SOLAR ENERGY

Supporting the Rural Community
Lightsource BP is your trusted solar partner that always delivers. We’re focused on writing the next chapter of the solar success story in a fast-changing energy landscape, worldwide.

We are certainly not just another solar energy company. In addition to being innovators in financing and development, we are the stewards and custodians of property leased to us for 30 years. As such, our in-house teams have the knowledge and experience to deliver solar projects that provide much needed sustainability to rural businesses and are designed to integrate easily with rural communities.

Our pioneering approach is to bring renewable power directly to businesses, either by connecting solar sites to the grid under a sleeved agreement, or by providing a local Major Energy User (MEU) with their own personal solar farm, connected by a Private Wire. These Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) models allow us to give businesses across the UK access to cheaper energy, while creating a wealth of opportunities for landowners and farmers alike.

Here at Lightsource BP, we are absolutely focused on championing the rural economy and ensuring our schemes promote the local supply chain, to truly become a home-grown energy asset that communities can be proud of.

Nick Boyle, CEO
Our proposition is very simple – you allow us to construct a solar farm on your land and we pay you a quarterly index-linked rent for the lifespan of the lease, or we offer to purchase your land at a premium above agricultural market value.

Our team of in-house planners and development managers will work closely with you to design a scheme that truly integrates within your business, reflecting the values of your local community. As well as financing, developing, constructing and operating utility-scale solar farms, we also supply renewable power at a discounted rate directly to businesses, either via the grid or through a Private Wire. This means that a solar project on your land could provide electricity to a Major Energy User (MEU) either locally or anywhere in the country.

We firmly believe in the importance of supporting rural businesses and communities, which is why we are committed to maintaining dual usage of any land we develop. The solar farm will be constructed to suit the existing purpose of the land so that you can continue to graze your animals on the site throughout the lifetime of the project, while producing clean electricity at the same time.

What are the benefits?

- Long-term, fixed income
- Diversification of business
- Dedicated in-house management
- Reliable long-term owner

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**GROUND MOUNT SOLAR**

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**GROUND MOUNT TIMELINE**

**Weeks 1 – 4**

**SITE ASSESSMENT**

We assess the suitability of your land for a solar installation. We analyse the electrical demand of the MEU we intend to connect into.

**Agree Rent & Sign Exclusivity Agreement**

**Weeks 4 – 16**

**POWER PURCHASE AGREEMENT**

We agree a power purchase agreement with an MEU.

**PPA Agreed**

**Weeks 16 – 33**

**PLANNING APPLICATION**

We work with the local authorities before and during the planning application. 

* a. Community Consultation 
  b. Planning Surveys

**Planning Permission Obtained**

**Weeks 33 – 45**

**CONSTRUCTION & 1ST LEASE PAYMENT**

Lightsource BP construct the solar farm and enter into the lease paying the first quarter’s rent.

**Construction Completed**

**30 years**

**OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE**

Once operational, our in-house asset management and operations & maintenance teams will oversee long-term care for the solar farm.
Preparing the Planning Application

Once we have completed our initial assessments of your land, we will start preparing the planning application. This involves preparing a provisional design and conducting technical assessments onsite to support the application. These assessments include several specialists, such as ecologists, landscape architects and surveyors, visiting the site.

The Planning Application

Once the application is submitted to the local authority, we stay in touch with the community throughout the process and actively encourage people to voice their opinions to the decision makers.

Decision-Making

In the UK, local councils have around 13 weeks to assess and decide an application. Decisions on planning applications are either made by the local authority planning officers through delegated powers, or by elected councillors at a committee meeting. Our communications team brief committee members on the project to ensure they have all the information they need. A Lightsource BP planner also attends the committee meeting to speak in support of the proposal.

Community Engagement

We implement a comprehensive community engagement programme and long-term management plans to ensure our projects bring about tangible benefits. By consulting with local residents and community stakeholders we are able to tailor our plans to address any concerns wherever possible. We also host a community consultation event, so community members can meet us in person to discuss the proposals.

Lightsource BP takes great pride in engaging with local communities, not just during planning and development, but throughout the lifetime of its solar farms.

As well as hosting open days and guided tours for residents, schools and local groups, we have also assisted several higher education students and ecologists with biodiversity research projects by providing access to our sites.

Educational Opportunities

Solar technology is passive and easily accessible, with no emissions or harmful chemicals, unlike more complex energy generation methods. As such, our projects can provide an excellent educational resource for communities wanting to learn more about solar power on their doorstep. Lightsource BP is keen to involve communities and facilitate educational activities as much as possible.

We operate more than 100 school rooftop installations across the United Kingdom and have developed a ‘school information pack’ which can be used in the classroom to help students understand the importance of renewable energy and to contextualise the solar installation on the building’s roof.

Local Interest Groups

Local knowledge and input is greatly encouraged to ensure our proposals integrate within activities and aspirations of the local community. We don’t just end this process once a site is installed. We engage with local interest groups to help us improve and develop both new and existing sites.

