


# South Brooks Solar Farm

## Preliminary Environmental Information

### Volume 2: Outline Employment, Skills and Supply Chain Plan

Document Reference: EN0110027  
May 2026  
Blue Planet Solar Limited



## Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
2	Construction Workforce Requirements and Summary Socio-economic Baseline	2
3	Collaboration and Partnership	6
4	Next Steps	11

## Tables

Table 3-1:	Stakeholder group and engagement	6
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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of the Document

1.1.1 This document sets out the proposed approach to the South Brooks Solar Farm ('Project') outline Employment, Skills and Supply Chain Plan (oESSCP) that will be submitted as part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application. The oESSCP will describe how Blue Planet Solar Ltd ('the Applicant') would promote the delivery of economic benefits generated by the Project to people and businesses across Kent and East Sussex. The economic benefits that the Project could generate are:

- Access to employment, upskilling and re-skilling opportunities for people; and
- Opportunities for businesses to engage with the supply chain and increase capabilities and specialisms in modern construction, developing renewable energy infrastructure, ecology and protecting and enhancing biodiversity and complex coastal habitats.

1.1.2 The Project comprises the construction, operation and decommissioning of a solar photovoltaic (PV) array electricity generating facility across approximately 1,225 hectares (ha) of land (the 'Site'), with approximately 1,174ha of the Site located within Kent and approximately 50ha in East Sussex. The Project includes solar PV arrays, on-site substation(s), Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) units, power conversion stations, grid connection infrastructure (including underground grid connection cabling to the Point of Connection (PoC) and underground interconnecting cable routes), access tracks, as well as specific landscape and ecological mitigation and enhancement areas across Project parcels.

1.1.3 At the time of writing, the Project is one of five solar farm developments, either proposed or consented, in the Folkestone and Hythe District and part of a wider pipeline of energy and other infrastructure development projects across the Region, including the Lower Thames Crossing and Sealink, the National Grid undersea cable connection from Suffolk to Kent. Set within the broader infrastructure development context, the oESSCP could promote opportunities for communities and businesses to develop additional and different skills and capabilities that would benefit the development of energy and other infrastructure across Kent, East Sussex and beyond. The oESSCP could provide an important basis for collaboration between the Applicant and other infrastructure developers in relation to workforce and skills development and transfer. It could also create the framework for potential joint activities designed to engage local communities and businesses with potential opportunities offered across a number of developments; notably South Kent and Shepway solar farms, which would sit closest to the Project. This could include supply chain engagement and co-ordination of 'Meet the Buyer' events.

1.1.4 The greatest volume of potential local economic benefits would arise during the construction phase. Those that would arise during the operation and maintenance phases would be more limited, but could still provide opportunities for Kent and East Sussex people and businesses. The oESSCP will focus, in the main, on the construction phase.

1.1.5 If the Project receives consent, a Detailed Employment, Skills and Supply Chain Plan (Detailed ESSCP) would be produced, which would be secured by the DCO. The Detailed ESSCP would be reviewed and refreshed in response to contemporary economic circumstances throughout the construction, operation and decommissioning phases in accordance with a schedule to be agreed with the relevant Local planning Authority. This is likely to cover a time period of four to five years.

## 2 Construction Workforce Requirements and Summary Socio-economic Baseline

### 2.1 Construction Workforce

2.1.1 The focus and proposed actions of the oESSCP will be underpinned by:

- initial estimates of the construction workforce required and the areas from which the workforce is likely to be drawn, based upon professional judgement and experience of the delivery of solar and BESS projects throughout the UK and contemporary travel to work research;
- initial estimates of operation and maintenance roles that would be required, including landscape and biodiversity management, as well as the scope of decommissioning;
- a socio-economic and population baseline analysis; and
- a review of the economic policy drivers and priorities for Kent and East Sussex.

2.1.2 In summary it is estimated that throughout the 36-48 month construction phase, an average of 500 workers may be needed on-site, rising to a peak of 600.

2.1.3 Applying assumptions for leakage to this figure and the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) Workforce Mobility survey outcomes for the Southeast (see 2.2.2 below), the following employment average, for the construction period, has been estimated for the site. At this stage, additionality assumptions for displacement have not been applied.

- Approximately 200 Full time Equivalent (FTE) roles per year within a radius of up to 50 miles from the Project; or
- Approximately 165 FTEs per year within 20 miles of the Project.

