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Ask for:
Date: 27/04/2026

Dear Member

GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT CABINET COMMITTEE - TUESDAY, 5 MAY 2026

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at next Tuesday, 5 May 2026 meeting of the Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee, the following report(s) that were unavailable when the agenda was printed.

Agenda Item No

11 **26/00026 - Position Statement on Solar Generation (Pages 1 - 16)**

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Watts', is written over a faint circular stamp.

Benjamin Watts
Deputy Chief Executive

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From: *David Wimble, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects*

Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

To: *Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee - 5 May 2026*

Subject: Position Statement on Solar Generation

Decision no: 26/00026

Key Decision :

- *It affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions*

Classification: *Unrestricted*

Past Pathway of report: *N/A*

Future Pathway of report: *Cabinet Member Decision*

Electoral Division: *All*

Is the decision eligible for call-in? *Yes*

Summary: This report summarises Kent County Council's (KCC) proposed approach to photovoltaic (PV) development and should be read in conjunction with the 'Position Statement on Solar Developments'.

Recommendation(s):

The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE** or make **RECOMMENDATIONS** to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects on the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A).

1. Introduction

1.1 Kent County Council (KCC) is in principle supportive of solar generation. However, KCC considers that Solar Developments:

- (a) should be well-designed and appropriately located, which is consistent with its commitment to protecting valued landscapes, habitats, heritage, and agricultural land.
- (b) require careful consideration and should not be located on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land (grades 1 to 3a).

- 1.2 KCC acknowledges that co-located Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) storage is generally necessary to make solar farms viable; however, KCC does not support grid-scale BESS.

2. Key Considerations

- 2.1 The Position Statement on Solar Developments that accompanies this report updates the 2014 document. It supports the Council's current priorities, expressed in the 'Reforming Kent 2025-2028' Strategic Statement, to:
- Stand firm against excessively large housing and solar farm developments
 - Protecting our land from excessively large solar farms
 - Push back on inappropriate solar farm development planned for Kent
- 2.2 The Position Statement on Solar Developments sets out KCC's strategic approach for Solar Developments in Kent and is not part of the development plan
- 2.3 The Position Statement is intended to support consistent engagement, whilst allowing flexibility to respond proportionately to circumstances of individual developments.

3. Background

- 3.1 KCC's (2014) Position Statement on Development – Large Scale Solar Arrays, remains in the public domain and is available online at [KCC Solar Policy Position Statement August 2014 FINAL.pdf](#). However, it references outdated national policy and does not represent the current KCC administration's position on solar generation.

4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- 4.1 Retract, without replacing, the 2014 position statement 'Development of Large-Scale Solar Arrays'. Risk: KCC would have no clear position on solar generation that elaborates on the organisation's stated priorities regarding deployment of the technology set out in the Strategic Statement.
- 4.2 Retain the 2014 position statement. Risk: KCC's position on solar generation would be based on outdated national policy and not reflect the current administration's position on solar development.

5. Financial Implications

None

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 This Position Statement provides non-statutory views on KCC's approach to applications for Solar Developments in Kent and is not part of the development plan. It does not constitute policy and does not prejudice KCC's consideration of

individual planning applications for Solar Developments as a statutory consultee.

- 6.2 The Position Statement is intended to inform, not to pre-determine responses. Accordingly, it does not bind KCC to a fixed position, and its consultation responses should be understood as being capable of departing from the broad principles set out in this document where justified by the circumstances of a particular case.

7. Equalities implications

- 7.1 *None*

8. Data Protection Implications

None

9. Other corporate implications

- 9.1 The position statement provides corporate clarity on KCC's approach to solar farm development

Governance

10. The Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport will inherit the main delegations under the Officer Scheme of Delegation, with provision for onward sub-delegation to Directors or Heads of Service as appropriate under the Constitution.

11. Conclusions

- 11.1 Kent, with its high levels of solar irradiance, is a favourable site for solar generation and the cumulative impacts of multiple projects across the county must be carefully considered. The collective impact on food security of using high grade agricultural land for energy generation, which the County Council discourages, may also become significant as deployment of ground-mounted solar accelerates. KCC therefore encourages solar generation to be prioritised on rooftops, car parks, and brownfield land over ground-mounted installations on greenfield and agricultural land.

12. Recommendation(s):

- 12.1 The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE** or make **RECOMMENDATIONS** to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects on the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A).
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13. Background Documents and appendices

- Equality Impact Assessment
- *Position Statement on Solar Developments*
- Appendix A Proposed Record of Decision

14. Contact details

Report Author: Tom Henderson Job title: Principal Strategic Energy and Infrastructure Officer Telephone number: 0300 041 5248 Email address: tom.henderson@kent.gov.uk	Director: Simon Jones Job title: Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport Telephone number: 0300 041 1683 Email address: simon.jones@kent.gov.uk
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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

*David Wimble, Cabinet Member for Economic
Development and Special Projects*

DECISION NUMBER:

26/00026

Executive Decision – key**26/00026 - Position Statement on Solar Generation**

Decision: As Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects, I agree to:

ADOPT the Solar Developments Position Statement.

DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director to take all necessary actions and make all consequential decisions to give effect to and implement the position statement.

Reasons for decision:

To update the 2014 position statement ‘Development of Large-Scale Solar Arrays’ to provide guidance to applicants, communities, and district councils to help support well designed and appropriately sited solar installations across Kent.

Financial implications :

None

Legal implications:

The Position Statement is non-statutory, does not form part of the development plan, and does not prejudice KCC’s role as a statutory consultee in individual planning applications. It provides guidance only and does not bind KCC, allowing responses to depart from its principles where justified by the circumstances.

Equalities implications:

The EQIA identified **no positive or negative impacts** on protected characteristic groups

Data Protection implications:

None

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision will be considered by the Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on 5 May 2026

This version of the PROD is included in the agenda pack for committee members to review ahead of the meeting.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Withdrawing the 2014 position statement without replacement. This would leave KCC without a clear, articulated stance on solar development aligned to its current strategic priorities.

Retaining the 2014 statement. This was discounted because it relies on outdated national policy and does not reflect the current administration's position on solar generation

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

.....

Signed

.....

Date

EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Position Statement on Solar Developments

Responsible Officer

Tom Henderson - GT GC

Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)

Claire Pamberi - GT GC

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

No

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

Strategy/Policy

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Strategic Planning and Infrastructure

Responsible Head of Service

Claire Pamberi - GT GC

Responsible Director

Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

Aims and Objectives

This position statement outlines Kent County Council's (KCC) approach to photovoltaic (PV) development. It updates the 2014 position statement 'Development of Large-Scale Solar Arrays' to provide guidance to applicants, communities, and district councils to help support well designed and appropriately sited solar installations across Kent.

The Equality Impact Assessment has identified no negative impacts on any protected groups. The assessment indicates that the proposal is unlikely to create adverse effects and therefore does not require mitigating actions.

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

No

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

No

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

Yes

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Not Applicable

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?
The EqIA shows no potential positive or negative impacts on any protected characteristic groups.
Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?
No
Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?
Yes
Section C – Impact
Who may be impacted by the activity?
Service Users/clients
No
Staff
Staff/Volunteers
Residents/Communities/Citizens
Residents/communities/citizens
Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?
No
Details of Positive Impacts
Not Applicable
Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions
19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age
Are there negative impacts for age?
No
Details of negative impacts for Age
Not Applicable
Mitigating Actions for Age
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age
Not Applicable
20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability
Are there negative impacts for Disability?
Yes
Details of Negative Impacts for Disability
People with a disability may find it hard to read and navigate the document
Mitigating actions for Disability
Training offered, support and advice, make the document clear and accessible
Responsible Officer for Disability
Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Team
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
Are there negative impacts for Sex
No
Details of negative impacts for Sex
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sex
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Sex
Not Applicable
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
No

Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
No
Negative impacts for Race
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
No
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Applicable
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Not Applicable
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
No
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable

Kent County Council
Position Statement on Solar Developments

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 Kent County Council (**KCC**) published a document in 2014 titled “*Development of Large-Scale Solar Arrays*”, which sets out their position on the delivery of photovoltaic development (“**Solar Developments**”) in KCC’s administrative area (the “**2014 Position Statement**”). This document replaces the 2014 Position Statement.
- 1.2 KCC is not the local planning authority (i.e. Borough or District Council) for determining planning applications for Solar Developments but is a statutory consultee on such developments. It acknowledges that a local planning authority will determine planning applications in accordance with their statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 1.3 KCC is the local highway authority, education authority, waste disposal authority, mineral planning authority and the local flood authority in Kent.

2. Summary of KCC’s Position

- 2.1 KCC is in principle supportive of Solar Developments where they have the potential to maximise the social, environmental and economic benefits that solar provides.
- 2.2 KCC considers that Solar Developments:
 - (a) should be well-designed and appropriately located, which is consistent with its commitment to protecting valued landscapes, habitats, heritage, and agricultural land.
 - (b) require careful consideration and should not be located on Best and Most Versatile (BMV) agricultural land (grades 1 to 3a).
- 2.3 KCC acknowledges that co-located Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) storage is generally necessary to make solar farms viable; however, KCC does not support grid-scale BESS.
- 2.4 KCC considers that BESS should only be co-located if “a” and “b” policy positions above are satisfied, and that the clearly evidenced safety measures described in paragraph 7 of this Position Statement are in place.
- 2.5 KCC does not support applications for ground mounted solar arrays that do not have a grid connection secured with the Distribution Network Operator

(DNO)/National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET) at the time the application is submitted.

3. Preferred Solar Developments

- 3.1 Where applications for Solar Developments are aligned with development plans' policies, the National Planning Policy Framework, Kent Design Guide and any other relevant considerations, Solar Developments will be encouraged on:
- Rooftops of homes, council buildings, schools, commercial premises, warehouses, community facilities, agricultural properties or rural businesses that do not have a harmful visual impact on the landscape in which they are located.
 - Car parks and solar carport canopy systems.
 - Community-led ground-mounted installations, integrating local ownership (in part or in full) and benefit, where evidence is provided that demonstrates roof or wall-mounted provision has been considered and why this is not feasible.
 - Brownfield or former industrial land, integrated with compatible land uses such as grazing, horticulture, and/or nature recovery.
 - Properties participating in collective purchasing schemes in Kent, which offer vetted installers, competitive pricing, and optional battery/electric vehicle charging support.
 - Established sites, where applications are for the repowering or life extension of an existing renewable site.

