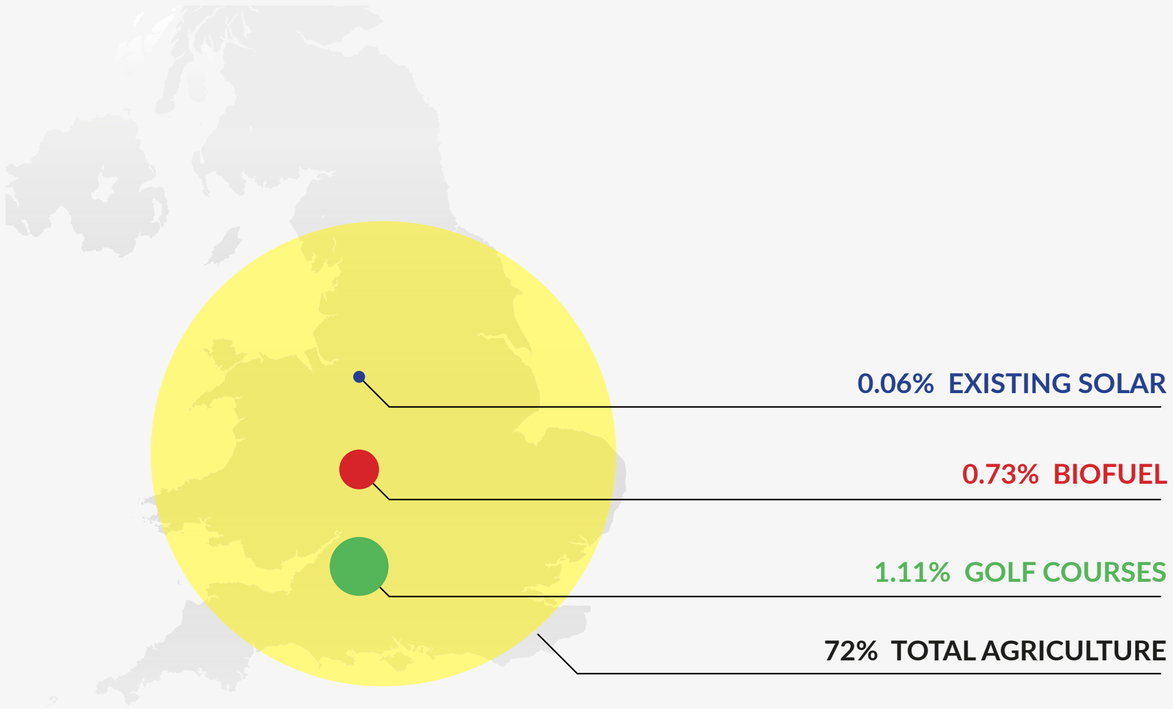
SOLAR IN THE UK

Land use in the UK

As a technology, solar is sometimes accused of using large amounts of agricultural land. But what are the actual figures for the amount of UK land used by solar PV?

Our research suggests that ground-mounted solar panels only use about 0.06% of all land in the UK, while other uses take up much larger percentages of workable land across the country.



Existing Solar Estimation: Estimation of 7.3GW of existing ground-mount installations at 2 hectares/MW, which is just under 15,000 hectares – Solar Trade Association

Biofuels: Crops grown for biofuel cover approx. 129,000 hectares – Solar Trade Association

Total Agriculture: Utilised Agricultural Area as proportion of total UK area, DEFRA's "Agriculture in the United Kingdom 2017"

Business rates for local councils

Since 1st April 2013, local authorities keep 100% of the business rate income from renewable energy schemes, including solar. Borough and county councils receive the entirety of any taxes paid on installations within their jurisdictions.

No subsidies, no tax breaks

Solar energy producers in the UK do not benefit from any tax breaks. In 2017 it was reported that the UK government subsidised the coal industry to the tune of £356 million every year through tax breaks, whereas subsidies to support the solar industry were cut in 2016, and then abandoned altogether. New solar farms will now generate clean, sustainable electricity without support from the government or the taxpayer.

End our contribution to climate change

The UK Government's Committee on Climate Change (CCC) May 2019 report sets out actions required if the Government wishes to achieve "Net Zero Status" (meaning net zero greenhouse gas emissions) by 2050. These actions include quadrupling the amount of renewable energy generation in the UK.

Site size

Many communities and Councils will have become familiar with small scale solar developments, (up to 5MWp in capacity), as previous subsidy support was targeted at this level. Now that we are developing projects subsidy free, it is important to drive economies of scale to ensure economic viability, meaning larger projects are likely to be more viable. However, our thorough site selection criteria remain consistent regardless of size. A well-sited 50MW project will have fewer impacts than a poorly-sited 5MW development.