

Farm helps 650 homes cook on sunshine!

A NEW £2.6m solar farm in Lymington has been hailed a "fantastic community endeavour" by New Forest West MP Desmond Swayne.

Mr Swayne was among 100 visitors to the West Solent Solar Cooperative Limited (WSSC) facility at Lower Pennington Lane during an open day on Saturday.

Built on a former gravel pit and landfill site, the 9,372 solar panels are helping to power 650 homes in the area.

With no emissions of any kind, two megawatts of pollution-free electricity can be produced by the farm at maximum output.

The open day coincided with a new landmark figure for renewable energy generation in the country,

with around 16% of the UK's energy produced by solar power last Friday.

My Swayne told the 'A&T': "This is a fantastic community endeavour, and is extremely important in terms of our future energy security.

"From my ministerial point of view, it's one of the key developments we're really excited about in Africa. Lack of power is one of the great limitations on economic development, and without it, even more people are trying to cross the Mediterranean to come here."

New Forest Transition group volunteers have helped to plant several thousand hedging plants and trees around the field to start forming a wildlife corridor, and wildflower seeds have been sown

across much of the 12.5 acre field.

Sheep will be grazing in the autumn, and a collection of beehives has been installed on site.

WSSC members have already shown over 200 primary school children from seven New Forest schools, plus a group from the Lymington Rotary Club, around the facility.

New Forest District Council chairman Alison Hoare, who also attended the open day, said: "I think it's a wonderful project, and I like that it's powering local houses.

"The importance being placed on bioversity, like the bees and sheep in winter, is great, and it shows that even with the panels you can still make a good use of the land."

Landowner and chairman of the project, Anthony Woolhouse, said: "In 2011, Quakers in the UK committed to become a low-carbon, sustainable society. This gave me the spiritual strength and determination to make West Solent Solar

Co-op the success it has become."

Project coordinator and founding director of WSSC, Cathy Cook, said: "The solar farm tour is a great experience, opening children's and adults' eyes to the fact that people living just up the road are actually

cooking their lunch with sunshine."

For more information visit www.westsolentsolar.coop or to organise a tour email cathyc@westsolentsolar.coop



Grand tour: (l-r) Anthony Woolhouse, Desmond Swayne MP and Coun. Alison Hoare