

Footprint Zero Urges Ed Miliband to Introduce Preferential Feed-in Tariff for On-Roof and Car Park Solar Installations

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Footprint Zero, a leading advocate for sustainable energy solutions, is calling on the UK Government, particularly the Energy Secretary, Ed Miliband, to introduce a preferential feed-in tariff specifically for solar energy generated from on-roof and car park installations. This initiative aims to prioritise solar developments that do not encroach upon valuable agricultural land or natural landscapes.

As the demand for renewable energy intensifies, the practice of installing solar photovoltaic (PV) panels on open fields has raised significant environmental and aesthetic concerns. Footprint Zero questions the continued expansion of ground-based solar farms, especially when vast expanses of industrial roof space and car parks remain underutilised.

Recently, Ed Miliband approved the development of three substantial solar farms at Mallard Pass (Rutland and Lincolnshire), Sunnica (Suffolk and Cambridgeshire), and Gate Burton (Lincolnshire). These projects, spanning a total of 2,837 hectares, are expected to generate 1.4 GW of power—enough to supply electricity to 406,994 homes. While the benefits of renewable energy are undisputed, Footprint Zero and other environmental organisations argue that the UK can achieve its energy goals without sacrificing the countryside.

The Countryside Charity (formerly the Campaign to Protect Rural England) has launched a campaign urging the government to set a target for at least 60% of the solar energy required by 2035 to come from rooftop installations. The organisation highlights several advantages of on-roof solar, including the preservation of farmland, improved energy efficiency by generating power close to where it's needed, and the protection of rural landscapes.

Government data indicates that the UK has approximately 250,000 hectares of south-facing industrial roof space and 20,000 hectares of car parks—more than 2.5 billion square metres in total. Even at a conservative solar panel efficiency rate of 18%, this area could generate around 486 GWh of electricity annually, significantly exceeding the UK's current energy consumption.

Rupert Harrow, Founding Director of Footprint Zero, emphasised the importance of updating government policies to reflect the potential of rooftop solar. "We commend The Countryside Charity for their excellent work in advocating for more on-roof solar. It is crucial that the UK Government introduces incentives to prioritise on-roof and car park solar over ground-mounted systems. The original solar feed-in tariff was instrumental in driving the adoption of solar PV across the country, and it is time to revisit this policy to ensure that we maximise the use of available roof space."

Harrow further stated, "No one wants to see vast solar farms covering our greenbelt when we have the opportunity to meet our energy needs through rooftop solar installations. By incentivizing on-roof solar, we can generate sufficient clean, renewable energy while preserving the natural beauty of our countryside."

Footprint Zero is urging the government to take immediate action by introducing a preferential feed-in tariff for on-roof solar. This policy update would not only accelerate the adoption of renewable energy but also ensure that the UK's energy transition is both environmentally responsible and socially acceptable.

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