

# ‘Solar parks must blend in with the landscape’

We should design more Dutch solar parks from a landscape perspective, says the Wageningen landscape architect Dirk Oudes. This would help reduce resistance among communities to solar parks.

We should also combine solar energy with nature, recreation and water storage. Up to now, the Netherlands has taken an overwhelmingly quantitative approach to solar parks, says Oudes. According to Dutch grid operators, the Climate Agreement means we need to generate 34,000 billion kilowatt-hours of sustainable energy by 2030, and so 34,000 to 65,000 hectares of solar parks need to be built. The 30 Dutch energy regions are drawing up plans on how to achieve this, but there is a shortage of space.

## Umbrellas

It is time to consider the qualitative aspects of solar parks too, says Oudes. How do they fit in with the landscape? How do we experience such a park? What functions could be combined with energy generation, for example agriculture, water storage, recreation and nature? He and his colleague Sven Stremke investigated 11 solar parks in

the Netherlands, the UK, Germany and Italy that use creative solutions to blend in with the landscape, take account of local preferences or combine functions. ‘These examples can help to get the debate going in the Netherlands’. In Britain, a solar park was built in a protected landscape whereby 40 per cent of the land was used for solar panels and 60 per cent for nature. The designers placed the solar panels so as to blend in with the rolling countryside (see photo). They were aided by a hundred volunteers from the local village who put up their umbrellas in various locations in the park to see where the solar panels would be least visible. ‘That shows how you can involve local residents in setting up a solar park from a landscape perspective,’ says Oudes. The best option in practice depends on the site, explains the landscape architect. ‘You always need to think about what fits best in this landscape.’ AS



In England, designers placed the solar panels to blend in with the rolling countryside. Photo Dirk Oudes