# Local leaders and residents oppose large-scale solar farms over farmland and wildlife concerns



The proposed solar farm spanning over 120 hectares across Monmouthshire, Torfaen, and Newport has ignited significant concerns among local leaders and environmental advocates. If sanctioned, this development would occupy approximately 300 acres of cultivated farmland, raising questions about the impact on food production and the environment.

Local Member of the Senedd, Peter Fox, has voiced his apprehensions regarding the implications of removing such a substantial area of farmland. In a discussion with Ken Skates, the cabinet secretary for economy, energy, and planning, Fox emphasised that while the transition to renewable energy is essential, it should not come at the expense of vital agricultural land. "Removing over 300 acres of farmland could affect our ability to produce food, at a time when our food security is paramount," he stated. This sentiment reflects a growing concern that the push for renewable energy could inadvertently undermine local agricultural capabilities and compromise food security.

Echoing Fox’s concerns, Fay Bromfield, a county councillor for Llangybi Fawr, articulated her worries about the potential consequences of large-scale solar projects. Although she supports renewable initiatives, she remarked, "This development risks undermining our rural economy, compromising food production, and altering the character of our landscape beyond recognition." The councillor urged planning authorities to consider alternatives that would maintain a balance between sustainability and the preservation of local communities.

This solar farm proposal is just one of several looming developments in the region. Plans for at least four solar parks on the Gwent Levels, including marshlands in Magor, have already met stiff opposition from wildlife campaigners concerned about biodiversity. The Gwent Levels harbour fragile ecosystems, and the potential threat to species like lapwings and water voles raises alarms about the suitability of the area for such projects. The delicate balance of natural habitats must be weighed against the benefits of renewable energy production, presenting a complex dilemma for policymakers.

Concerns about habitat disruption are mirrored by residents in Bishton, near Newport, where a separate proposal from JBM Solar aims to cover at least 334 acres with solar panels. Locals fear that this could ruin the rural landscape and negatively affect property values. Campaigners are calling on the Welsh Government to evaluate less intrusive energy solutions that could fulfil energy demands without compromising the natural environment or community integrity.

Complicating the narrative, previous solar initiatives in the region highlight the difficulties and opposition that can surround such projects. For instance, Torfaen County Borough Council recently shelved plans for a £2.2 million solar farm due to compliance issues regarding planning and biodiversity, despite having invested a considerable amount in the project. In contrast, Newport City Council has recently greenlit a solar farm on a former landfill site, aiming to produce one megawatt of renewable energy while making commitments to mitigate the impact on local wildlife habitats.

Further complicating public sentiment, a petition has emerged against a proposed solar farm at Penpergwm, near Abergavenny, which threatens to convert 103 acres of prime farmland into solar energy production. This petition, highlighting concerns about local agriculture and environmental degradation, underscores the resistance against developments viewed as detrimental to rural life.

In addition, a 45-acre solar farm proposal at Buckwell Farm near Wentwood has sparked local objections due to potential adverse impacts on the special landscape area and wildlife. Residents are increasingly vocal about protecting their local environment, advocating for a balanced approach that respects both the urgent need for renewable energy and the sanctity of their rural landscapes.

In conclusion, as the need for renewable energy intensifies, the dialogue surrounding these solar farm proposals reveals a critical intersection of sustainability, food security, and environmental stewardship. The growing opposition suggests that any future developments must navigate these complexities carefully to forge a truly sustainable path forward.

