

Time to go solar?

Climate change has climbed the agenda. Buildings are now being rated for energy efficiency and CO₂ emissions. Some new homes are appearing with renewable energy systems built in.

But is now really the time to go solar?

“Only if you’ve taken care of the basics”, say the experts. Proven systems can provide hot water or electricity. However, insulating your home and switching to a 100% green electricity tariff may be quicker ways to help the planet.

- **Insulate first**

You won’t get a government grant to go solar if you haven’t first insulated your home. This makes sense. The initial capital cost of insulation can usually be recouped from energy savings within 3 years, rather than 10 – 50 years for a renewable energy system.

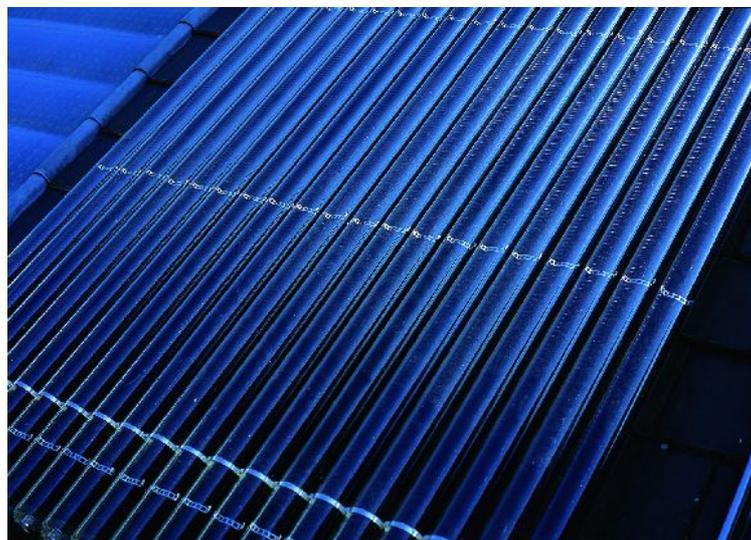
- **Be realistic**

Productive renewable energy systems are sited in the optimum location. The best are integrated so that any surplus energy generated can be sold or stored. If you do not have a south facing pitched roof, your home may not be suitable for solar hot water or electricity generation.

- **Beware the hard sell**

Always seek independent advice before your purchase. Solar water heating, for example, will not reduce your space heating bill. It will reduce your water heating bill - which represents around 15% of your overall space and water heating costs.

The Energy Saving Trust offers free, impartial advice and details of grants towards both insulation and renewable energy systems. Call free on **0800 512 012**.



Solar water heating roof panel

Photo credit: Energy Saving Trust

Notes for editors:

1. This article was produced by United Sustainable Energy Agency (USEA). This organisation was created by the merger of Milton Keynes Energy Agency & Thames Valley Energy Centre in May 2008.

Contact: Gordon Glass, Marketing Co-ordinator

Email: gordon.glass@usea.org.uk

2. USEA works in partnership with local authorities throughout Bucks, Berks, Beds, Herts, Oxon, Hants and the Isle of Wight. In 2008, USEA was awarded a new contract with the Energy Saving Trust to operate an Energy Saving Trust advice centre for the South East. The centre provides impartial energy saving advice to the residents of Bucks, Berks, Oxon, Hants and the Isle of Wight. USEA also offers a free insulation price comparison service called Cocoon.
3. For a more detailed picture of the potential for renewable energy technologies like solar panels, wind turbines, and biomass heaters in UK households, visit www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/Generate-your-own-energy
4. The information contained within this article is correct to the best of our knowledge, but is subject to change. USEA cannot in any way be held legally responsible for any advice given or any work carried out as a result of this information.