

## Launch of the third Solar Together scheme in Wiltshire and Swindon

### Briefing Note No. 24-14

**Service:** Climate Team

**Further Enquiries to:** Lynn.Trigwell@wiltshire.gov.uk

**Date Prepared:** 14 June 2024

Wiltshire Council and Swindon Borough Council are working with iChoosr, independent experts in group-buying, to launch a third Solar Together scheme, following the success of previous two schemes in 2022 and 2023. The Solar Together scheme offers a cost-effective way for residents and businesses to purchase solar panel and battery storage installation.

#### **What is the Solar Together scheme?**

Solar Together operates on a group-buying approach, with the core principle that coming together as a group provides enhanced buying power and allows the approved providers to offer a better price than individual homeowners might get from entering the market alone.

The scheme gives households and businesses the opportunity to save on energy bills and generate their own electricity by purchasing high-quality solar panels and battery storage at a competitive price.

The prospect of choosing an installer and making the change to renewable energy can be daunting, but Solar Together makes the switch to clean energy as hassle-free as possible. The scheme supports people every step of the way, providing clear and objective information that people can trust, so that they can make a well-informed decision and receive expert guidance throughout the process.

The initiative offers solar panels (also known as solar PV) with optional battery storage and electric vehicle (EV) charge points. It also offers battery storage installation for residents who have already invested in solar panels and are looking to maximise how much of their self-generated energy they can use at home and become less dependent on electricity suppliers.

The cost-of-living crisis continues to be particularly challenging, and this scheme is one of the ways in which households can make long-term savings by generating their own renewable energy, whilst also helping our ambition to reach net zero carbon emissions across the county.

#### **Relevance to the council's business plan**

By reducing carbon emissions and stimulating the green economy, this scheme will support the following business plan missions and guiding themes:

- **Sustainable environment:** We are on the path to carbon neutral (net zero). We lead the way in how councils and counties mitigate the climate challenges ahead and assist the county to have a smaller carbon footprint.
- **Thriving economy:** Our local economy thrives and is supported by a skilled workforce.

## Who is eligible and when can they register?

To register for the scheme, residents must either own their own house or have permission from the landlord to install solar panels. Small and medium-sized enterprises (non-domestic) and Commonhold Associations meeting this requirement can also participate.

The scheme is now open for registrations in Wiltshire and Swindon, people have until 9 August 2024 to register. People who are interested can register for free, and, following a competitive bidding process managed by Solar Together, will then be sent their recommended provider and costs, with no obligation to proceed with the installation.

iChoosr will send out a direct mail letter from the week of 17 June to a selection of properties in Wiltshire that are likely to be eligible for the scheme, to give them all the information they need to consider participating should they wish to. The scheme will be promoted using all the available council communication channels, including social media, press releases, newsletter articles and posters at public facing council buildings. There will be no selling by phone or doorstepping of residents.

## How does the scheme work?

- 1. Register without obligation from 17 June:** in Wiltshire via [Solar Together Wiltshire](#) or in Swindon via [Solar Together Swindon](#)
- 2. Auction:** Solar Together's approved solar installers will bid for the work in a reverse 'auction'. The most competitive offer, from these pre-vetted installers, wins the auction.
- 3. Personal recommendation:** Individuals will be emailed a personal recommendation for their home based on the details they provided during registration. This will include the costs and specifications for a complete solar panel installation.
- 4. The decision:** the decision is then up to individuals as to whether they want to accept or decline their personal recommendation. There is no obligation to continue and they will have four weeks to decide. If they choose to go ahead and accept with Solar Together, a £150 deposit is required, which is conditionally refundable.
- 5. Installation:** if they accept, the winning installer will contact them to survey their roof and set an installation date. All installations are planned to be completed six months after accepting.

## How successful was the first Solar Together scheme in Wiltshire?

The previous schemes in 2022 and 2023 have delivered 1,110 installations, totalling more than 10,660 solar panels and resulting in over £11 million invested by residents into the green economy. All of the schemes combined are also estimated to lead to a reduction of 22,000 tonnes of CO2 over the 25-year guaranteed lifetime of the solar panels installed.

## What can you do to help?

Our Wiltshire Climate Strategy is very clear that as a county we need to reduce the energy we use as well as using low carbon forms of energy. Within the strategy we aimed to encourage installation of renewables through group buy schemes and we're pleased to offer this opportunity to residents to consider.

If you are contacted by residents who want more information about this, people can visit [www.solartogether.co.uk/wiltshire](http://www.solartogether.co.uk/wiltshire), email [wiltshire@solartogether.co.uk](mailto:wiltshire@solartogether.co.uk) or call 0800 0488113. iChoosr are responsible for managing and rolling out the scheme and all enquiries about it will be going via them.

We would welcome and encourage you to share any council communications, such as social media posts and press releases, with your contacts and the local community to help spread the word about the scheme.

For those residents not eligible for this particular scheme, but who still want ideas on lowering their carbon footprint or information on how to access support or grants for energy efficiency in their homes, then there's more information available at [www.wiltshire.gov.uk/climate-change-individual](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/climate-change-individual).

If you have any questions or queries, please contact [climate@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:climate@wiltshire.gov.uk).

### **More about Solar Together and iChoosr**

The Solar Together scheme has been running successfully across the UK for six years and, to date, has completed over 33,000 installations with 10-25% savings for individuals against the market average. More information can be found at: <https://solartogether.co.uk/>.

iChoosr are the independent experts in group-buying who facilitate the scheme locally. iChoosr was founded in 2008 and is privately owned by two co-founders. Before it entered the UK energy market in 2012 it had focused on collective schemes in the Netherlands and Belgium where it works with community leaders helping households to select energy and solar power suppliers. As in the UK, its operations continue to grow across Europe, North America and Japan.

iChoosr has a strong track record of delivering group purchase schemes for local authorities. It has worked with 160 UK local authorities on its collective energy switching schemes. More information can be found at [www.ichoosr.co.uk](http://www.ichoosr.co.uk).