

Solar power mushrooms in Britain

Solar power in Britain over the past few years has mushroomed, especially during the six weeks before December 12th 2011. This is when the British government tried to close a gap in a solar power scheme the previous government created. The reason 'it seems' is that the deal was too good to be true! Homeowners who installed solar panels could receive a tariff rate of 43.3p per kilowatt-hour with returns predicted at 18% per annum on one initial investment over 25 years. In October 2011 the British government announced it would reduce this figure to 21p from December 12th. This was challenged by the Friends of the Earth in court. On January 25th the Court of Appeal released its verdict on the government's appeal. The judges agreed it was unlawful to change the feed in rate to 21p before March 3rd 2012. The British government immediately launched an appeal but this was immediately rejected. Homeowners have until March 3rd to get a completed system registered at the 43.3p receivable tariff rate.

Demand has been huge! Thousands of homeowners are now ordering the panels, which generate electricity for them for free and supply the national grid. Different schemes are offered by different companies. For example, you might have to pay out £14,000 to get 16 panels installed on your roof. But you could see a cheque arrive on your doormat for £500 after three months. Not bad, eh? Other schemes offered include free installation. They offer homeowners free electricity but the company installing it get the feed-in tariffs. It thus depends on your budget what scheme is good for you. Either way it seems to be a win, win situation for homeowners in Britain. The schemes offer everyone a much reduced electricity bill, which considering the price of electricity is something worth thinking about. An added bonus is - if you have an old fashioned meter it is even better, as the meter goes backwards during the day when the sun is out so when you come home in the evening and start using electricity you simply use the energy that has been created! Homeowners with digital meters unfortunately don't get this extra benefit as they simply stand still or go forward! In these days of green energy it's worth thinking about a solar installation. **(See notes on page 4)**

(See LINKS on page 8 for alternative argument on this article!)

Category: Business / Technology / Solar energy
Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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EXERCISES

1. Solar energy: Think of three things you know about solar energy? Go round the room swapping details with others.

2. Dictation: The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - you need to do some work!

3. Reading: The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

4. Vocabulary: Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

5. The article: Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?

6. Geography: Britain: What countries make up Britain (Great Britain)? Where is it in the world? Draw a map on the board then **look on Google maps** to help you.

7. Solar energy: In pairs think of five things about solar energy. Then add five sources of energy. Write them below. Discuss together. What are your conclusions?

Solar energy	Sources of energy
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

8. Let's roleplay 1: In pairs/groups. One of you is the interviewer. The others are one of the following people. You are in the *Solar FM* radio studio. Today's interview is about: *Solar energy*.

1	Someone wanting solar energy
2	A homeowner with solar energy
3	A solar energy expert
4	A government spokesperson

The teacher will choose some pairs to roleplay their interview in front of the class.

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9. **Let's think!** In pairs. On the board write as many words as you can to do with **Solar energy**. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

10. **Let's roleplay 2:** In pairs. You are in a bar in a small village in England. Start a conversation about solar energy. *5-minutes*.

11. **Let's do 'The Article Quiz':** Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) How much is the tariff rate offered until March 3rd 2012?
- 2) What will be the rate after March 3rd 2012?
- 3) How much might you pay for the solar panels?
- 4) What is a cheque?
- 5) What is solar power?

Student B

- 1) What did the British government do?
- 2) What is an added bonus?
- 3) What is worth thinking about?
- 4) What could arrive on your doorstep?
- 5) What are the predicted returns?

12. **Solar energy:** Think of three advantages and three disadvantages of solar power in the UK. Write them below. Discuss together with your partner.

Advantages	Disadvantages
1	1
2	2
3	3

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

13. **Presentation:** In pairs, groups or individually: Prepare in class or at home a two minute presentation on: **Solar energy**. Stand at the front of the class to give your presentation to the class. The class can vote on the best presentation. Class – After the presentations go through the good and weak points on each presentation. Learn from the results.

14. **Business case:** In pairs, prepare a brief business case for installing solar energy panels on the roof of your *house/company*. Explain some challenges you might face.