2.1.4 The assumptions used in these estimates are explored further in 'construction industry characteristics' below.

2.1.5 The jobs created on-site during the construction phase would be required for land preparation, installation and grid connection. The employment opportunities would encompass a range of different positions, occupations and skill levels.

2.1.6 In general, it is anticipated that the construction phase would require a mix of occupational skills across a range of construction industry sub-sectors, but predominantly civil engineering/civils construction roles including topsoil strip, ground preparation, cable laying and plant operative roles, skilled mechanical and engineering trades and vehicle operation and electrical installation.

2.1.7 These construction roles would be supported by non-construction and relatively low skilled construction roles including security, maintenance, banksmen, traffic management, administration and site management and operations.

2.1.8 Employment would be in a range of tenures depending on the nature of the work package.

## 2.2 Construction Industry Characteristics

2.2.1 For specialist construction, travel-to-work patterns are wider than average. The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) UK Workforce Mobility survey (2023)<sup>1</sup> indicates that construction workers may travel up to 50 miles (approximately 90 minutes) to site on a regular daily basis.

2.2.2 At a regional scale, CITB survey information sets out that 24% of construction workers in the South East live in a different region to their place of work and the average journey for a construction worker from home to Site is 16 miles. In the 12 months prior to the survey, construction workers in the South East indicated that:

- 33% worked within 20 miles distance from their home;
- 40% worked within 21-50 miles distance from their home; and
- 27% worked further than 50 miles from their home.

2.2.3 As such, it is anticipated that the Project would draw its construction workforce from a substantial Construction Labour Market Area (CLMA) of up to 50 miles that includes (as a 'best fit' comparison to administrative geography) the Authorities of East Sussex (being made up of five district or borough councils), Kent (made up of 12 district or borough councils), and the unitary authorities of Brighton and Hove and Medway.

2.2.4 It is acknowledged that construction workers are not likely to be spread evenly over the CLMA and there is propensity for workers to live closer to work within the CLMA. This is an important consideration for guiding the focus of the Outline Plan, so that it effectively advances potential for local employment and skills development. Aligning with the CITB Workforce Mobility surveys, it is considered that the Local Authority Districts of Folkestone & Hythe, Rother, Ashford and Hastings would be an appropriate primary target area for proactive activities delivered through the Outline Plan, given that they sit within the 20 mile radius, from which an estimated 33% of the construction workforce could be drawn. This would constitute the Construction Labour Market Area Focus Area (CLMA Focus Area). These Districts also incorporate communities exhibiting high levels of deprivation (see paragraph 1.6.1 below), which could benefit most from employment and skills actions.

2.2.5 The Applicant is aware that the Project is one of a number of infrastructure projects proposed, and in development, across Kent and adjacent Local Authorities. These projects would collectively impose a significant demand upon available construction labour; a challenge that would need to be addressed at County and wider Regional level.

## 2.3 Construction Employment and Business

2.3.1 The CLMA Focus Area has a residential population of c. 20,875 engaged in construction (ONS 2021)<sup>2</sup> and hosts c.10,750 construction jobs (BRES, 2023)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> CITB (2023) Workforce Mobility and Skills in the UK Construction Sector 2022: UK-wide report. Available at:

[https://www.citb.co.uk/media/uwhbtrkj/2272\\_bmg\\_workforce\\_mobility\\_and\\_skills\\_uk\\_wide\\_report\\_v1.pdf](https://www.citb.co.uk/media/uwhbtrkj/2272_bmg_workforce_mobility_and_skills_uk_wide_report_v1.pdf) [Accessed: 10 April 2026].

<sup>2</sup> ONS (2021) Census 2021: Table TS060A – Industry. Available at:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/select/getdatasetbytheme.asp?theme=93> [Accessed: 10 April 2026].

<sup>3</sup> ONS (2025) Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES): provisional results 2024, revised results 2023. Available at:

- 2.3.2 The CLMA has a residential population of c.131,808 engaged in construction (ONS, 2021) and hosts c.79,000 construction jobs (BRES, 2023).
- 2.3.3 Kent has a residential population of c. 79,897 people engaged in construction employment (ONS, 2021), and hosts c.53,000 construction jobs (BRES, 2023).
- 2.3.4 According to UK Inter-Departmental Business Register (2025)<sup>4</sup>, there were approximately 17,455 and 111,320 active businesses within the CLMA Focus Area and the CLMA respectively in 2025, with construction firms accounting for 16.7% and 17.7% of all businesses respectively (above the national average of 14.1%).

