

Photovoltaic panel installation on 7 Rotherham Schools

- **Local authority area:** Rotherham MBC (RMBC)
- **Stakeholders:** Schools; RMBC Environmental Team; Development Control; Nationwide Solar

Summary

A project to achieve funding and install photovoltaic panels on Rotherham Schools to reduce emissions; reduce energy costs and benefit from the Feed in Tariff.

Key learning points

- Contact all relevant departments across the Council at the earliest opportunity to make those essential contacts and inform relevant departments of any plans.
- Time taken to complete all site surveys, documentation and following the correct procedure does pay.

Background

- In October 2009 Rotherham MBC were approached by A Shade Greener Ltd to develop a partnership project to install PV systems on Rotherham Schools using funding from Phase 2 of Low Carbon Building Grants and private capital investment.
- Bids for 50% funding were submitted to BRE for 63 Rotherham schools in November 2009. In March 2010, BRE informed RMBC that 7 grant applications had been successful securing £473,000 to install PV systems. The project had to be completed by February 2011 and the grant claimed on completion by 28 February 2011.
- Detailed site surveys and system plans were carried out on all 7 schools with proposed plans for:

School	PV Size (kW)	Projected Energy Output (kWh / yr)
Anston Greenlands Primary	33	27,000
Anston Hillcrest Infants	15	12,300
Anston Hillcrest Junior	19	15,500
Thrybergh Primary	16	13,100
Rawmarsh Sandhill Primary	26	21,300

Rockingham Primary	33	27,000
Greasbrough Junior & Infant	33	27,000

Method

- Development Control was contacted as soon as the designs were complete with outline plans of the project, and a meeting was requested to assess what was required for planning.
- There was an indication that an application would be straightforward and would not have to go to Members. None of the schools are listed or in a conservation area and the use of renewable energy is encouraged from a planning aspect.
- A detailed plan and proposed installation programme was sent to Development Control prior to submitting a planning application so that any potential issues could be addressed.
- A report requesting authority for the project was submitted to Corporate Management Team and Cabinet with final sign off in October 2010 and lease agreement signed in November 2010 with installation commencing in December.
- A delay in the project was caused following:
 - Government changes to the Feed in Tariff (FITS) and obtaining confirmation from DECC that the project could use Low Carbon Building Grant funding and claim FITS.
 - Checking, amending and signing lease agreements and getting to a point, both legal and financial, that both parties found acceptable.
- Notification from Development Control confirmed that Part 32 of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (Amendment) (England) Order 2010 states that development of this type of project would be permitted development unless:
 - It is placed within 5 m of curtilage of the boundary of the premises;
 - or if the school is listed or within a conservation area.

Therefore it would not require planning permission so long as the materials used have a similar external appearance to those used in the building.
- The installation programme progressed through December to February and was delayed on a number of occasions due to adverse weather. Installation continued through weekends and up to 11 p.m. where feasible. The programme was completed, fully commissioned and certified on 24 February 2011. The final claim for Low Carbon Building Grant Funding was driven down to Watford by A Shade Greener Director and handed in on 26 February 2011, two days before the cut off.
- Early contact with Development Control; Building Control; RMBC Surveyors; structural engineers; property team and legal team ensured that any points of contact had already been made and problems could be solved in realistic timescales.
- RMBC are now progressing with a Schools PV installation programme on 54 schools and the lessons learnt during this initial project are invaluable.

Result - Key outcomes and impact

- Installation of large photovoltaic systems on 7 Rotherham schools reducing emissions; reducing utility costs; providing an annual income for schools through 10% of the FITS payments.
- Positive PR for the schools featured in local and regional news.
- Confidence for RMBC to continue installing PV systems and the experience of dealing with lease agreement etc. is invaluable.

Key contact

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