15. **Let's write an e-mail:** Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **Solar energy**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

16. **Sentence starters:** Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) Solar energy _____
- b) Solar panels _____
- c) Energy _____

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Do you use solar energy in your house?
- 3) Do you think more people will convert to solar energy?
- 4) Why is solar energy so important these days?
- 5) How do you see solar energy developing?
- 6) What advice would you give to anyone considering solar energy?
- 7) Would you like solar panels on your roof? Explain.
- 8) What challenges will there be for companies wanting solar power?
- 9) Does Europe really need solar power? Explain.
- 10) What type of energy use do you use? Why?

Student B questions

- 1) What does the last sentence in the article mean? (In these days of green energy it's worth thinking about a solar installation.)
- 2) Have you learnt anything in today's English lesson?
- 3) Why is electricity so expensive?
- 4) Should electricity companies reduce their charges?
- 5) What is wrong with using fossil fuels as power?
- 6) What happens when the sun goes in when using solar power?
- 7) Would you like to convert to solar power?
- 8) Is solar power the right way forward in energy creation?
- 9) What risks are there with using solar power?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

Please note: This lesson is talking about the type of solar power that is known as **solar PV (i.e. photo-voltaic)**. The **other** sort of solar power is **solar thermal (i.e. the older water heating technology)**

Please note: The scheme mentioned on page 1 says 'the schemes offer everyone a much reduced electricity bill'. I have been asked to point out that this isn't strictly true. The schemes force non-participants to have higher bills. This scheme, devised by the current UK Labour leader, Ed Milliband, really does make the rich richer directly at the expense of those who haven't got the ability to participate but have an electricity bill to pay.

SPEAKING

Let's discuss! Solar power

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

20 things about solar power – discuss together
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The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING:

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Solar power mushrooms in Britain

Solar power in Britain over the past few years has (8)____, especially during the six weeks before December 12th 2011. This is when the British government tried to close a (1)____ in a solar power scheme the previous government created. The reason 'it seems' is that the (2)____ was too good to be true! (3)____ who installed solar panels could receive a tariff rate of 43.3p per kilowatt-hour with returns predicted at 18% per (7)____ on one initial investment over 25 years. In October 2011 the British government announced it would (4)____ this figure to 21p from December 12th. This was challenged by the Friends of the Earth in court. On January 25th the Court of Appeal released its (5)____ on the government's appeal. The judges agreed it was unlawful to change the feed in rate to 21p before March 3rd 2012. The British government immediately launched an appeal but this was immediately rejected. Homeowners have until March 3rd to get a completed system registered at the 43.3p receivable (6)____ rate.

(1)____ has been huge! Thousands of homeowners are now ordering the panels, which (2)____ electricity for them for free and supply the national (3)____. Different schemes are offered by different companies. For example, you might have to pay out £14,000 to get 16 panels installed on your roof. But you could see a (4)____ arrive on your doormat for £500 after three months. Not bad, eh? Other (5)____ offered include free (6)____. They offer homeowners free (7)____ but the company installing it get the feed-in tariffs. It thus depends on your (8)____ what scheme is good for you. Either way it seems to be a win, win situation for homeowners in Britain. The schemes offer everyone a much reduced electricity bill, which considering the price of electricity is something worth thinking about.

homeowners

verdict

tariff

reduce

mushroomed

annum

gap

deal

grid

cheque

demand

generate

schemes

electricity

installation

budget

GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Solar power mushrooms in Britain

Solar power in Britain over _____ has mushroomed, especially during the six weeks before December 12th 2011. This is when the British government tried to close a gap in a solar power scheme the _____ created. The reason 'it seems' is that the deal was too good to be true! Homeowners who installed solar panels _____ rate of 43.3p per kilowatt-hour with returns predicted at 18% per annum on one initial investment over 25 years. In October 2011 the British government announced it would _____ to 21p from December 12th. This was challenged by the Friends of the Earth in court. On January 25th the Court of Appeal released its verdict on the government's appeal. The _____ unlawful to change the feed in rate to 21p before March 3rd 2012. The British government immediately launched an appeal but this was immediately rejected. Homeowners have until March 3rd to get a completed system registered at the 43.3p receivable tariff rate.