## 2.4 Key Economy Activity Characteristics

- 2.4.1 According to data from the 2021 Census, economic activity rates (the proportion of the working age population who are either employed, or unemployed and actively seeking work) within the CLMA (57.9%) and the CLMA Focus Area (55.6%) are slightly lower than regional (60.1%) and national rates (58.6%). Retirement was recorded to be the main reason for economic inactivity in Kent.
- 2.4.2 The Annual Population Survey (2024-25)<sup>5</sup> unemployment rate within the CLMA is 4.7%, which is greater than rates within the CLMA Focus Area (4.1%), the South East (3.5%) and England (4.4%).
- 2.4.3 Claimant count data from April 2022 reveals a claimant rate (as a proportion of all working age residents aged 16 to 64) of 3.9% in the CLMA Focus Area and 3.8% in the CLMA, which is higher than rates within Kent (3.6%) and the South East (3.3%), but below the average for England (4.2%).

## 2.5 Qualifications and Occupational Skills

- 2.5.1 According to data from the 2021 Census, approximately 29.0% of residents above the age of 16 in the CLMA Focus Area and 31.7% in the CLMA were recorded to have higher or further education qualifications, which was lower than regional (35.8%) and national proportions (33.9%). At 18.9%, the proportion of CLMA Focus Area residents with no qualifications is higher than the CLMA (17.4%), regional (15.4%) and national proportions (18.1%).
- 2.5.2 Around 12.2% of residents are employed in 'skilled trades' occupations in the CLMA Focus Area (c.23,266). This proportion is slightly higher than the proportion of residents working in 'skilled trades' in the CLMA (11.0%, c. 136,900), the South East and national levels (10.2%). However, the CLMA Focus Area and CLMA is recorded to have a lower proportion of individuals working in professional occupations (17.1% and 19.1% respectively) when compared to regional (21.2%) and national levels (20.3%).

## 2.6 Index of Multiple Deprivation

- 2.6.1 The site and the immediate surroundings of Lydd range between within the 20% to 40% most deprived areas, indicating that the population experiences a higher overall level of deprivation than the

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<https://www.ons.gov.uk/releases/ukbusinessregisterandemploymentsurveybresprovisionalresults2024revisedresults2023> [Accessed: 10 April 2026].

<sup>4</sup> Business Registers Strategy and Outputs Team (2025). UK business; activity, size and location: 2025. Available at:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/business/activitysizeandlocation/bulletins/ukbusinessactivitysizeandlocation/2025> [Accessed: 10 April 2026].

<sup>5</sup> ONS (2025) Annual Population Survey: Unemployment rate – aged 16-64. Available at:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/construct/components/variableComponent.asp?menuopt=7&subcomp=130> [Accessed: 10 April 2026].

national average. Deprivation is largely driven by the Barriers to Housing and Services and the Education domains. In contrast, deprivation relating to Income, Crime, and Living Environment is comparatively lower.

- 2.6.2 While a number of inland and suburban areas within the CLMA Focus Area experience comparatively lower levels of deprivation (generally falling within the 20-50% least deprived nationally), the CLMA Focus Area as a whole indicates higher levels of deprivation relative to much of South East England. Within this context, there are localised pockets of higher levels of deprivation concentrated along the coastal belt, including areas of Hasting, New Romney, Greatstone and Folkestone, with additional areas of relatively high deprivation present within central Ashford.

### 3 Collaboration and Partnership

#### 3.1 Early Engagement Completed to Date

- 3.1.1 The prosperity of the renewable energy sector, local communities and businesses is increasingly dependent upon inter-agency and cross-company collaborations.
- 3.1.2 The developers and the Tier 1 contractors would work in tandem to identify and open up opportunities for communities and businesses. Tier 1 contractors are generally large in scale, have significant experience in building large infrastructure projects and, typically, have responsibility for most aspects of projects from commencement to completion. This would include appointing and managing subcontractors, ensuring health and safety and adherence to timescales and budgets. However, the Applicant and Tier 1 Contractors would be dependent upon close collaborative working with local stakeholders and organisations across Kent and East Sussex to translate these opportunities into jobs, enhanced skills and contracts for local people and businesses.
- 3.1.3 At the time of writing, the Applicant is in the process of engaging with key stakeholders with a remit to connect with communities, provide education and skills and support and represent businesses to ensure that the actions proposed within the oESSCP are relevant to contemporary economic opportunities and challenges and chime with local policy priorities. The Applicant is testing whether the initial proposals for delivering positive impacts from the development resonate with their knowledge and experience of approaches that work in Kent and East Sussex. The Applicant is also exploring practical ways of working with those agencies during the construction, operation and decommissioning phases.
- 3.1.4 The Applicant is also exploring, with other developers, structures that would enable the articulation of workforce and skills requirements, and influence education and skills curriculum planning, so that all businesses have timely access to the people and skills they need.
- 3.1.5 Table 3-1 below lists, as a minimum, the organisations with whom the Applicant intends to engage in developing the oESSCP and examples of their roles in promoting and achieving benefits for people and business.

