and to maintain its hold over its political bases in the Midlands and the North, it is determined to build more houses, reduce planning ‘red tape’, and meet its renewables targets. This threatens other rural areas such as East Anglia, and the Cotswolds – not just Cornwall.

**Figure 6: Main Issues in the case of Fairpark Solar Farm, Hendra, 2025.**



*source: AI generated estimate of arguments in relevant text (blue for CC's, red for the Planning Inspector's)*

The Inspector's decision to accept Fairpark Solar Farm's appeal against CC's refusal demonstrates the change. The CC planning committee argued that the Hendra Valley was an AGLV candidate and deserved protection – see the blue column in Figure 6. The inspector countered – see the red column - that the AGLV status had not yet been made and should not count.

Similarly, the inspector noted the relatively low-quality Grade 3b land, and that sheep grazing under the panels were a good substitute for more intensive farming. There was also significant biodiversity gain. The CC committee had been impressed by the substantial local campaign and the outcry from a Hendra Valley resident who feared for his wedding venue and tourist business, whereas the Inspector claimed it was not that bad. Although overall he acknowledged the harm to the area, he argued that targeting net zero was more important.

## **7: LOCAL FARMER OPPOSITION: PRESENTING THE CASE**

The inspector was following standard planning rules - but the local case might have been better presented. For Speedwell Solar at Gwinear - not yet appealed - Giles Eustice of Trevaskis (brother of George Eustice, the former Agriculture Minister), documented his concerns more precisely. "We employ over 130 people. They're involved in agriculture, retail and hospitality.... As people meander around our site picking fruit and enjoying retail facilities, they look at the vista across the valley. That vista is now going to be potentially 200 acres of glass and steel. Our company's strapline is 'the complete countryside experience' - that is not the complete countryside experience."

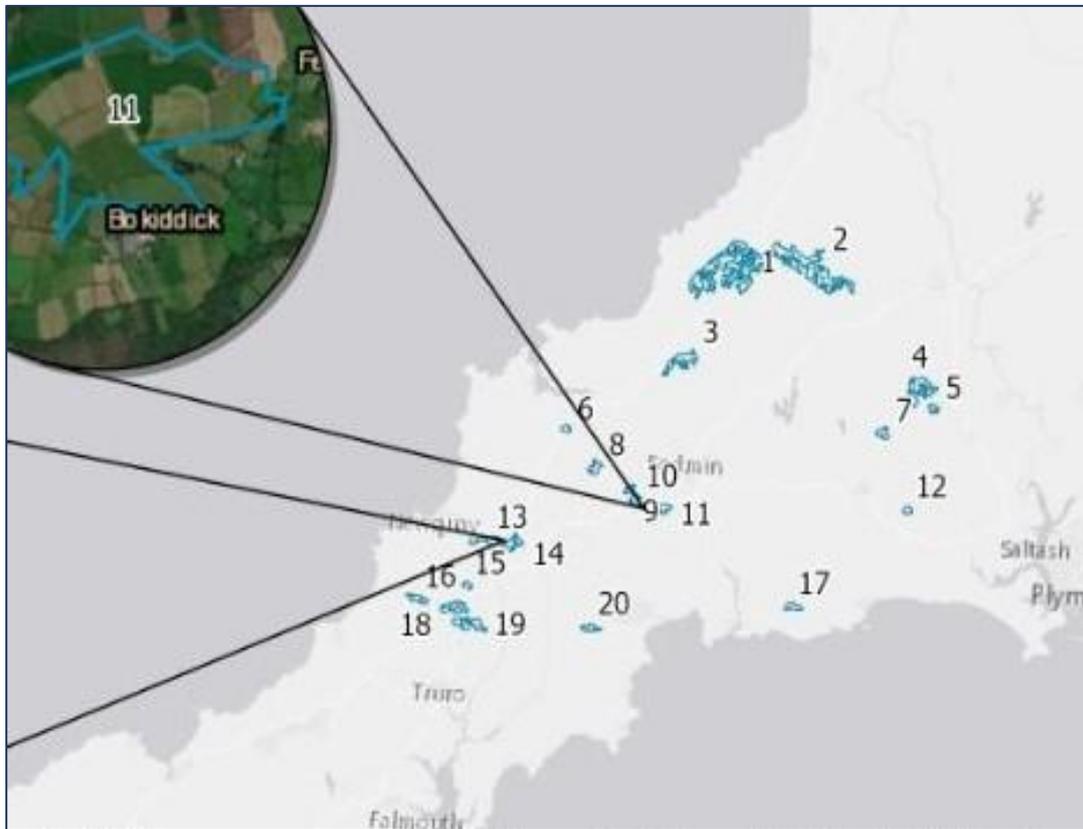
He added: "Our wage bill is over £1.5 million a year - that's local people employed and money going into the local economy. We have not been considered. We've not even been consulted. Our local purchases are over £2 million a year - that's a lot of money going into the economy. Tell me how much employment 200 acres of solar panels is going to give? Nothing."

