

# Richard Fuller MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Ed Miliband MP  
Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change  
Department of Energy and Climate Change  
3 Whitehall Place  
London, SW1A 2AW

3<sup>rd</sup> February 2025

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Miliband'.

I am writing to clarify how, if at all, the Government and the National Energy Systems Operator (NESO) are retaining changing the weight attached to the criterion of "best and most versatile" (BMV) agricultural land in evaluations of renewable energy projects.

During the recent Westminster Hall debate, 'Solar Farms: Agricultural Land' held on 28th January, I asked the Minister whether BMV land will continue to be a criterion used to assess which solar projects the Government moves forward. In the Minister's response, she advised that a range of issues would need to be considered, however, her response did not make clear how much weight will be given to BMV land as a criterion in assessments for proposed solar farms.

As you know NESO has announced a halt to new project connections while it reforms its evaluation process, revealing that the current connections queue stands at over 700GW—more than double what is required to meet net zero by 2050. NESO has indicated that all projects required for 2030 are already in the queue.

NESO highlights just two criteria for their evaluation: "readiness" and "strategic alignment" to the Clean Power 2030 Action Plan with no reference to BMV land. The Action Plan itself references farms only in the context of "wind" and "solar", with no mention of food production or agriculture.

The Government's Clean Power 2030 Action Plan has rightly recognised the need for reforming the connections process to prevent inefficient allocation of power generation. However, without explicit safeguards for agricultural land, there is a risk that short-term financial incentives will lead to long-term inefficiencies and the loss of valuable farmland. I would therefore be grateful if you could advise on the following:

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1. Is BMV land use still a criterion in the assessment of solar projects?
2. Has there been any change in the weighting of the criteria of BMV land in the decision process for solar farm development approvals?

I appreciate your time in addressing these concerns and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R Fuller', written in a cursive style.

Richard Fuller CBE MP