**Table 3-1: Stakeholder group and engagement**

Stakeholder Group	Stakeholder	Potential Roles
<b>Regional and Local Government</b>	Kent and East Sussex County Councils; Ashford, Folkestone and Hythe and Rother District Councils – or any successor bodies, following Local Government Reorganisation (Planning, Economic and Workforce Development Services, Careers Hubs, Education and Adult Learning Services).	<p>Connect the Applicant and Tier 1 contractors with networks, business clusters and infrastructure designed to achieve collaboration on addressing regional workforce, skills and supply chain need, including the Kent and Medway Task Force and Skills and Employment East Sussex;</p> <p>Collaborate with other local stakeholders to secure funding to provide additional or different training to address workforce demand;</p> <p>Provide intelligence on accessing communities generally, and targeting communities that have disproportionate</p>

Stakeholder Group	Stakeholder	Potential Roles
		<p>levels of multiple deprivation and low social mobility, including creating connections with the Romney Marsh Partnership;</p> <p>Support access into schools (including the Marsh Academy) and Adult Learning provision, to support the deployment of contractors engaged on the Project to inspire young and older people to consider and pursue careers in solar and other renewable energy sectors and organise visits to the Site to provide insights into the Project, the technology it incorporates and the benefits of renewable energy projects .</p>
<p><b>Other Public Sector Organisations</b></p>	<p>Department for Work and Pensions/  Jobcentre Plus  Regional Partnership Manager and local Jobcentres.</p>	<p>Keep the Applicant and Tier 1 contractors abreast of structural changes within government funded access to employment and careers services, pertinent to the delivery of activities set out in the oESSCP;</p> <p>Incorporate the workforce and skills support needs of the Project into submissions for National Government funding for skills training and recruitment support;</p> <p>Promote work placement and employment opportunities to local job seekers and support the development of job readiness support, including sector-focused initiatives e.g. the Sector Based Work Academy Programme and Skills Bootcamps; and Connect To Work;</p> <p>Provide job entrants on the Project with access to in-work support if required, including wraparound assistance designed to address other needs, to enable candidates to sustain work.</p>
	<p>Kent Association of Colleges, representing North Kent College Group (including the Construction Technical Excellence College), East Kent College Group (including the Green Engineering Centres</p>	<p>Identify candidates from the college learner bases as potential candidates for employment or upskilling opportunities;</p> <p>Provide insight into skills gaps and deliver training to equip students with the knowledge and skills to gain and sustain work and skills development;</p> <p>Explore the development of new, customised solar sector-specific provision</p>

Stakeholder Group	Stakeholder	Potential Roles
	<p>at Ashford and Canterbury Colleges) and Mid Kent College Group (including the green construction centre and decarbonisation hub).</p>	<p>in collaboration with other clean energy developers;  Enable the roll out of 'Destination Renewables', designed to raise young peoples' awareness of opportunities within the renewable energy sector and create connections with employers to enable them to pursue careers within the sector;</p> <p>Engage the Applicant and contractors with colleges to enable the transfer of industry insight to staff and students.</p>
	<p>University of Kent and the University of Sussex.</p>	<p>Provide access to job seekers and existing relevant skills provision;</p> <p>Engage in technical knowledge transfer and encourage innovation regarding solar and other renewable energy development and storage;</p> <p>Explore the development of new, customised solar sector-specific provision in collaboration with other solar and clean energy developers.</p>
<p><b>Business Representative Groups</b></p>	<p>The CITB and the Civil Engineering Contractors Association (CECA).</p>	<p>Support alignment of oESSCP and Detailed ESSCP actions with the CITB industry-developed and approved National Skills Academy for Construction and its associated performance benchmarks;</p> <p>Facilitate skills and workforce intelligence sharing between South Brooks Solar Farm and the CITB/CECA-co-ordinated Infrastructure Sector Skills Plan, Employer Intelligence Networks and Training Provider Networks;</p> <p>Collaborate on organising and delivering market warming events to signpost potential contracting opportunities to businesses and support their readiness to tender;</p> <p>Support the supply chain to access grants and other support available for workforce development including the New Entrants Support Scheme and potential for Shared Apprenticeships.</p>

