

England's largest land manager to help home-grown clean energy

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Consumers are set to benefit from more home-grown clean energy, with an increased number of renewable projects to be enabled on the public forest estate under new powers coming into force today on Friday 27 February.

The new statutory powers will enable renewable electricity proposals across land managed by Forestry England with the energy generated used on site and sold to the national grid. The move will boost the government's mission to become a clean energy superpower and generate extra income for tree-planting as part of our net zero plans.

Forestry England, which manages the nation's 1,500 woods and forests covering over 250,000 hectares, is the country's largest land manager. It could now play host to a range of renewable energy developments, including solar and wind projects.

These measures will also generate new income streams to further Forestry England's environmental objectives such as tree-planting, woodland management and supporting wildlife. There will be no net loss of woodland area, with compensatory tree planting to ensure the replacement of any woodland permanently removed as a result of renewable energy projects.

In a major boost for Britain's clean energy mission, Forestry England and Great British Energy are exploring opportunities to work in partnership to deliver rooftop solar at scale across the public estate and other similar renewable energy projects. This will help to generate low-carbon electricity and reduce costs.

Nature Minister Mary Creagh said:

Our forests and woodlands are among this country's greatest natural assets, and these new powers mean they can now play an active role in our mission to become a clean energy superpower.

Enabling Forestry England to develop renewable energy projects across its estate is a significant moment. This will be a win for both our environment and our energy security, with income invested directly back into tree-planting and woodland management.

Forestry England Chief Executive Michael Seddon said:

Generating significantly more renewable energy in the nation's forests is a very exciting opportunity for Forestry England. We have been successfully integrating small scale renewable energy projects for many years with over 40 installations already, mostly solar projects such as rooftop solar installations.

These new powers bring opportunities to hugely increase what we can do to support the UK's energy security with electricity generated being connected to the Grid; reduce our own reliance on fossil fuels; and bring extra money for us to reinvest in caring for the nation's forests.

Dan McGrail, CEO of Great British Energy, said:

Great British Energy is focussed on making the most of the UK's natural assets to deliver more home-grown clean power. We're looking forward to working with Forestry England to bring new renewable projects to life, helping to cut bills, strengthen energy security and support communities across the country.

These projects will deliver environmental, social and economic benefits, and will be subject to the planning and development processes, ensuring environmental surveys and stakeholder consultation are undertaken. Renewable electricity development on this land will be subject to possible Secretary of State consent as well as the usual planning permissions.

More information will be set out later this year.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/englands-largest-land-manager-to-help-home-grown-clean-energy>