

## Solar PV, Renewables & Decarbonisation Project

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#### 1. **Do individual flats benefit from solar PV?**

It is currently too expensive and difficult to feed from the solar panels directly into individual flats' so financial gains are only made from a bill reduction to the landlord meter (communal areas).

#### 2. **I live in a block of flats. How do the solar panels effect my bills?**

With every solar PV array on a block of flats there are three meters:

1. Solar generation meter: this registers how much energy has been generated. The Council uses these readings to get the cashback from the Government.
2. Block electricity consumer meter (or Landlord meter). This registers how much energy is taken from the main national grid when services are used in communal areas e.g., lifts and lighting.
3. Individual flat's electricity consumer meter

When it is daylight (and electricity is being generated from the panels) and communal area power is required, the Landlord meter takes this energy directly from the solar panels. If there is more solar energy generated than the power being used, the landlord meter stops registering any usage.

When the solar panels stop generating e.g., at night, or if the communal area demand is more than the solar energy being generated, then the landlord meter will start to register energy consumption again.

When reading Landlord meter bills there will be a consumption figure, it will not show you how many units of solar energy it has used. But if solar energy has been used then the bill will be lower than normal.

#### 3. **Are tenants living in flats paying a service charge for solar PV?**

In Eastbourne, the original Solar PV installation on blocks of flats came out of the Council's general fund, so the general fund covers all ongoing associated costs, including depreciation. The general fund collects the Government 'cashback' for the energy generated by the solar PV systems. Therefore, the tenants of Eastbourne flats do not contribute towards the costs of solar PV but do benefit from the reduction in the communal (landlord meter) energy bills.

In Lewes Solar PV panels were installed on a few retirement housing schemes. The installation was funded from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and as a result the HRA is responsible for all ongoing costs. The HRA retains the Government 'cashback' for the energy generated and uses this income to support HRA housing services, cover the ongoing costs, and to help offset installation costs. The tenants benefit from a reduction in their communal energy bills (landlord meter). A depreciation charge is applied as a service charge to the tenant's rent accounts to help to recover the cost of the original installation. The budgets are always reviewed and if circumstances change that could benefit tenants, they will.

#### **4. How do houses benefit from solar PV?**

Houses with solar PV panels benefit from the daytime solar energy generated; the solar energy is connected directly to the home's consumption meter, meaning that electricity is free when the panels are generating electricity. If the household energy consumption is more than the panels generate then the meter will start to register energy being used from the grid. The panels on houses were funded by the general fund and the council retains the Government "cashback" for general fund services.

#### **5. Are more solar PV panels going to be put on roofs?**

We are reviewing the potential for future solar PV, and results are unlikely to be ready to share until February 2022 at the earliest.

#### **6. What other solar research work are you doing?**

We are currently reviewing:

- how we could maximise the energy generated from the current solar panels, such as using batteries to store energy for night-time use
- if we could generate an additional income from the energy we export back to the national grid

#### **7. When will I get mesh on my solar panels to stop birds nesting?**

We are currently reviewing the best approach to tackle this issue given the limited budget that is available. For any issues we will be prioritising the most problematic cases first. We hope to have proposed way forward by February 2022.

If there is a problem with pigeon mess, then we can arrange for Mears to clean this.

#### **8. Who should we contact about renewable energy?**

If anyone has any queries regarding solar PV, or our wider programme to decarbonise housing stock please email [zerocarbon@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:zerocarbon@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk) We will aim to respond within 10 working days.

Tenants with air source heat pumps should contact BSW on 01444 831138.

### **9. Are we getting our homes insulated?**

A lot of our homes are already insulated and have good energy ratings; the most common type of energy rating is the EPC. Government targets have suggested that we should aim to get to at least EPC C.

In Eastbourne nearly 75% of our homes are already at EPC C, and in Lewes whilst only just under 50% of the stock is EPC C, over 90% of properties are either EPC C or EPC D which suggests we are nearly there.

Our main focus will be how to deal with hard to heat properties.

Any homes that could benefit from insulation will be part of the future decarbonisation or zero carbon works and will form part of the Energy Case Study Taskforce's conclusion in April.

If you think your home could benefit, please send an email to [zerocarbon@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk](mailto:zerocarbon@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk).

We will acknowledge receipt and log your details, but nothing will be able to be confirmed until we have the Taskforce conclusions

### **10. What is the Decarbonising our Housing project?**

The Council has declared a Climate Emergency and in response to this would like to make all its housing zero carbon by 2030.

This is very difficult problem to solve which is why we have set up dedicated taskforce to look what the solutions could be. The first conclusions of this taskforce should be ready by April 2022 and will be the basis of our programme of works for the next eight years.

The task force has specialists from universities, architectural practices, building surveyors and large and small contractors, and it will take a peer review approach to make sure:

- we get objective based answers that work for our homes.
- we work within the current 30-year asset management budget i.e., there is no new money. This work may or may not be supported by Government grants
- we do not make fuel poverty worse
- consider the greenhouse gasses produced in the life cycle of materials and products (embodied carbon) E.g., extraction, manufacturing, transport, and construction.



A key part of the assessment involves an analysis of eight case study homes, which taken together form a good representation of the whole housing stock.

The case study analysis will allow us to understand what actions can be scaled up and applied to the whole stock portfolio. The study ran from November 2021 to March 2022. Conclusions will be published in due course.

**11. Why do you need to carry out case studies and have a taskforce?**

The homes in our property portfolio, have a range of different construction types which will retain or lose heat in different ways. Understanding how this happens, will affect the improvements we might make to the home and importantly how much it might cost to install and how it will affect resident fuel bills.