4. Management of Solar Development

- 4.1 KCC considers:
- (a) that Solar Developments have the potential for considerable impact on the surrounding environment and should therefore be carefully considered by local planning authorities.
- (b) that Solar Developments that conflict with the conservation or enhancement of environmentally sensitive areas should be discouraged on:
- Protected landscapes such as the Kent Downs and High Weald National Landscapes, or land adversely affecting their setting (unless, through community engagement and consultation processes, local residents consider the benefits of the development to outweigh the potential adverse effects).

- Green Belt except where the tests for very special circumstances under the National Planning Policy Framework are met.
- Sites of high ecological or historic value, including ancient woodlands and priority habitats.
- Sites that cause harm to the significance of designated heritage assets or their settings.
- Best and most versatile agricultural land (Grade 1, 2, and 3a), unless the benefit to the agricultural land outweighs the impact.

5. Cumulative impact

5.1 KCC considers that:

(a) the cumulative impact of Solar Developments, particularly where multiple schemes are proposed within protected landscapes, valued countryside, or areas experiencing rapid growth in renewable infrastructure, can have a considerable impact and should be addressed by developers/applicants.

(b) Considerations could include:

- Combined loss or fragmentation of habitats,
- Combined landscape character change across wider areas,
- Sequential or combined visual effects from multiple developments, and
- Cumulative traffic and construction impacts.

6. Environmental Protection and Resilience

6.1 KCC considers that:

(a) Solar Developments should be designed to avoid significant adverse effects on biodiversity, soils, water, heritage and landscape, and to be resilient to flood and climate risks. Planning applications should demonstrate how impacts are avoided, minimised, and mitigated, and how net benefits will be delivered and maintained over the scheme's lifetime.

(b) Solar Developments should be encouraged where there is:

- Use of nonreflective coatings and recessive colours to minimise visual impact and potential harm to wildlife. Where near dwellings, transport corridors, or aviation assets, a glint and glare assessment with mitigation should be provided.

- Submission of an Ecology Management Plan (including under-panel habitat management) setting out landscape and biodiversity enhancements, including habitat buffers, wildflower corridors, or nature recovery measures. Nature recovery measures should be in line with those in the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- Flood Risk Assessment and drainage strategy, including nature based Sustainable Drainage Systems.
- Incorporation of bunds, filter drains or other measures to interrupt flows of water between rows of solar arrays, to disperse flows over the surface, and promote infiltration into the soils.
- Placement of wide grassed filter strips at the downstream side of blocks of solar arrays and maintenance of the grass at a long length to interrupt water flows and promote infiltration.
- Incorporation of gravel filled filter drains or swales at the downstream side of blocks of solar arrays to help infiltrate run-off (where ground conditions allow).
- Vegetated strips through a combination of wildflowers and or grass along with buffer strips around the perimeter of the fields left uncut to capture any runoff leaving the site.
- Historic and ecological assessments where relevant, with early engagement with KCC specialists.
- Public Rights of Way (PRoW) remain open and safe, with temporary closures only by prior agreement with KCC.
- Minimal disruption to local and strategic road networks, including appropriate construction management.
- A Construction Environmental Management Plan addressing dust, noise, traffic, soil handling, runoff, ecological protection, and PRoW management.
- Decommissioning plans to restore the land at the end of life (typically 25–30 years), ensuring land can return to its former use or equivalent quality within three months.

7. Fire safety and Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS)

- 7.1 KCC recommends that planning applications for BESS should ensure:
- BESS compounds are located at least 25m from occupied buildings (National Fire Chiefs Council guidance).
 - Two independent emergency access points, allowing for upwind approach where possible, plus onsite turning space.
 - Evidence of adequate firefighting water supply (hydrants, static tanks or alternative measures) and contaminated runoff containment, recognising controlled burn tactics may be required.
 - An Emergency Response Plan covering system isolation, shutdown, venting strategy, hazardous plume modelling, cordon requirements, and post incident monitoring.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 KCC supports Solar Development in principle, where it has the potential to maximise the social, environmental and economic benefits that solar provides.
- 8.2 KCC recognises the importance of solar generation for UK energy security and economic development. However, it considers that Solar Developments can have significant impacts on surrounding communities and the environment.
- 8.3 Kent, with its high levels of solar irradiance, is considered a favourable area for solar generation, and the cumulative impacts of multiple projects across the county must be carefully considered by local planning authorities. The collective impact on food security of using high grade agricultural land for energy generation, which KCC discourages, may also become significant as deployment of ground-mounted solar accelerates. KCC therefore encourages solar generation to be prioritised on rooftops, car parks, and brownfield land over ground-mounted installations on greenfield and BMV agricultural land.

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