

First floating solar farm in UK comes to life in Berkshire

October 2 2014, by Nancy Owano



Solar panel farms raise concerns about tying up valuable farmland. Is there another way to generate solar power without tying up large tracts of land? French company Ciel et Terre has an interesting approach that involves floating solar arrays on reservoirs, quarry lakes, irrigation canals or remediation and tailing ponds. Their platform has led to the UK's first floating solar farm, namely a solar array at a farm in Berkshire.

The floating [solar farm](#), said the BBC, involves 800 panels mounted on plastic floats installed on a reservoir at the Sheeplands Farm in Berkshire. The farm is located near Twyford in Berkshire and in rolling countryside next to the River Loddon. Reports said that it cost the farm £250,000 for the project, and the owner set up a company, Floating Solar UK, to distribute the technology in the UK. Farm owner Mark Bennett said, "We are a fourth-generation [farm](#) so we have had to diversify, because it's hard...This green energy [provides] another revenue stream," according to the BBC. He is using Ciel et Terre's modular Hydrelia system. and he hopes to further ignite interest in the benefits of the technology in the UK. Emily Gosden, energy editor of The Telegraph, wrote about the floating technology, and had a quote from Bennett who said, "We are speaking to big utility companies, to agricultural companies - anyone with an unused body of [water](#). The potential is remarkable."

"Thanks to the cooling effect of water on PV panels, our systems produce more energy than land-based systems of a similar size," said the company. Hydrelia has a 30-year lifetime, according to the company site. Ciel et Terre plays an active role in the photovoltaic solar market, and manages all aspects of the development process with design, engineering, financing, legal, construction, operation and maintenance services. They operate and maintain 55 [solar power](#) plants and are expanding activity worldwide, said the site.

By lowering the water temperature and reducing the size of the water area exposed to air, floating [solar panels](#) can reduce water evaporation by up to 33 percent on natural lakes and ponds, and by up to 50 percent on man-made facilities, according to Ciel et Terre. Hydrelia, they added, can withstand up to 118 mph [winds](#) and changes in water levels of up to 20 feet.

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