For example, The Devon Hedge Group visited our solar farm at Barton Farm in Devon, following initial conversations about the potential for solar farms to harbour biodiversity. The visit gave them a helpful insight into solar farm habitats and we now consult with them regularly on our planting plans for new sites in the South West. We have also completed projects with the RSPB and are currently working with local bee-keepers and bee-keeping associations to install hives on suitable sites to promote and encourage biodiversity.
Once planning permission has been secured, Lightsource BP assigns a project manager to oversee construction and connection of the solar farm. Construction takes place over a twelve-week period, during which security staff monitor the site 24 hours a day. Upon completion of the build, the solar PV system is tested, before being connected to the grid or the Major Energy User.

Following stringent best practice guidelines, the construction process is tailored to the land, community and season to ensure the least possible adverse impact. Appropriate equipment and materials are specifically chosen to minimise soil compaction, damage to land drains and ensure longer-term benefits in productivity and optimal grazing conditions. We make regular checks to ensure that our installers and contractors adhere to our thorough health & safety guidelines. We also take into account the importance of biodiversity, avoiding breeding seasons for protected species and minimising light and noise pollution where possible.

Championing Local Enterprise

We acknowledge the importance of local understanding as each region can be unique in its own characteristics. When engaging subcontractors is a requirement, we typically endeavour to procure services from local businesses who care and consider the countryside and communities. In order to maintain high standards of work, each subcontractor is put through a strict pre-qualification process. This enables us to ensure the output of work is carried out to a high standard.

CONSTRUCTION TIMELINE

Step 1: PROJECT MANAGER ASSIGNED

Once planning approval is received Lightsource BP assign a Project Manager to oversee construction of the solar farm.

Step 2: CONSTRUCTION BEGINS - LEASE PAYMENTS START

This includes site preparation, installation of electrical infrastructure and cabling. Lightsource BP will employ security guards to monitor the site at all times until completion.

Step 3: TESTING AND COMMISSIONING

Before the site is energised, Lightsource BP will perform a number of checks to ensure the solar farm is built to high standards.

Step 4: SOLAR FARM CONNECTED

Lightsource BP will arrange connection of the solar farm into a Major Energy User.

Step 5: MAINTENANCE & LAND MANAGEMENT

Lightsource BP assign an Asset Manager to monitor the performance of the site for the term of the project.

CONSTRUCTION

Typical features of a solar farm

- Panels: Pile-driven into the ground to a depth of 1.5m. No concrete is used.
- Inverters: Converts the Direct Current (DC) into Alternating Current (AC).
- Transformers: Increases the voltage.
- Substation: Holds the switchgear and is the electrical exit of the site.
- Cable Route: MEU or grid.
- Screening: Existing foliage used to screen solar farm from view.
- Deer fencing: Typically located 5m inside the boundary of the field.
- CCTV: Monitors the site.
The Lightsource BP in-house operations & maintenance team work together in regional teams based across the United Kingdom. Due to such significant local presence, our specialist engineers boast a typical response time of just a few hours. The skillsets within our team include land managers, electricians and engineers, ensuring every aspect of a project is attended to with the right expertise.

**Land Management**

Land management of a solar farm is typically dictated by planning permission requirements and production needs. Planning conditions can vary a lot from place to place, but no matter where the solar farm is, Lightsource BP sticks to several core principles:

These are:
- To encourage a healthy and diverse sward of grass or wild-flowers
- To prevent invasive weeds spreading and implement long term eradication
- To prevent shading of the solar farm from tall vegetation
- To consider bird nesting season where applicable.

**Additional Income Opportunities for Landlords**

Through our land management programme, there are opportunities for you to engage with us should you wish to diversify your income further:

**Ground Maintenance Contracts**

Lightsource BP implements a locally focused ground maintenance system. Grass and weed cutting works are overseen by our regional Ground Maintenance Teams. Where possible we look to engage directly with the landlord for the provision of these works. Our localised approach ensures each site is provided the individual attention it requires to flourish.

**Grazing License**

A large number of solar farms are managed for grazing. These can be requirements set out through planning permission or on request by the landlord. Lightsource BP will issue a grazing license to ensure safety protocols are put in place around the solar farm equipment and DEFRA’s best practice guidance relating to stocking density is adhered to.
For the trustees of the land at the Wilburton Estate, the decision to diversify the trust’s income with a large scale solar farm has paid dividends - not just in the form of a secure stream of regular income, but for the land, local wildlife and the local community who continue to support the development. Wilburton has become a 35-acre pollen, brood seed and wild bird seed paradise. As a consequence, the site has seen a marked increase in bird and wild mammal numbers, together with much improved quantity and variety of insects and invertebrates.

In 2015, with the encouragement from the farm’s landowner, Lightsource BP partnered with a local bee farmer and installed 10 hives along the site’s southern boundary – producing honey which is sold in the local community.

“Solar farms tick an awful lot of boxes at a time when many farmers and landowners are looking for options to secure a steady source of income. Solar diversification has been the ideal choice for the Wilburton Estate and we are very proud of what has been achieved.”