_____! Thousands of homeowners are now ordering the panels, which generate electricity _____ and supply the national grid. Different schemes are offered by different companies. _____ might have to pay out £14,000 to get 16 panels installed on your roof. _____ cheque arrive on your doormat for £500 after three months. Not bad, eh? Other schemes offered include free installation. They offer homeowners free electricity but the company installing it get the feed-in tariffs. It thus depends on your budget what scheme is good for you. Either way it seems to be a win, win situation for _____. The schemes offer everyone a much reduced electricity bill, which considering the price of electricity is something _____.

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

Solar power mushrooms in Britain

Solar power in Britain over the past few years has mushroomed, especially during the six weeks before December 12th 2011. This is (1)___ the British government tried to close a gap in a solar power scheme the previous government created. The reason 'it seems' is (2)___ the deal was too good to be true! Homeowners who installed solar panels (3)___ receive a tariff rate of 43.3p per kilowatt-hour (4)___ returns predicted at 18% per annum on one initial investment over 25 years. In October 2011 the British government announced it (5)___ reduce this figure to 21p (6)___ December 12th. (7)___ was challenged by the Friends of the Earth in court. On January 25th the Court of Appeal released its verdict on the government's appeal. The judges agreed it was unlawful to change the feed in rate to 21p before March 3rd 2012. The British government immediately launched an appeal (8)___ this was immediately rejected. Homeowners have until March 3rd to get a completed system registered at the 43.3p receivable tariff rate.

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Demand has been huge! Thousands (1)___ homeowners are now ordering the panels, which generate electricity for them for free (2)___ supply the national grid. Different schemes are offered by different companies. For example, you might have to pay out £14,000 to get 16 panels installed on your roof. But (3)___ could see a cheque arrive on your doormat for £500 after three months. Not bad, eh? Other schemes offered include free installation. They offer homeowners free electricity (4)___ the company installing it get the feed-in tariffs. (5)___ thus depends (6)___ your budget what scheme is good (7)___ you. Either way it seems to be a win, win situation for homeowners in Britain. The schemes offer everyone a much reduced electricity bill, which considering (8)___ price of electricity is something worth thinking about.

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	rate	11	roof
2	scheme	12	until
3	tariff	13	installation
4	thus	14	homeowners
5	unfortunately	15	government
6	different	16	previous
7	generate	17	challenged
8	investment	18	verdict
9	solar power	19	immediately
10	mushroomed	20	rejected

LINKS

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Solar_power_in_the_United_Kingdom

<http://www.solaressence.co.uk/about-us/about-us.html>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/solarpower>

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/blog/2012/feb/03/feed-in-tariffs-solar-power> (see page 1 article for comparison)

ANSWERS

GAP FILL: Solar power mushrooms in Britain: Solar power in Britain over the past few years has **mushroomed**, especially during the six weeks before December 12th 2011. This is when the British government tried to close a **gap** in a solar power scheme the previous government created. The reason 'it seems' is that the **deal** was too good to be true! **Homeowners** who installed solar panels could receive a tariff rate of 43.3p per kilowatt-hour with returns predicted at 18% per **annum** on one initial investment over 25 years. In October 2011 the British government announced it would **reduce** this figure to 21p from December 12th. This was challenged by the Friends of the Earth in court. On January 25th the Court of Appeal released its **verdict** on the government's appeal. The judges agreed it was unlawful to change the feed in rate to 21p before March 3rd 2012. The British government immediately launched an appeal but this was immediately rejected. Homeowners have until March 3rd to get a completed system registered at the 43.3p receivable **tariff** rate.

Demand has been huge! Thousands of homeowners are now ordering the panels, which **generate** electricity for them for free (or much reduced) and supply the national **grid**. Different schemes are offered by different companies. For example, you might have to pay out £14,000 to get 16 panels installed on your roof. But you could see a **cheque** arrive on your doormat for £500 after three months. Not bad, eh? Other **schemes** offered include free **installation**. They offer homeowners free **electricity** but the company installing it get the feed-in tariffs. It thus depends on your **budget** what scheme is good for you. Either way it seems to be a win, win situation for homeowners in Britain. The schemes offer everyone a much reduced electricity bill, which considering the price of electricity is something worth thinking about. (V5)

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