North Newton Solar Farm Frequently Asked Questions

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Overview

Who are AMPYR Solar Europe?

The proposal for North Newton Solar Farm is being developed by AMPYR Solar Europe. Created in 2021, we operate solar farms across the UK, the Netherlands and Germany, and have several projects in progress across the UK.

How big is North Newton Solar Farm?

The proposal at North Newton covers an area of 57 hectares (141 acres). The solar fam is expected to generate 30 megawatts (MW) of electricity.

The site includes areas for biodiversity improvements, such as traditional orchards, scrub and hedgerow planting, and grassland improvements.

What is in the North Newton Solar Farm proposal?

Our proposal contains detailed plans for:

- Fixed-tilt solar photovoltaic panels. This means that they are fixed in position facing south and do not move during the day.
- Solar panels set on lightweight frames in rows spaced 2.5m apart with a minimum ground clearance of 0.6m and a maximum panel height of up to 2.5m.
- Power will be converted from Direct Current to Alternating Current and the voltage stepped up suitable for the UK grid via onsite inverters and transformers.
- An on-site substation and site facility covering just less than 0.3 hectares (0.74 acres).
- A security fence up to 1.8m high, and CCTV cameras and a thermal imaging detection system located on 3m high poles.
- Safety lights will be installed at the substation. They will be used only during occasional routine maintenance.
- The substation will include a communication tower at a height of 15m.
- Internal access tracks through the field to enable operation and maintenance.
- Dedicated sites for ecology mitigation and enhancement to protect wildlife and habitats in and around the site.

Why have you chosen this location?

We have carefully considered the best location for the solar farm. We assessed locations that would work operationally, and also minimise any impacts on the community and the environment. The steps we followed are set out below.

1. Securing a connection agreement: We secured a 30MW connection agreement with National Grid at the Bridgewater Substation, via a connection point on the existing overhead power line approximately 1.8km (1.12miles) north of the site. We will make a separate application at a later date for a buried cable route between the connection point and the solar farm.

2. Conducting a desktop assessment: We carried out desktop assessments to find a suitable area. The assessments considered factors such as national and local designations, heritage,

ecology, flood risk, agricultural land grading, neighbouring land uses, visual impacts, and proximity to homes and other committed developments.

3. Identifying land options in the search area: When we identified a suitable area, we began engaging with landowners to find suitable sites.

4. Carrying out a detailed assessment on suitability of the land: Once we had identified a site in the right area, we conducted a detailed assessment of its suitability, including environmental surveys.

Why do we need North Newton Solar Farm?

The proposed development will provide a clean, renewable and sustainable form of electricity. As the UK transitions away from fossil fuels, renewable energy supplies must increase to meet the increasing demands for power.

Solar energy is an important contributor to the country's energy security, and our national ambitions to achieve Net Zero carbon emissions.

Somerset Council declared a climate emergency in 2020, and North Newton Solar Farm is a step towards mitigating the impacts of climate change.

What are the timescales for North Newton Solar Farm?

We will submit our planning application to Somerset Council in late 2025, with the aim of beginning construction in late 2026.

Will a solar farm work here?

Solar panels need daylight and sunshine – they can capture solar energy even through cloud cover. Solar panels operate well in England and are a key source of sustainable electricity.

Will there be a lot of traffic while North Newton Solar Farm is operational?

We expect traffic to be limited to monthly maintenance visits around once a month. The activities on site will include servicing, inspection, and maintenance of plant and equipment and vegetation management.

Construction, traffic and decommissioning

How long will construction take?

Construction is expected to commence in 2026 and take approximately six months.

Will there be a lot of construction traffic?

Most of the traffic will consist of workers visiting the site in a car or van. HGVs will deliver construction materials as required.

All traffic movements will be spread evenly across the working day (7am – 7pm) to minimise disruption, and deliveries by HGV will be outside of morning and evening rush hours. At the

busiest construction phase, we anticipate approximately six vehicle visits per day – four car/van movements and two HGVs.

To limit vehicles using the local road network, access will be from the west via the A38 along a short stretch of Moon Lane. Vehicle access will be provided from a new arm on the existing Moon Lane/Brook Street priority junction.

What will happen in the construction phase?

We begin by setting up the site and constructing internal access routes.

For the first step we will set up a site office, a temporary parking area and staff welfare facilities for our workers. Then fencing will be installed around the perimeter of the site, and preliminary ground works and access works will commence.

Following this, work will begin on constructing the rest of the site, including the installation of solar panels, switchyard, and other substation infrastructure.