Tim Hughes, Land Owner
As a business we are committed towards sustainability, and being able to procure solar electricity is a huge benefit, not only towards lowering our carbon footprint but reducing our operating costs and providing pricing certainty for the future. We were delighted that even on the first day of connection, the airport ran for 9 hours on just solar power alone.”

Alan Whiteside,
Operations Director
Is the rent index-linked?
The lease payments are index-linked with RPI for the lifetime of the project. The lease is paid quarterly and in advance of construction of the plant.

What happens if Lightsource BP goes out of business?
The solar farm is a bankable power generation asset which will be backed by funders such as RBS or Santander. They will have step in rights to continue the project should anything go wrong. They will take over the lease obligations and ensure rent is paid.

How long does it take to build the solar farm?
Construction of the solar takes approximately 2-3 months. Lightsource BP will work with experienced contractors who have built the majority of the 2GW portfolio under our management. They will meet all planning conditions and additional quality standards we adhere to as part of agreement with our funders.

What happens at the end of the lease?
Lightsource BP will be responsible for removing all the equipment that is located on site and return the land to its original condition. If, once the lease has ended, there is an opportunity to propose another solar project, we shall consult with you and the local planning authority to submit a new planning application.

Who maintains the solar farm?
Once constructed, the Lightsource BP operations & maintenance team will be responsible for maintaining the site throughout the lifetime of the project. We have a dedicated land management team, focussed on exceptional upkeep of the land below the solar farm.

Can I graze sheep?
Yes. Where appropriate, solar farms can be designed for the grazing of small livestock, continuing the land’s agricultural use.

What happens if I sell my land?
Should you wish to sell the land during the lease period, the Lease Agreement and payments will be transferred to the new landowner once the sale is complete. Lightsource BP can offer to buy the land from you and have a dedicated Acquisition Team that can discuss a potential sale. Offers take into account the underlying land value as well as the value of the unexpired lease term and in most instances are made at premium above agricultural market value.

What is the impact on local wildlife?
Independent studies have shown that solar farms have the potential to bring about significant increases in wildlife populations on agricultural land. They are essentially secure sites with little disturbance from humans once installation is complete. Additionally, we plant new trees and hedgerows and seed wild flowers and grasses, all of which enhance the environment for local wildlife.

How is the equipment protected?
Our solar farms are enclosed - usually by a timber and wire agricultural fence about 2 metres high. This is positioned on the inside of any hedgerows and trees with wide field margins in between the fence and field boundary. We also install CCTV cameras to monitor any movement on the site.
**Championing Local Economy**

**Keith Harris**  
Landowner – Manor Farm Solar Farm, Dorset – 4.9 MWp

“I think to some people it may seem like a really big move, but it’s fitted in so well. It’s helped the bottom line of the farm by providing a regular income that is not weather dependant, so we can support the arable side of our business and the agricultural output is still there with sheep grazing on the solar farm.”

**Richard Buckpitt**  
Livestock Farmer – Marley Thatch Solar Farm, Devon – 6.3 MWp

“We’ve tried to grow corn and we’ve tried to grow other crops, but in the South West there’s no way we can compete with the big corn producers up country, because of the depth of soil and the terrain that we have to farm. We’re using the solar farm land as dual purpose now – we’re grazing sheep under and around the panels for agricultural purposes and also harnessing the sun for the benefit of the community and the farm income.”

**Les Partridge**  
Dairy Farmer – Broadgate Solar Farm, Devon – 1 MWp

“Diversification is an important issue that I think every farmer should consider. Solar energy provides a consistent income stream. I think if anyone has any doubts about solar farms they should actually go and see one for themselves and have a walk around to see what the impact is within the countryside, or to talk to a farmer who has a solar farm and see things from a different perspective.”

**Tim Spencer**  
Landowner – The Hollies Solar Farm, Lincolnshire – 8.6 MWp

“As farm incomes have declined over the last 20 years, we’ve looked at other areas of diversification and we’ve always been excited about the prospect of renewable energy. The solar farm here is forming an integral part of our business operation.”

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**WHO WE ARE**

Lightsource Renewable Energy was founded in 2010, and quickly achieved an unrivalled track record in the installation of both ground mount and rooftop solar projects.

In 2017, Lightsource partnered with BP and rebranded as Lightsource BP, to aggressively accelerate the low carbon transition, and to address the growing demand for grid-connected plants and corporate power purchase agreements (PPAs) signed with private companies.

Our team of dedicated in-house experts have the knowledge and experience to deliver solar projects designed to provide not just sustainable energy but sustainable income and land diversification opportunities to rural businesses – seamlessly integrating solar projects into the communities across the UK.

All our projects are managed in-house, from initial planning and development through to ongoing operations & maintenance for the full length of your agreement, ensuring that you can always get in touch with any queries or issues. To maximise our service even further, our engineers are based locally to provide swift on-site response times.

Funding for all our projects is already secure, so you are not exposed to any financial risk, and we have an outstanding track record for project completion and success. Lightsource BP is absolutely focused on championing the rural economy and ensuring our schemes promote the local supply chain, to truly become a home-grown energy asset that communities can be proud of.