

OPINION

Climate Action

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A solar panel installation experience

One of the advantages of being part of Harborough Climate Action is that one becomes more aware of the climate crisis and more active in helping to avert it.

As such, I wanted to embrace as many energy saving features as possible. My house is pretty well insulated, so the next step was to investigate solar PV (polyvoltaic) panels and a heat pump.

When Harborough District Council instigated its Solar Together solar panel group purchasing scheme, I signed up for that, but also explored four alternatives. Interestingly, the prices were generally the same, so I went for a local supplier that had its own in-house team of installers. My search for al-

ternative suppliers was guided by the MCS quality standards website <https://mcs-certified.com>

I also attended a green event in Market Harborough where my preferred supplier was talking. Nothing like being able to see and talk to the company's owners.

I knew how much electrical energy I was already using and added more to future proof for an electric vehicle and possible heat pump, so my 16 roof panels are configured at 6.56kWp. I also added 10.24 kW battery storage.

I placed my order on January 10 this year and the panels and battery were installed in April. A large part of this time-scale was due to the registration with my Distribution



Solar panels on a house

Network Operator.

I wanted to check that I was not flouting any planning rules and tried to check for "permitted development" with Harborough District Council.

Now came the fun of setting it all up. I am with Octopus Energy and I had to request fitment of a smart meter so that I could apply for my Smart Export Guarantee (SEG) tariff – the money I would get for ex-

porting any excess energy I generate into the grid. The meter was installed May 4 and I also downloaded Octopus' very neat app, which is much more useful than the smart meter display. I

It took a while to get from the installer the necessary documentation to apply for the SEG, but that was sorted on June 1 and was up and running on June 15. It should be noted that some smaller energy suppliers do not offer SEG.

So, you ask, is it worth it? I honestly don't know yet. I feel I am doing my bit to get my carbon footprint down, but whether it will pay off in my lifetime really depends on how energy prices go.

One early indication is that since installation of the panels and start of the SEG, during the

period June 15 to July 15, I exported 600 kWh of electricity into the grid and I used 7.5 kWh. Also, I incurred the criminal standing charge for those 31 days. The total net cost for this period was -£73.19.

Compared to a similar period last year, that usage, then, of 217 kWh would have cost £78 at today's rates. Therefore, I am better off by £192 in one month.

From these early figures, I cannot estimate pay back, but hopefully will be in a better place to do this in a year's time, after using the system through both the summer and winter months.

If you have taken steps to reduce the emissions relating to your home, please email hca@SustainableHarboroughCommunity.co.uk.