

‘Solar panels – are they for you?’

Brief notes accompanying a talk for Climate Action Durham on issues to consider by Gavin Wakefield, August 2022.

These notes are made from my recent experience of having solar PV panels fitted to my home, but they are not technical.

******Please check carefully what is right for you.******

Why do this?

- Doing something to tackle climate change.
- Then economics: monthly electricity bills plummet.
- A small contribution to national energy security

Sources of information

<https://www.which.co.uk/reviews/solar-panels/article/solar-panels/how-does-solar-pv-work-adlBz0X5w5nh> Which? Has various articles, beginning here

Finding an installer

Trade bodies, including RECC: the Renewable Energy Consumer Code <https://www.recc.org.uk/> this goes wider than solar panels, but is helpful in getting the bigger picture on powering your home.

MCS Certification <https://mcs-certified.com/> the installer needs to have Microgeneration Certification so you can get the Smart Export Guarantee (SEG)

Solar Energy UK <https://solarenergyuk.org/>
this is specific to solar power and again has useful background material
<https://www.jojusolar.co.uk/>
their website provides good background information

What did we get?

I strongly recommend getting an onsite survey done. See the Which? checklist. <https://media.product.which.co.uk/prod/files/file/gm-83a4ef88-ac57-4fdd-af29-cc381afeb2c6-solar-pv-checklist-pdf.pdf>

Based on our roof size we went for 16 panels, the most that can be fitted to one inverter (turns DC electricity from the solar panels into AC for the grid).

Tesla Powerwall storage battery for use at night and even if the grid goes down.

Also, bird deterrent guards or netting around the panels – they might try to nest and panels have been known to be dislodged!

How much to spend?

I don't think that getting a large loan is very worthwhile, but if you have savings that you could invest then it becomes more worthwhile.

<https://www.which.co.uk/reviews/solar-panels/article/solar-panels/solar-panel-costs-aDxBY2v7kr60>

The Feed In Tariff scheme was ended in April 2019 for new installations.

It has been replaced by the less generous Smart Export Guarantee, which pays for the electricity you export to the grid. The amount varies considerably.

Current market leaders at present are Octopus, especially with their tie in with Tesla.

<https://octopus.energy/help-and-faqs/articles/seg-tariff/>

What else to think about?

The panels we chose have a 25 year guarantee on them, the Powerwall has 10 years. Check with the supplier and the manufacturer.

What is the state of your roof?

Is it necessary or at least useful to replace it before solar panels are fitted?

It might be good to look at the option of solar panels which also work as roof tiles, but this needs to be carefully checked. Which? reckon they can be twice as expensive as more conventional solar panels.