There will be minimal waste generated on site as most of the components are prefabricated. Any waste generated will be responsibly disposed of in accordance with the appropriate licences.

Solar farms generate very little waste during operation. Should transformers and inverters require replacement, they will be reconditioned for re-use or responsibly recycled.

What will happen when the solar farm is no longer needed?

North Newton Solar Farm will be operational for approximately 40 years. The site will be decommissioned and the land returned to the landowner, with improved soil quality for agricultural use.

We will re-use and recycle any materials removed from the site.

Traffic during this period is expected to be at similar levels as the construction period.

A decommissioning bond is the financial guarantee which Ampyr is required to establish (as a planning requirement and/or by the landowners), for the purpose of covering the future costs of dismantling the solar farm after the lease expires in 40 years and returning the land to its original condition. The terms, including the amount and timing of payments, have already been negotiated in the lease agreement, along with provisions for regular reviews. Therefore, following the 40 year lifespan of the project, the cost to decommission and return the land to its original sate is safeguarded and available.

Environment

How have you considered the impact of North Newton Solar Farm on the environment?

We work hard to understand the site's natural environment and mindful of our impact.

We are undertaking an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) which identifies, predicts, and assesses the possible environmental effects of a proposed development. The EIA is a

comprehensive assessment of the potential impact on the area's ecology, landscape and visual characteristics, cultural heritage and archaeology, and soil and agricultural land quality,

For each of our developments, we build a detailed picture of the site's environment and any potential impacts the development may have.

The site survey outcomes are written up as technical reports which will be submitted with the planning application. The planning documentation will be made available for public consultation and feedback via Somerset Council's Public Access.

Conserving and enhancing biodiversity around North Newton Solar Farm is important to us. The site will have a combination of solar panels and areas of ecological mitigation to protect the ecology of the site. We are committed to delivering a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain through habitat enhancement onsite, and it is currently expected that this can be substantially bettered through hedge and tree planting, enhancement areas, and the planting of species rich grassland under the panels.

How will local wildlife benefit?

We will be working to enhance the natural environment through our work at North Newton Solar Farm. We have set aside areas to support environmental enhancement and we are committed to increasing the site's biodiversity by at least the required 10%. Our projects typically far exceed the 10% minimum, At North Newton, we are considering:

- Planting over 1,300m new native hedgerows
- Seeding 53 hectares of grassland - the area between, beneath and around the solar panels - with a seed mix of native grasses, herbs and sedges
- Planting around a hectare of mixed native scrub
- Creating over 2 hectares of traditional orchard.

Will there be any glint or glare from the panels?

Solar panels are designed to absorb – rather than reflect – the sun's rays. Glint and glare levels are lower than reflective surfaces such as glass or water.

We are undertaking a Glint and Glare assessment to assess any visual effects, and this report will be submitted as part of the planning application.

Will any noise be generated?

Solar panels do not make any noise. During operation, the electrical system can generate a quiet buzz, which is only audible within close range of the inverters, transformers and substation.

We are undertaking a full Noise Impact assessment, to fully consider the noise effects on those near the site.

During construction, there may be short periods of highly localised noise and vibrations. We will make the community aware when works are likely to take place, and full details of our limited working hours will be set out in our planning application.

Is there a risk of flooding at the site?

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 – which is land assessed by the Environment Agency as having a less than 1 in 1,000 probability of river or sea flooding. It is considered to be at a very low risk to surface water flooding. Watercourses near the development will not be impacted.

As part of our planning application, we will submit a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy, which will demonstrate that the site will not be affected by flood risk, nor affect flood risk elsewhere. It will also demonstrate how any residual risk of flooding will be managed.

Will there be any impacts on local heritage?

Heritage assets are divided into two categories: designated assets have national protection, and non-designated assets are those with significance to the community.

There are no World Heritage Sites, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields or Conservation Areas within 1km of the site. We have identified 27 designated assets within 1km of the site. Notably, these include:

- The Church of St Michael (Grade II Listed), 10m east;
- Maunsel House (Grade II* listed) and three associated buildings (Grade II Listed), approximately 120m east;
- King's House (Grade II Listed), 150m north;
- Derelict House at Lower Rydon Farm (Grade II Listed), 160m south
- Coxhill Bridge on Middlemoor Drove (Grade II Listed), 315m east; and
- The Chapel, Shearston Scheduled Monument, 950m north west.

