

## **Sustainable School Buildings**

### **1 The Churches commitment to sustainability**

- 1.1 The Church of England has committed to reducing its carbon emissions by 80% by 2050 (from 1990 levels). Forwarding this national agenda through to a local level, The Diocese of Exeter passed a motion in March 2007 to urge parishes and mission communities to work towards reducing their carbon footprint.
- 1.2 As a central part of all parishes and mission communities, Church of England schools have an important role to play in achieving these objectives.
- 1.3 School buildings have a considerable impact on the environment (they account for about 14% of public sector carbon emissions\*). The Diocese is committed to ensuring that the benefits of good school building design can be harnessed, whilst the negative environmental impacts are minimised.

### **2 DfE desire for sustainable schools**

- 2.1 *"The Department for Education is committed to sustainable development and believes it is important to prepare young people for the future. Our approach is based on the belief that schools perform better when they take responsibility for their own improvement. We want schools to make their own judgements on how sustainable development should be reflected in their ethos, day-to-day operations and through education for sustainable development. Those judgements should be based on sound knowledge and local needs."*
- 2.2 The DfE has published 'top tips' for sustainability in schools  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/top-tips-for-sustainability-in-schools>

### **3 What can you do to make your school buildings more sustainable?**

- 3.1 For information on how to start thinking about sustainable designs, getting the children involved in design and undertaking environmental audits at your school, see  
<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/toolsandinitiatives/sustainabledevelopment/a0070736/what-is-sustainable-development>
- 3.2 There is no new/additional funding to improve sustainability at schools. If proposed works are below £2,000 value it would have to be funded from revenue sources or donations. Works exceeding £2,000 value may be eligible for capital funding (using your DFC) with procedures and processes as for any other capital works project; please contact the Diocesan Surveyor in the first instance.

### **4 CRC Energy Efficiency Scheme (CRC)**

- 4.1 The *Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC)* is a new emissions trading scheme for large non-energy intensive commercial and public sector organisations. The government has proposed that state-funded schools will participate within the carbon reduction commitment scheme under the umbrella of their Local Authority. The emissions of each school must be covered by an allowance bought by its Local Authority.

- 4.2 Schools have a statutory duty to provide reasonable assistance and gather all data which relates to their energy use and provide this each year to their Local Authority.
- 4.3 Each LA is developing its own priorities and schemes for School to engage and participate in. Torbay Council's website is very informative at;  
<http://www.torbay.gov.uk/index/education/schools/sustainableschools.htm>

## **5 Photovoltaic Solar Panels on School Roofs**

- 5.1 The UK Government has made available funding to encourage the 'take-up' of green technologies to enable the Government to meet international carbon reduction targets. The encouragement is given by way of;
- A Generation Tariff
  - An Export Tariff
  - Lower emergency bills (by using the electricity generated at source)
- 5.2 The Government has given a 25 year fixed commitment re the Generation Tariff thereby making it a very attractive commercial investment. The Export Tariff element may change in value over the 25 year period.
- 5.3 Should Governing Bodies have sufficient capital to invest in PV Solar panels on the school roof this may prove to be a worthwhile investment (cost pay-back period typically 12 years).
- 5.4 A significant number of commercial organisations are approaching schools on a 'rent a roof' basis. The Companies own the PV panels and get the Government Generation and Export Tariffs and look to the School to provide a location of the panels for a 25 year period. The benefit to the school is they get the electricity generated by the panels. For many schools this appears a very attractive proposition. However;
- Church School buildings are in Trustee Ownership and the Trustee's approval should be obtained before any agreement is entered into.
  - The Terms and Conditions of the agreement are heavily 'weighted' in favour of the company and this will have significant implication for the school particularly in relation to;
    - How much notice the school needs to give to undertake remedial works to its roof,
    - When it can undertake such works (Schools will want to undertake works during the summer holidays but the company will not want this as this is the peak time for energy generation)
    - The cost for dismantling the PV array in order to do such works
    - Having 24 hour a day 7 day a week access to the equipment.
    - Penalties re withdrawal from the contract.
- 5.5 The 'rent a roof' model is typically structured for the installation companies to assemble a large grouping of roof spaces and then 'sell on' as an investment to another company. Typically such companies are looking to maximise the investment and be less 'user-friendly' than the original company.
- 5.6 The commitment of 25 years is a significant time period particularly if the contract is weighted towards the company rather than to the school. Governors and Headteachers must be mindful that it is likely that their successors that will have to deal with any 'fall out' that may occur and therefore they must give very careful consideration, and obtain advice from Diocesan Officers before making any decision.
- 5.7 Devon County Council has written to all schools (July 2011) advising that they are also concerned about 'rent a roof' PV Solar Installations at their schools and that written consent will be require from DCC for installation at any of their schools also.
- 5.8 If you are considering a PV Solar Installation please contact Richard Power on 01392 294952 to discuss, well before making any engagements with a sales/installation company.

## 6 Recommended further reading

- <http://www.eco-schools.org.uk/> 4 – for information on becoming part of an international eco-school community.
- [www.globalactionplan.org.uk](http://www.globalactionplan.org.uk) – for help in setting up Action Teams at your school.
- [www.carbontrust.co.uk/cut-carbon-reduce-costs/products-services/sector-advice/Pages/schools-1.aspx](http://www.carbontrust.co.uk/cut-carbon-reduce-costs/products-services/sector-advice/Pages/schools-1.aspx) - suggested measures which could allow lots of schools to use less energy, save money on their energy bills and also reduce their carbon emissions.
- <http://www.generationgreen.co.uk/school/in-your-school.aspx> - British Gas Green Initiative.