

Save money and be more green – without any costs or hassle

Imagine if you could save your business or organisation thousands of pounds each year and boost its green credentials, all without any cost or hassle.

West Suffolk Solar for Business launched its first Rent a Roof scheme last summer. Since then the council scheme has helped 16 businesses and organisations save up to 25 per cent of the costs of their daytime electricity.

Businesses in industrial units in Brandon, Bury St Edmunds, Haverhill and Mildenhall, have all benefitted from the scheme as has a number of community organisations and sports clubs.

The scheme works by organisations signing up to rent their roof to the council. The council then pays for the installation of up to 50 kilowatt peak (kWp) of solar panels to be installed. The business then benefits from buying the electricity generated at a rate cheaper than its current energy supplier.

So far 16 sites are signed up to the scheme with a combined annual electricity saving of £16,000.

Cllr Lance Stanbury Forest Heath District Council's Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth said: "Our Rent a Roof scheme is beneficial to both businesses, the environment and our council tax payers. By the council renting roofs of local businesses on which to install solar panels, the businesses benefit from buying cheaper electricity generated from the council's equipment, the council benefits through selling the energy which covers the costs and helps support services and simultaneously the environment benefits from the green energy produced. This is a superb demonstration of how this local authority is working with local business to help cut their costs, boost the economy and save tax payers money at the same time."

Cllr Alaric Pugh, St Edmundsbury Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Planning and Growth said: "Our team has an excellent track record in solar installation, while, as a council, we have a vested interest in the success of the local economy. The roof over your businesses or community organisation may be the asset you never realised that you had. At the very least, this will help you save hundreds if not thousands of pounds a year as well as playing a collective part in helping the environment while opening the door to other free, independent advice to help you make further carbon cuts and savings."

In Bury St Edmunds, the Risbygate Sports Club, whose facilities include four full size indoor bowls rinks, and six outdoor, floodlit tennis courts, squash courts among many other sports, social and meeting facilities, have been amongst the first to benefit from the scheme.

Club President Kelvin Morton said: "The club is run by its members and the executive committee keeps a close eye on energy bills. We spotted this scheme

in the papers and saw the potential. Sound planning has helped the club operate for over a hundred years and this scheme doesn't just give us cheaper energy, it gives us certainty on cost."

Pat Lewis, General Manager said: "Within five weeks of enquiring we knew that we had been accepted and within five months we were generating. The exercise caused a minimum of disruption and has no maintenance impact. We expect to our electricity bills to be 5 per cent lower this year."

In Haverhill Ultra Precision Products in Homefield Road, contacted the council about installing Solar Panel on the roof of its manufacturing premises last autumn. In December 2015 174kW of solar panels were installed and are now producing renewable energy.

Company director Geoff Quick from Ultra Precision said: "It is great to utilise our large roof space for the generation of electricity, saving us several thousand pounds each year, and offsetting any future electricity price increase. We are always looking for ways to improve our environmental credentials and reduce energy costs and this scheme has achieved both aims."

In Mildenhall, Steve Cooper of Cooper's Garage was quick to spot the potential of the new scheme.

Mr Cooper said: "After moving into our new premises in Hampstead Avenue, Mildenhall, we were soon approached by the council about the possibility of having solar panels installed on the roof. My main concern was to limit any disruption during the installation but the contractors were only on site for three days and the disruption was minimal. We are now saving 30% on our daytime electricity rate and recommend that other businesses consider this opportunity."

In Brandon, The Brandon Test Centre is saving money after signing up to the Rent a Roof scheme.

Richard Restarick from Brandon Test Centre said: "We are now benefitting from 27KW of solar electricity following our successful engagement with Forest Heath District Council in 2015. The installation process was quick and easy with zero disruption to the working environment. Under the West Suffolk solar for business scheme we are now saving at least £500 per year without making any financial outlay. I would recommend this to any business – it is simple, effective, and it is better for both the environment and the pocket."