

Crime prevention advice for Commercial Solar Panels



Solar panel theft is an emerging issue in the UK. While the price of panels has come down considerably in the past few years, they are still a significant investment, and it would be painful for the owner to have this integral part of a solar photovoltaic (PV) system stolen from under their nose. Security is a particularly important concern for large solar farms and solar parks which are ordinarily located on sizable tracts of land, often in remote areas.

The security measures to be incorporated at each location will have to be considered on a site specific basis. They will obviously be determined to some degree by, for example, the existing landscape and local planning constraints etc.

The basic principle of all crime prevention is to provide layers of defence to whatever is in need of protection. In the case of solar farms this protection will almost certainly require both the physical element, such as fences or ditches and also the utilisation of appropriate technology such as CCTV.

The advice offered below covers the general crime prevention points which should be considered.

Perimeter Security and Access Control

Perimeter fencing should be used and be a proven security fence such as paladin fencing, this is more ascetically suited to the rural environment. The recommendation would be to install fencing, which has been tested and approved to current UK Government standards. Boundary fencing should be tested and certified to LPS 1175 Security Rating 2 and to a height of 2.4 metres. Gates, pedestrian and/or vehicular, should also achieve LPS 1175 Security Rating 2.

Planting up and alongside any fencing will be acceptable providing there is no detrimental effect upon site surveillance that is available.

Landscaping techniques such as ditches and berms (bunds) may also be appropriate in some instances. To be effective in stopping vehicles these need to be designed carefully. Police are able to provide further specific advice in relation to the design of such defences upon request. There should be a minimum number of vehicular access points onto site, ideally only one. Clearly such access points will present the most obvious means for the criminal also and therefore will require a robust and adequate defence.

Some thought should also be given to the wider issues of access around any site. If, for instance, the land surrounding the site is under the same ownership can this be made more secure by improving gates etc. Again this provides layers of difficulty for the criminal to overcome.

Electronic Security

There is a huge range of electronic security available. For most sites it is very likely that this will play an important role. In selecting which type of technology to employ a proper assessment on a site specific basis should be undertaken to ensure any system will be fit for purpose.

For CCTV this assessment is commonly called an Operational Requirement (OR) An obvious example would be to establish how effective will the CCTV be at night at these locations.

There will probably be little reward in deploying CCTV or other defence unless it is monitored in some way or can provide an instant alert in some form and also who would then respond to this? CCTV that simply records will probably be of very limited value.

Further information and other factsheets can be found on our Website
www.warwickshireruralwatch.co.uk

