



4 November 2014

SOLAR ENERGY

Following the publication this spring of the Department for Energy and Climate Change's Solar Photovoltaic (PV) Strategy¹, I wanted to take the opportunity write to you in my capacity as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change to highlight the potential benefits of solar PV for the public sector estate, and in particular for the schools in your area.

The cost of providing electricity to the nation's schools currently stands at around £500Million per year, representing a significant proportion of the education budget.

Solar PV has seen very strong growth in recent years, and as the industry develops is an increasingly important part of the UK's energy mix, generating electricity directly from sunlight, through solar panels. As costs have fallen dramatically over the last few years solar PV has been increasingly installed in a range of different contexts, from smaller domestic properties up to large-scale, grid-connected facilities. One of the ambitions in the Government's strategy for the sector is to maximise the potential of deployment on the country's buildings, in particular the as yet little tapped sector of mid-sized rooftops, including those of our schools. Over half a million home owners have now successfully installed solar panels and companies as diverse as Sainsbury's and Bentley have fitted big panels on their buildings, and I am keen to see schools benefiting in the same way.

Every school has the potential to generate its own renewable energy. As most schools have a large roof, solar PV is generally the stand out choice. The main energy and other benefits of going solar are:

1. **Reduced electricity bills:** schools can make significant savings on their electricity bills, depending on the size of the Solar PV installation, allowing them to spend money on educational and recreational programmes, not on energy. Solar panels can generate electricity for 25 years or more so the cost savings will go on for some time and could be very substantial.

1

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/302049/uk_solar_pv_strategy_part_2.pdf



Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

2. **Revenue generation:** solar PV will generate a steady income stream for schools over a 20 year period using the Feed-in Tariff. Most PV systems achieve a full payback between 10 - 12 years and will generate revenue streams for another 8 - 10 years (see link to leaflet for more detail²).
3. **Reducing CO₂ emissions:** combating climate change by significantly reducing the school's greenhouse gas emissions, creating significant CO₂ savings over the lifespan of a system.
4. **Education and engagement:** being able to communicate to the pupils the benefits of sustainability through a working example of renewable technology in their own school will provide more direct engagement, particularly in the subjects of geography, science, design and technology and IT. This can also help to inspire the wider community to take action to address climate change.

The Government is working to encourage energy savings in schools. We acknowledge the funding issues that can face schools, but in the spring we published an explanatory leaflet for schools, attached here, which informs and explains the possibilities, and sets out a number of options for schools to fund solar PV, including self-finance, crowd-funding, operating leases, and others.

In summary, I hope that you will draw the attention of the schools in your area to the potential benefits of solar PV in terms of enabling them to save money on energy, generate revenue Tariff, reduce CO₂ emissions, and provide educational benefits across a range of core subjects, while providing inspiration to the community.

**AMBER RUDD MP
PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE FOR ENERGY
AND CLIMATE CHANGE**