He said, "Land in the area is used by five or six big agricultural companies, one of whose employment bill is £6.5 million - if you multiply that across the five or six, that's £35 million of employment going into the local economy. What is solar going to give? Nothing. We're devastating our local economy by rolling this out. How much is enough and when does it become too much?" This statement deserves careful inspection, and implies a fuller calculation of employment and production benefits than just BMV – 'Best and most versatile' - soil assessment.

## **8: WILL FAIRPARK OPEN THE FLOODGATES?**

Supposing the Fairpark case opens the floodgates, there are some indications of how far it could go. ArcGIS, the well known international geographic information system application (produced by ESRI, Environmental Systems Research Institute, California) has worked out the top 20 potential sites for future solar farms in Cornwall as shown in the map below.

**Figure 7: Potential Sites for Solar Farms in Cornwall - Top 20**



*Source: ArcGIS*

These 20 sites were identified by sifting for the following criteria: solar radiation, flood risk, roads, grid distance, BMV land grade, slope, present land cover, distance from towns and airports, brownfield, designated areas, and size: over 80 acres (32 hectares).

The largest groups were in North Cornwall: 1, 2 & 3 near Camelford and Davidstow: 257+5,698+649 acres, with 4,5,7 and 13 to 20 between Newquay and Truro including Mitchell, Carland Cross and Trispen. The attraction to the developer at Fairpark was the nearby grid connection at Carland Cross, good road access and the gentle undulating terrain in the Hendra Valley. There is nothing west of Carland Cross in the ArcGIS survey - but Figure 4 above and the Gwinear case demonstrate interest in West Cornwall. In the Fairpark case, CC and the Inspectorate are implicitly accepting additional criteria such as

visibility from major roads and harm to businesses. There are, therefore, huge opportunities for expansion – but over limited areas - and with more restrictions on each site than suggested by ArcGIS.

## 9: COMPETING INTERESTS IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Landowner interest is driven by notices like that below widely placed in the media, which emphasised the high margin per acre offered by Solar over normal farm incomes for grazing, dairy and arable.

**Figure 8: Developer Pitch to Landowners to adopt Solar**

**ARE YOU READY TO MAXIMISE  
INCOME FROM YOUR LAND ?**

- » Up to £30k per acre & for up to 30 years.
- » Rent your land for a battery, wind and solar farm today.
- » Completely free, no obligation & hassle free
- » Get in touch

**Calculate Your Rental Income Now**

Source: [hello@rentyourland.co.uk](mailto:hello@rentyourland.co.uk)

Not unreasonably, landowners at Gwinear and elsewhere supported the scheme, but other interests opposed it, or were silent. Giles Eustice quoted above noted that the big agricultural contractors working locally “couldn’t air their concerns publicly about the application as they’re scared they won’t get further land allocation from landowners who are applying for solar applications... “- suggesting an underlying tension between landowners, agribusinesses, and tenant farmers. At Fairpark and Lanreath - another upcoming case - residents as well as local farmers and businesses opposed the application.

## **10: CORNWALL'S RATIONAL SPECIALISATION:**

There are obvious contrasts between the flat empty reclaimed marsh at Cleve Hill - see Figure 2 above – and the attractive landscape at Lanreath near Lostwithiel – see Figure 9 below –. More generally, Cornwall not only has much good farmland in a mild climate, but also a very dispersed settlement pattern with a dense network of small coastal and inland villages, rural businesses, historical sites and a commercial imperative to protect its valuable landscapes and tourism interests.

Cornwall's current rapid growth depends not only on traditional beach holidays but also on a wide variety of coastal and inland attractions and residential possibilities based on that settlement pattern – and an underlying physical and cultural brand evolved from that geography. Some ventures – such as an undue proliferation of second homes - need careful management - but if no one came, Cornwall would be a much poorer and more stagnant place. The need for renewables – and also additional housebuilding - should therefore be balanced not only against residents' immediate interests – but also on the danger of damaging that elusive physical and cultural identity.

