

St Columb Solar Park



Commissioned	March 2014
Site area	37 acres
Installed capacity (MW)	7.0MW
Annual production (MWh)	6,732MWh
Households powered per annum	2,172
CO2 emissions saved (tonnes per annum)	3,111 tonnes

Overview

This is a ground-mounted, fixed-tilt solar PV site on largely unproductive grade-3 land some 800m south-east of the small Cornish town of St Columb Major. The well-respected landowner has a total of 3,000 acres, of which the 37-acre site, across three agricultural fields, is adequately hidden from nearby roads. Though there are no footpaths, the site benefits from plentiful, well-maintained Cornish hedgerows, bounded to the south and east by minor roads and to the north and west by other agricultural fields. As well as screening the site, the hedges are managed to enhance their value, both as an attractive staple of the countryside and as habitat, breeding area and feeding ground for the region's rich wildlife.

Biodiversity

The site's fields are bounded mainly by Cornish hedges and elder, oak, hazel and beech trees. With plentifully diverse ground flora, the hedges include bramble, bracken, hawthorn, blackthorn, elder, gorse, hazel, honeysuckle, ivy and sycamore, providing habitats and food sources for many invertebrates, small mammals and breeding birds. Hedges will only be cut at winter's end, avoiding the main nesting season between 1 March and 31 July, while each side will be trimmed on a 3-year rotation. This will ensure blackbirds, redwings and fieldfares can feed on hawthorn and blackthorn berries. To enhance the site's wildlife value, ground cover at the hedge base will be allowed to grow and be retained over winter for ground-nesting birds, and as an early and late season nectar source for butterflies, bees and other invertebrates. The solar park benefits further still from ongoing farming practices with sheep grazing on the site.