### Reference Map

* Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25161969.solar-farm-concerns-across-newport-torfaen-monmouthshire/?ref=rss)
* Paragraph 2: [[1]](https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25161969.solar-farm-concerns-across-newport-torfaen-monmouthshire/?ref=rss)
* Paragraph 3: [[1]](https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25161969.solar-farm-concerns-across-newport-torfaen-monmouthshire/?ref=rss)
* Paragraph 4: [[2]](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-64293363)
* Paragraph 5: [[3]](https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2023-10-23/the-environmental-row-over-solar-panels-being-a-threat-to-rural-wildlife)
* Paragraph 6: [[4]](https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/23036231.torfaen-council-scraps-2-2m-llantarnam-solar-farm-plans/)
* Paragraph 7: [[5]](https://news.wales/south/newport-council/newport-council-approves-solar-farm-on-former-landfill-site-2024-08-47651.html)
* Paragraph 8: [[6]](https://petitions.senedd.wales/petitions/244438)
* Paragraph 9: [[7]](https://www.monmouthshirebeacon.co.uk/news/45-acre-solar-farm-planned-for-wentwood-286804)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/25161969.solar-farm-concerns-across-newport-torfaen-monmouthshire/?ref=rss> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-64293363> - Plans for at least four solar parks on the Gwent Levels, including a marshland in Magor, have met opposition from wildlife campaigners. Budweiser Brewing Group intends to develop renewable energy sources to cut carbon emissions at its brewery in Magor, Monmouthshire. However, concerns have been raised about the impact on biodiversity, particularly the potential threat to species such as lapwings and water voles. The Gwent Levels, a wetland area between eastern Cardiff and Chepstow, are considered a fragile and complex ecosystem, making them unsuitable for such developments.
3. <https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2023-10-23/the-environmental-row-over-solar-panels-being-a-threat-to-rural-wildlife> - Residents of Bishton, near Newport, are concerned about plans to install a large solar power station in the area. The project, proposed by JBM Solar, aims to cover at least 334 acres with solar panels, potentially surrounding the village. While the development is intended to meet the energy needs of over 45,000 homes and reduce carbon emissions, locals fear it will disrupt the rural landscape, harm local wildlife, and negatively impact property values. Campaigners are urging the Welsh Government to consider less intrusive alternatives that balance sustainability with local preservation.
4. <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/23036231.torfaen-council-scraps-2-2m-llantarnam-solar-farm-plans/> - Torfaen County Borough Council has shelved plans for a £2.2 million solar farm at the former Ty Coch landfill site in Llantarnam, Cwmbran, despite spending over £250,000 on the project. The council cited a dispute with the preferred bidder and changes proposed by the contractor that did not comply with planning permission and biodiversity requirements. The project aimed to offset 21% of the council’s annual carbon emissions and generate £63,000 in annual revenue for 35 years. The council may consider reviving the project in the future if circumstances change.
5. <https://news.wales/south/newport-council/newport-council-approves-solar-farm-on-former-landfill-site-2024-08-47651.html> - Newport City Council has approved plans for a major solar farm on a former landfill site near the Household Waste Recycling Centre, off Docks Way. The project aims to produce up to one megawatt of renewable energy, helping the council reduce its reliance on diesel-powered refuse collection vehicles. The solar farm is expected to operate for around 25 years. Concerns have been raised about the loss of trees and potential impacts on local wildlife habitats, particularly otters. The council has agreed to implement measures to mitigate these effects.
6. <https://petitions.senedd.wales/petitions/244438> - A petition has been launched to stop a proposed giant solar farm at Penpergwm, near Abergavenny, Monmouthshire. The development plans to cover 103 acres of prime farmland with solar panels, nearly as large as the three existing solar arrays in the area combined. The site is characterized by ancient meadows, native hedgerows, and diverse flora and fauna. The petition highlights concerns about the impact on local agriculture, the environment, and the visual amenity of the area, urging the Welsh Government to reject the planning application.
7. <https://www.monmouthshirebeacon.co.uk/news/45-acre-solar-farm-planned-for-wentwood-286804> - Plans have been submitted to Monmouthshire County Council for a 45-acre solar farm at Buckwell Farm, Pen y Cae Mawr, near Wentwood. The proposal includes installing approximately 32,000 solar panels on sloping farmland, with sheep grazing between the panels. Developers claim the site is less suitable for agricultural crops but ideal for solar energy production. However, local residents have raised objections, citing concerns about the impact on the special landscape area, local wildlife, and the visual amenity of the countryside.