Stakeholder Group	Stakeholder	Potential Roles
	The Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and Industry; the Alliance of Chambers in East Sussex; and the Federation of Small Businesses in the South East and East Sussex.	<p>Support connections into the Local Skills Improvement Plan partnership;</p> <p>Support the creation of connections between the Project and businesses with goods and services that match the supply chain needs of the Project;</p> <p>Partner in the design and delivery of local business market warming events.</p>
<b>Business</b>	EDF Energy Dungeness B	<p>Support alignment between Dungeness B decommissioning strategy and the development and delivery of actions to promote local economic benefits for local communities and business through the Project;</p> <p>Collaborate with the Applicant to connect the Dungeness B workforce and its supply chain to Project jobs, skills and contracting opportunities;</p> <p>Use its knowledge and local connections to support the Applicant to build relationships with local organisations with good reach into local communities and business to enable Project benefits to permeate as deeply as possible into local communities and the business base;</p>

3.1.6 Consideration could be given to establishing a Stakeholder Working Group as a forum for working with partners with a role in providing access to employment and skills and business engagement, to deliver local benefits arising from the Project. It would also act as a focal point for embedding the Applicant and contractors within relevant structures and networks across Kent and East Sussex, in order to share workforce volume and skills data pertinent to education and skills curricula planning. It is envisaged that partners would include those listed in the table above. Proposed Structure and Scope of the Outline Employment, Skills and Supply Chain Management Plan

3.1.7 The full outline ESSCP will set out the following:

- The socio-economic context, which will guide the activity themes and the balance of delivery measures to be developed and implemented;
- The key policies and priorities set out across Kent and East Sussex economic strategies that the oESSCP is able specifically to support in addition to the overarching National Policy Statement for Energy and the need to consider all socio-economic impacts, including the creation of jobs and training opportunities;
- The underpinning conditions required to successfully promote economic benefits, including engagement with:

- education, skills development and business growth support infrastructure with capability to respond in a timely way to contemporary employer need; and
- relevant agencies from across the public, private, charitable/voluntary and community sectors with good reach into communities, to harness their knowledge of the barriers to engaging in the labour market and what works, locally, to address them;
- A set of core objectives, which would form the basis for marshalling collective action by the Applicant, the Tier 1 contractors and regional stakeholders with a role in promoting access to employment, workforce development and business prosperity;
- Key stakeholders that have been engaged in developing the full oESSCP particularly those with which the Applicant would seek to collaborate to successfully promote opportunities and translate these into employment, skills and business benefits;
- A suite of actions, which the Applicant would drive forward, in collaboration with partner stakeholders, grouped into three core, interrelated themes: Information and Collaboration, Access to Construction Jobs and Skills and opening Up the Supply Chain;
- How the Applicant would engage with the host authorities and other stakeholders to produce a Detailed ESSCP if the Development Consent Order (DCO) is granted and a summary of how the activities would be delivered and monitored. The Detailed OESSCP would be secured by a requirement in the DCO;
- A performance monitoring and review framework, setting out procedures and responsibilities for ensuring that actions and outcomes committed within the Detailed ESSCP are measured and recorded and that a system of evaluation and learning is embedded; and
- A process for ensuring sustainable, ethical procurement practice across supply chains and ensuring against fraud, corruption or abuse of human rights.

3.1.8 As stated above, the key focus of the oESSCP will be promoting opportunities that arise during the construction phase. The Detailed ESSCP would also incorporate operation (including maintenance and repainting) and decommissioning phases.

## 4 Next Steps

- 4.1.1 This document sets out the proposed framework for the full oESSCP. The Applicant will continue to consult with stakeholders to shape the oESSCP to be submitted as part of the DCO application, which will contain a suite of actions that would open up opportunities for employment and skills development for local people and potential for businesses to engage in the supply chain. This will include an analysis of how the Applicant and contractors can support delivery of the socio-economic policies and priorities of those stakeholders and how we can complement, rather than duplicate, effective initiatives that drive opportunities for people and business within Kent and East Sussex, particularly in locations closest to the Project.



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