We have also identified 41 non-designated assets within 500m of the site, including the shrunken medieval village at Tuckerton. We have considered any potential impact on local heritage, and this has been used to inform the location and design of the solar farm. Our planning application will include a Heritage Assessment.

We have undertaken geophysical surveys on the land to help identify the potential for undiscovered archaeological remains. Based on these results, we are undertaking further archaeological evaluation on the advice of Somerset Council's archaeologist.

How tall will the infrastructure be?

The solar panels will range from 0.6m in height at the lowest point, rising to no more than 2.5m at the highest point. A substation and control compound will be situated in the southwest corner of the central field. The transformer will be approximately 6m high, with the other structures and infrastructure lower than that. The one exception being a 15m high communication mast that will also be located within the substation compound area.

How will the solar panels be screened?

A Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is being undertaken as part of the EIA and planning application for North Newton Solar Farm. This considers measures that can be introduced to minimise any changes to the landscape character or views toward the site.

We will retain and enhance the existing hedgerows and trees surrounding the site, which will help to screen the development from external views. We will also provide additional screening in the form of native hedgerows, native trees and areas if native scrub planting. This additional planting will also have biodiversity benefits.

Any new planting, including areas of traditional orchards, will be in keeping with the existing landscape character. It will help to filter views of the development, including those from the Public Rights of Way, the small number of nearby residential properties and recreational areas such as North Newton Cricket Club.

Will there be an impact on food security?

The National Food Strategy is clear in its message that climate change is the greatest risk to the UK's food supply. Extreme weather events and catastrophic harvest failures will become more frequent. Addressing climate change, including by using solar energy, will improve the security of our food supply. We welcome sheep grazing under our solar farms – this helps to manage the grassland under the solar panels.

Following decommissioning, the land will be restored back to a state ready for its return to arable farming, with a greatly improved soil condition.

Community

Will we be able to have a say on this proposal?

Our community consultation runs until 15th September 2025. We will adapt our plans to reflect your feedback where possible. We invite residents to share feedback in any of these ways:

- Drop-in consultation event:
  4pm – 7pm, 8th September 2025 at North Newton Village Hall

- Online at www.northnewtonsolar.co.uk/consultation
  The feedback form will be live from the 25th of August 2025 to the 15th of September 2025.

- Email us: contact@ampyrsolareurope.com

- Write to us:
  Freepost ASE - no stamp needed.

What benefits will North Newton Solar Farm bring?

We are committed to ensuring that the community benefits from hosting our sites. We expect that the benefits will include:

- Supplying energy for approximately 13,000 homes per year.
- Helping to decarbonise Somerset - saving approximately 400,000 tonnes of carbon per year
- Biodiversity net gain / habitat creation
- Local farm diversification.
- Supporting the UK's transition to zero and low carbon power sources.

We are also looking at ways to help ensure the local community directly benefits from the development of the solar farm. This could include:

- A Community Benefit Fund to support local projects, initiatives, or community cooperative electricity; and/or
- Creating opportunities for local business in the supply chain.

We would also like to hear your ideas on what benefits you would like to see delivered. Any ideas or suggestions can be shared with us using our consultation feedback form.

Will North Newton Solar Farm impact any Public Rights of Way?

There are a small number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) across and on land adjacent to the site:

- PRoW BW 23/54 runs along the northern boundary of the site between Brook Street and North Newton Cricket Club.
- PRoW BW 23/55 crosses the northwestern field of the site, between Adder Lane and North Newton Cricket Club.
- PRoW BW 23/44 crosses the southwestern site field between Brook Street and Tuckerton Farm.
- PRoW 23/44 runs adjacent to the southern boundary of the eastern field, along Bankland Stream, crossing the corner of site before entering land at Tuckerton Grange adjacent to the site.

These routes will be retained as part of the proposals and additional planting provided to help screen changes in view. We will plant additional hedgerows on either side of PRoW BW 23/55 to filter short distance views of the development for users of this route. Similarly, a hedgerow will be planted between the perimeter fence and PRoW BW 23/54 to filter views for users using this route as it passes through the site and into the ground of the cricket club.

The Public Rights of Way will not be closed during construction. The temporary access track between fields crosses PRoW BW23/55, and we will provide signage to allow safe crossings for all users.

Other

Does the UK risk being covered with solar farms?

As part of the national drive to achieve Net Zero Carbon emissions, solar farms are likely to become more common in the UK - although they currently occupy around 0.1% of total land use (compared to 2% used by golf courses).

The Government's 'Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener' commits the UK to be powered entirely by clean electricity by 2035, while electricity demand is predicted to increase by 40-60%.