

Frequently Asked Questions

What are solar PV panels?

A solar panel is an arrangement of cells of 'photo-voltaic' (PV) materials, which generate electricity when exposed to light. PV panels can produce electricity even on a cloudy day.

What is a 'Solar Farm'?

A solar farm is a dedicated facility that generates power by converting sunlight into electricity using multiple PV panels.

What size will the Mullingar Community Solar Park be?

Approximately 9 hectares (22 acres).

What height will the solar farm be?

The PV Panels will be mounted at an angle and will be approximately 3 metres (less than 10') from local ground level at their highest point.

Will this have any impact on local plants and animals?

SEC members are keenly aware of the need to protect and improve biodiversity, and solar collection is one of the least harmful ways of generating electricity. In fact, once the array is operational, sheep will become part of the 'maintenance team' by continuing to graze between the panels. A full ecological impact study will be carried out as part of the planning process.

What is 'Glint and Glare' in relation to a solar farm?

Glint is a momentary flash of light reflected off the surface of the solar panels. Glare is a continuous source of bright light and is significantly less intense. Solar PV cells are designed to absorb light so significant glint and glare should not arise as a result of the proposed development. A comprehensive 'glint and glare' report will be included in our feasibility study as part of the planning application.

Will there be any noise from the solar farm?

There will be some daytime noise during construction, but given existing traffic noise from the nearby N4, this will not be significant. In operation, the array itself will be silent. The supporting mechanisms will emit only a very low level of noise. This is unlikely to be audible above the local traffic but it will be fully assessed as part of the planning process.

Will there be any visual impact to the local area?

The array will be close to the ground (max. 3m high) so the solar farm will not have a significant visual impact. A full visual impact assessment will be undertaken as part of the planning process.

Who will own the Solar Farm?

It will be operated by the Mullingar Energy Co-op and will be owned by the shareholders. Any member of the community will be able to buy shares in the solar park when they become available.

How many years will the solar farm be operational for?

As long as it's a viable and useful part of the local energy mix. Currently available PV panels have a projected lifespan of 30 years, after which they can be removed and recycled.

Talk to us...

If you would like to know more about joining the SEC, becoming a shareholder in the Mullingar Energy Co-Op, or if you have any concerns about any aspect of the proposed Mullingar Community Solar Park, send an email to hello@mullingarsec.ie



MULLINGAR
Sustainable
Energy
Community

Mullingar Sustainable Energy Community (MSEC) was inspired by communities across Ireland who have begun to take control of their own energy futures. Formed in 2018, with the support of the Mullingar Chamber of Commerce, our objectives are:

- to encourage energy efficiency
- to source renewable energy where possible.
- to improve the lives of all in the community.

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Mullingar Community Solar Park:

Generating a brighter future for Mullingar.



MULLINGAR
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<https://mullingarsec.ie>

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Mullingar Community Solar Park is a proposed development on the site of the former municipal landfill site at Marlinstown, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath. The development will be centred on a solar farm, which will provide renewable energy for Mullingar as well as employment and educational opportunities. Public amenities, such as a possible cycle track, will be installed on the site by Westmeath County Council - more information on this will be available at a later date.

How much Power?

The Solar Farm will be able to produce up to 5MW. Enough to run about 1,000 homes, without producing any greenhouse gas emissions.

Who's behind this?

The project is being promoted by the **Mullingar Sustainable Energy Community (MSEC)**, with support from **Community Power, Mullingar Chamber of Commerce, Westmeath Community Development** and in consultation with **Westmeath County Council**. MSEC is also supported by a number of generous corporate sponsors. A list of our current sponsors, and information on how to support our work, can be found on our website - <https://mullingarsec.ie/>

The solar park will be the first 100% community-owned solar farm in Westmeath. MSEC is currently in the process of establishing an Energy Co-op. This entity will retain 100% ownership of the solar farm, to ensure the future of the development as an asset for the benefit of the people of Mullingar.

Where will it be?

The proposed site for the solar farm (as shown in Figure 1) is on part of the former Marlinstown municipal landfill site, located approximately 1km east of Junction 15 (Mullingar/Tullamore exit) on the N4 and approximately 200m north of the N4. The site is owned by Westmeath County Council and it is proposed that if planning permission is granted for the Solar Farm, the site will be leased by the Mullingar Energy Co-op.

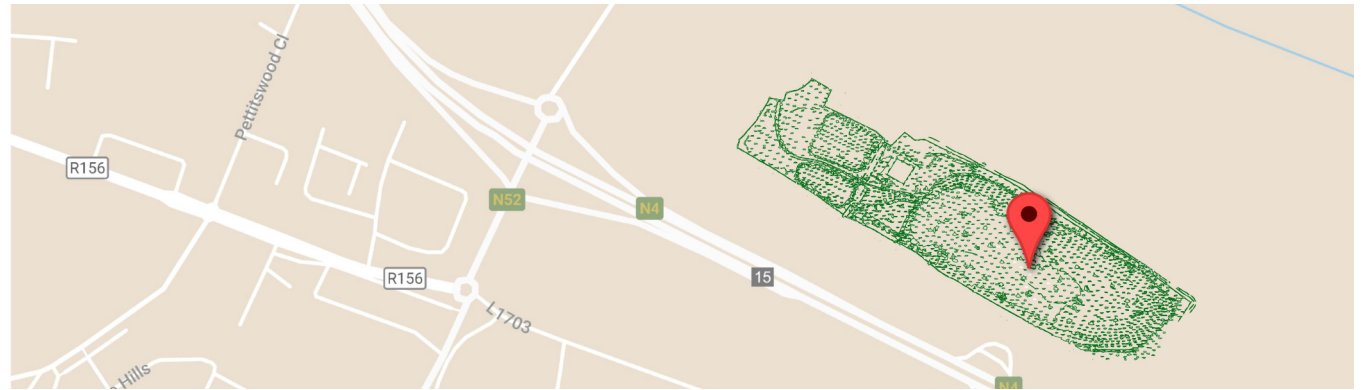


Figure 1 - map showing approximate location of the proposed solar farm site

What's going to be installed?

To capture the energy from the sunlight, a solar farm is made up of arrays of Photo Voltaic (PV) Panels. These will be mounted on low-level frames, angled to catch the maximum possible light. In addition to the PV panels, the development will also include the following associated infrastructure:

- Grid connection
- Drainage system
- Electricity substation
- Amenity and landscaping
- Underground cabling and ducting
- Inverter/transformer station modules
- Site access, internal roads and parking
- Operational management facilities - perimeter fencing, CCTV cameras etc.

A comprehensive series of environmental and other assessments will be undertaken to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority. Funding for a full feasibility study, to include these assessments, has been secured through the LEADER programme; J.B. Barry & Partners, a long-established consulting engineering practice, have been appointed to carry out this work.



Why are we doing this?

The vision of the Mullingar SEC is to create a zero-carbon community. The expected output from the **Mullingar Community Solar Park** will strongly contribute to achieving this aim, while also setting an (hopefully inspirational) example to similarly sized communities around the country. It will also:

- help to meet the targets set by the official designation of Mullingar as a decarbonisation zone.
- be 100% community owned - any profit derived from the sale of generated power will be retained by the Co-Op for the benefit of its shareholders.
- create employment, during both the construction phase and ongoing operation.
- help to secure Mullingar's renewable energy future.
- contribute to the national effort to meet renewable electricity production and carbon emissions reduction targets by 2030, while supporting a growing economy and population.