**Figure 9: Lanreath residents inspect the site from two views.**





*Source: Cornwall Live, photo: Lee Trehela*

At Lanreath, residents, local farmers and tourist businesses all opposed the application. In many parts of the country, the old Yorkshire saying “where there’s muck there’s brass” holds true. But most successful British industrial and service trades require extensive building and equipment and are properly modern and attractive in their settings – not “muck” at all, while in some areas – Cornwall, the Cotswolds, the Lakes - the opposite holds true and landscape appearance is everything. Overall, there has to be substantial renewables development, but the Government should respect that specialisation.

#### **11: CPRE’s CAMPAIGNING**

CPRE has had some success in changing government policy. It contends - and the government mostly agrees – that wherever possible, factories, warehouses, homes and car park areas should have rooftop solar panels. For all new houses, this is now mandatory.

We argue that:

1. At least 60% of solar energy should come from rooftop solar instead of the 40% now proposed.
2. Land Use Framework and Strategic Spatial Energy Plans should protect our

best and most versatile soils. Ground mounted solar should be banned on BMV grades 1 and 2.

3. All new buildings - including commercial buildings - should install solar as standard. Existing buildings, especially large farm barns and warehouses should retrofit where possible.

4. Community engagement to initiate new local projects and to monitor public energy and grid installations should be encouraged in new legislation.

5. National high-voltage and regional-distribution grids should be upgraded so that new solar and wind capacity is not wasted.

6. Ground mounted solar in National Parks and Landscapes should be banned and elsewhere landscape sensitivity studies should assess what to protect.

7. Woodland, trees, ponds, and hedgerows on all energy development sites should be retained in line with the Environment Act 2021.

## **11. CONCLUSION**

Nationally, CPRE may change the weather, but it cannot fight every local battle. We in Cornwall have to win those ourselves. It is important, therefore, that witnesses at hearings present not just the static situation accurately, but also document fully how the insertion of large solar farms, other renewables and excess house-building will damage their future interests.

More importantly, given the trend to gradually erode rural areas and values, it is vital that CC protects National Landscape and AGLV designations wherever possible. It has not always done so (see *Corbett v Cornwall Council*, 2020). In the Fairpark case it was critical that the AGLV designation had not been fully made. Now, it probably never will be. CC should find common cause with other rural South West Region Planning Authorities, and perhaps also other peripheral authorities like Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Norfolk, to establish the importance of these adverse general long-run trends in their areas and to convince government that their particular specialisations need protection too, both for themselves and in the national interest.

# Planning

## Recent Decisions

South Of Carland Cross 210 acre solar farm APPEAL 3365652 (PA23/02629) <b>ALLOWED</b>	Boat Cove Lane, Perranuthnoe Construction of a chalet APPEAL 3359104 (PA24/04886) <b>DISMISSED</b>
Trelissick Gardens, Feock 225 space car park APPEAL 3353157 (PA22/10184) <b>DISMISSED</b>	Near Harvey's House, Lowertown Holiday glamping pods and parking Planning application PA25/03809 <b>WITHDRAWN</b>

## Objections Awaiting Decision

Land At Ramoth Way, Perranporth 7 dwellings Planning application PA25/05916	Tyringham Place, Lelant Development of 50 dwellings Planning application PA25/01847
Lost Gardens of Heligan Car park and crossing Planning application PA/25/02624	Castle Horneck, Penzance Development of 140 dwellings Planning application PA25/00085
Pandarosa Farm, Bodmin Development of 58 Dwellings Planning application PA23/07573	Cold Northcott Wind Farm Repowering & extension of wind farm Planning application PA23/02727
Halgavor Moor Development of up to 540 dwellings. Planning application PA20/10618	

## Appeals to the Planning Inspectorate - Awaiting Decision

APP/3370949 (PA23/09696) Land At Lanyon Farm, Gwinear Solar farm	APP/3352891 (PA23/05034) Land South Of Pengelly, Bosavern Construction of a pond
APP/3369960 (PA24/06454) Cove Hill, Port Navas Self-build dwelling	APP/3352494 (PA23/02502) Gillyflower Golf Club Clubhouse, 19 holiday lodges
APP/3368536 (PA22/02896) Penhale Camp, Holywell Bay Holiday and leisure park.	APP/6000863 (PA25/00680) Boat Cove Lane, Perranuthnoe Replacement chalet