

Interest in solar energy hots up due to scheme

The installer of a giant solar panel system at the Glastonbury Festival site has had a flood of inquiries since the new Clean Energy Cashback scheme was announced a fortnight ago.

North Somerset installer Solarsense is fitting the UK's largest privately-owned solar electricity system at Michael Eavis's Worthy Farm later this year.

Commercial director Kerry Burns said: "We're seeing a

rush of business. Website traffic has gone through the roof.

"People have been attracted by the guaranteed rate of returns - and the payback levels were higher than anticipated."

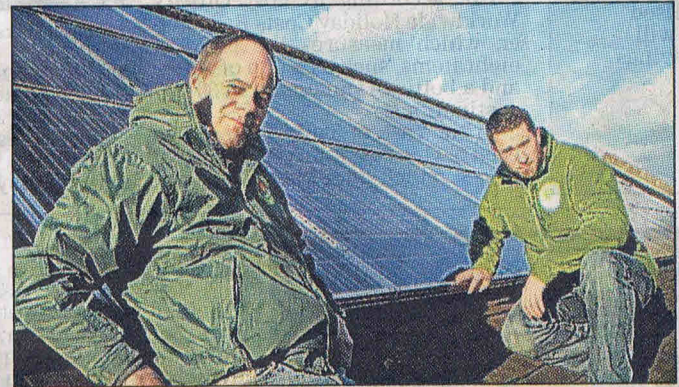
The Clean Energy Cashback scheme means electricity suppliers will pay people who generate power with solar panels at home 41.3 pence for every unit of energy. The payment is 34.5p per unit

for small-scale wind turbines.

The payments are guaranteed for 25 years and will rise with inflation.

The cashback levels have been set to guarantee a rate of return of between seven and ten per cent for those who invest in small-scale renewable energy.

But because of the rising price of electricity, the savings from self-generating power could be even greater than predicted.



Energy saver: Steve Barrett and Kerry Burns of Solarsense

Branson gives energy advice

A group of business leaders has urged the Government to ramp up the UK's renewable energy resources because of predicted oil shortages in the coming decade.

The UK risks being hit by painful hikes in the cost of food, heating and travel because it is unprepared for surging oil prices, Sir Richard Branson and other business leaders have warned.

Their report, entitled *The Oil Crunch - A Wake-Up Call For The UK economy*, warns



Wake-up call: Richard Branson is among those calling for more renewable energy resources

that the world is running out of oil and predicts shortages and price spikes as soon as 2015.

It said the challenges facing the UK would exceed those presented by the financial crisis and said the poorest in society were most vulnerable to potentially significant increases.

High hopes for carbon-saving aircraft project

The West's top engineers are working on a project to make flying greener.

Engineers from the Universities of Bath and Bristol and the aerospace industry are collaborating on £1.4 million project to investigate new ways of using composite materials for wing panels in aircraft.

Aeroplanes built with composite material - made of carbon fibres - use less fuel, and therefore emit less greenhouse gas, because they are lighter.

The more composite that is used in an aircraft, the lower its carbon footprint will be.

The project is funded by the Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) and aircraft manufacturers Airbus and GKN.

Dr Richard Butler, leading the University of Bath team, said: "This project could really make a difference in reducing the environmental impact of air travel."

The Bath team will be investigating different designs for the structures of wing panels.

Professor Paul Weaver, from the Department of Aerospace Engineering and the Advanced Composites

Centre for Innovation and Science (ACCIS), is leading the University of Bristol team, which will focus on the development and manufacture of the new carbon fibre materials.

Both teams will be using mathematical modelling techniques.

They said the presence of GKN, as a supplier of major wing components, creates a strong link with the manufacturing industry.

"This exciting programme will help ensure that the UK is at the forefront of aircraft structures technology," said Professor Weaver.

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