

SOLAR THERMAL FAQs

Got more questions about Solar Thermal? You should find all the answers below. And if you can't, give our Green Energy Team a call on 0800 404 7434*. They'll fill in the gaps.

How does Solar Thermal water heating work?

Flat or evacuated tube solar panels absorb the heat from the sun. A liquid medium carries this heat to a water tank, where a heat exchanger transfers the heat energy to the domestic hot water supply. The cooled fluid then returns to the solar panel(s), to repeat the cycle. Your boiler, which will be connected to the same cylinder, will provide backup water heating when required.

Where is the best place to install Solar Thermal panels?

The solar tubes can be sited on pitched roofs facing between south east and south west. Individual tubes can be rotated to best catch the sun's rays. It is possible to position the panels on flat roofs using a special 'A' frame structure – this option is not included as part of our installation package. If this is required, it could cost you more.

What's the difference between flat plate and evacuated tube panels?

Tube panels represent a greater initial investment but they offer more flexibility in terms of position and individual tubes are more easily transferred to the roof. Flat panels, whilst slightly larger, have optional colour coded frames and may integrate better visually.

Can I use a combination boiler with solar panels?

We do not offer Solar Thermal panels for use with combi-boiler systems. This is due to the requirements of a hot water storage tank together with additional safety valves to prevent the risk of overheating water and to avoid the possibility of bacteria forming in the tank.

What heating system do I need with my solar panels?

A traditional boiler or electric heating system, with a separate hot water cylinder installation, is usually suitable.

Do I need to change my hot water cylinder?

Yes. A cylinder, which is specially designed with two heating coils, is provided as part of our package. This ensures that you get the maximum efficiency from the solar technology. The ability to store large amounts of water in your cylinder means you achieve greater savings. Additionally, the solar panels and the cylinder work together to ensure that the boiler is only used to heat water when there is no solar energy available.

Will I need planning permission?

Recent changes to planning rules mean that you may not have to seek a planning permission for solar systems. However, some local authorities will insist on planning permission being gained prior to installation. You will usually need planning permission if your property is:

- in a Conservation Area
- in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- a Site of Special Scientific Interest
- a Listed Building

Don't forget to call our Green Energy Team on 0800 404 7434*, so you can start generating your own energy.

*Calls may be monitored and recorded as part of our customer care programme. Calls to '0800' numbers are free from BT landlines; other network operators may charge for these calls.

