

Key Questions to Ask Your ‘Free’ Provider of Photovoltaic Panels

Sustainability West Midlands

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Report information

Title: Key Questions to Ask Your 'Free' Provider of Photovoltaic Panels

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About Sustainability West Midlands

We are the sustainability adviser for the leaders of the West Midlands. We are also the sustainability champion body for the West Midlands, designated by government. We are a not-for-profit company that works with our members in the business, public and voluntary sectors. Our Board is private sector led and has cross-sector representation; they are supporting by our team of staff and associates.

Our vision is that by 2020 businesses and communities are thriving in a West Midlands that is environmentally sustainable and socially just. By 2012 our leaders are clear on what this looks like, have set milestones, and their organisations are making strong progress.

Our role is to act as a catalyst for change through our advice to leaders, to develop practical solutions with our members and share success through our communications.

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Introduction

Many SWM members from communities, business and local authorities have been approached and offered 'free' photovoltaic panels. We asked our associates Matthew Rhodes and Jon Morris and authors of our recent retrofit and finance report for their advice on the key questions to help you make informed decisions about the provider's offer.

Key Questions to Ask Your 'Free' Provider of Photovoltaic Panels

1. What is the expertise and track record of the developer? How much experience do they have in each of the following and how will they manage it for your project?

- a. Securing finance
- b. Solar technology
- c. Project management including site selection and surveying
- d. Local procurement
- e. Training and developing local supply chains
- f. Ongoing operations and maintenance over 25 years
- g. Managing tenants and/or local community relations
- h. Housing projects

2. How are risks shared and managed in the project for each of the following?

- a. Project development and planning risk
- b. Project delivery
- c. Ongoing operations and maintenance
- d. Security and insurances
- e. Product warranties
- f. Energy price fluctuations/market and regulatory risks

3. Where does the finance come from?

- a. Is it directly from the project developer or lent from other funds?
- b. What contribution is required from the community/property owners?

4. Who owns what?

- a. Do the developers plan to sell the project on once it is operational?
- b. What happens if the underlying properties are sold?
- c. What happens if individual systems get broken, vandalised or otherwise stop working?

5. What are the financials and assumptions?

- a. What are the income streams and who gets what and why?
- b. Is there scope to use benefits from PV to support other low carbon work locally?

6. Why are the providers better than other potential offers in your area led by your local authority or registered social landlord?