

Progress in Practice

Bronllys Hospital Solar Energy Project

Bronllys Hospital is the first UK hospital to install solar panels on their roof. This will help to reduce pollution and carbon dioxide emissions, helping to tackle climate change, and save the hospital money.

Summary

Bronllys Hospital in Powys, Wales, has installed 485 photovoltaic (solar) panels on their roof. By developing this renewable energy source, Bronllys Hospital has reduced its use of fossil fuels and expects to displace 19.5 tonnes of carbon dioxide per year. It is estimated that solar power will cover 5% of the energy needs of the hospital. This reduction in energy bills means that resources can be re-invested into energy efficiency, ensuring ongoing benefits for the hospital itself and the wider community. Calculations show that on a sunny day the hospital can run on the energy generated solely by the solar panels.

When installing the panels, local expertise and traders were used, stimulating the local skills base and feeding back into the local economy.

One of the barriers that Bronllys Hospital has overcome is in relation to public awareness. Initially, local people were unconvinced that solar power would actually work; however, as a result of this initiative, several domestic properties have had solar panels installed themselves.

To overcome the initial cost of installing photovoltaic (PV) panels, Bronllys Hospital worked with the Mid Wales Energy Agency and the Powys Local Health Board to identify funding opportunities. Funding was received from the European Regional Development Objective 2 and the Department of Trade and Industry's Major Solar Demonstration Programme. This part of the project was co-ordinated by Mid Wales Energy Agency. Mid Wales Energy Agency and the Carbon Trust helped raise energy awareness and assisted in improving energy efficiency in the hospital which has contributed equally to reducing energy use and therefore reducing emissions and saving on fuel bills.

Links and organisations involved:

Mid Wales Energy Agency <http://www.powysenergy.org.uk/content/home.php>; Powys Local Health Board <http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites3/home.cfm?orgid=501>; The Carbon Trust <http://www.carbontrust.com/>; Dept of Trade and Industry <http://www.dti.gov.uk/>; Bronllys Hospital <http://www2.netdoctor.co.uk/directory/hospitals/sh.asp?PID=503>

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Key learning points:

- The NHS can lead by example. Demonstrating solar power as a viable option can influence the local population to follow suit
- Always encourage those involved to work directly with each other. This brings clarity to all parties involved, and makes a complex situation more 'human' and manageable
- Innovative projects help to generate local jobs and skills

David Masson, Chief Estates and Works Manager of Powys Local Health Board, commented:

"We are very pleased to be pioneering renewable energy for the public health sector; it complements work in energy efficiency and we look forward to the PV array generating clean electricity."