

Solar programmes on school buildings

The DBF, as site trustee, are very happy to consider the addition of solar panels to our buildings. We are very supportive of MATs or schools buying their panels outright and of community energy schemes. However, we will not give permission for any commercial rent-a-roof scheme. If your site is owned by local trustees, they will need to give their consent and we are happy to advise them if that would be helpful.

Trusts

Our expectations from trusts seeking our permission to install solar panels are:

- That they have taken a formal trust board resolution to install solar panels or to work with a Community Energy Company to achieve greener energy across their estate.
- That they have undertaken due diligence and can provide evidence that the supplier chosen provides the best value for the schools in your trust.
- That they have commissioned independent structural surveys in each Church school under consideration to confirm that the roof can take the weight of the panels and is in sufficiently good condition. This independent survey must be done independent of the company you plan to work with.

Timeline

- Please let us know you are planning to install solar panels as soon as possible, and whether you are intending to purchase them outright or work with a community energy company.
- Please provide the requested evidence as soon as possible. Once that is received, we will write to you confirming we are happy for you to continue to place solar panels on your roof (if you are buying outright) or to sign contracts (if you are working with a community energy company).
- We have a regular scheduled meeting with our solicitor during the first week of the month. If relevant, we will add the contracts provided by your community energy company to that agenda as soon as we receive them. Please be aware that we have limited time with our solicitor and will process them as quickly as we can. Once she has approved them for signature, they will go to the person in the diocese who arranges signing and sealing of documents.
- Work should not commence until you have received a written agreement, or the contracts are signed, unless you have written confirmation we are happy for you to proceed.

Schools

Prior to requesting our permission to install solar panels we expect the school to:

- Have taken a formal governing body resolution to install solar panels
- Have undertaken due diligence and can provide evidence that the supplier you are planning to use provides the best value for the school. This should include considering at least three options.
- Have an independent structural survey to confirm that your roof can take the weight of the panels (independent of the company you plan to work with).
- If you are a school within a MAT, your MAT should have indicated they are happy for you to undertake this work, and that they are happy to maintain the solar panels over their life.

Questions/points to consider before submitting a proposal to us

- What commitment is required from the school/trustees?
- What exactly, both financially and non-financially, will the school be getting in return?
- Does anyone apart from the DBF own part of the site and/or access or cabling routes affected by the proposed installation? (This could be who should own them if they are part of an outstanding transfer between the Local Authority and Trustees.)
- The lease must be contracted out under the 1954 Landlord and Tenant Act to ensure there is no security of tenure.
- What warranties are being offered by the installer?
- A Charities Act Report by a qualified surveyor will be required if a lease is granted as it is viewed as a disposal of trust land. This will be granted if it can be shown it is in the interest of the foundation to grant it.
- Have planning/listed building/conservation area consent and building regulations consent (as necessary) been applied for/obtained?
- Are there any break clauses in the documentation? At a minimum the lease should be determinable if the school closes, or in the event that remodelling or redevelopment means the roof slope is no longer available.
- What are the penalty clauses and in what circumstance would they be enforced?
- Is there a minimum exclusivity period?
- We will not agree to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week access. Access should be at a time when pupils are not in the school unless there is an emergency and should be at the discretion of the HT/DSL.
- The school should ensure there is transparency within the process, particularly if any person connected to the school is providing the service.

Updated May 2023