



April 2025



Great British Energy's Solar Initiative to Reduce Energy Bills for Schools and Hospitals

In a significant move towards sustainable energy and cost savings, Great British Energy has announced its first major project: the installation of rooftop solar panels on approximately 200 schools and 200 NHS sites. This initiative, part of the government's 'Plan for Change', aims to cut energy bills and reinvest savings into frontline services.

Key Highlights:

- Investment and Savings: The UK government and Great British Energy are investing £200 million in this project. Schools and NHS sites are expected to save up to £400 million over 30 years, with typical schools saving up to £25,000 annually and NHS sites up to £45,000.

- Scope and Impact: Around £80 million will fund solar panels for 200 schools, and £100 million will support nearly 200 NHS sites. The first installations are expected by the end of summer 2025.
- Community and Local Projects: An additional £12 million will support local clean energy projects, including community-led initiatives and renewable schemes in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

This initiative not only addresses the immediate financial pressures on schools and hospitals but also represents a broader commitment to clean energy and sustainability across the UK. The project aims to balance long-term sustainability with short-term financial relief for public institutions.



Urban Garden Funding Project Reaches Conclusion

As our urban garden funding project draws to a close, we are thrilled to announce the delivery of funding for several impactful initiatives that will continue to benefit our community for years to come.

Final Projects:

- Community Garden at the Salvation Army: A new community garden space will be established at the Salvation Army, providing an urban garden for residents to enjoy. This garden will serve as a hub for community activities, fostering social connections and promoting well-being.

- Composting Scheme at Our Lady of the Rosary School: We are developing a comprehensive composting scheme at Our Lady of the Rosary School. This initiative will educate students about sustainable practices and reduce waste, turning organic materials into valuable compost for the school's gardens.
- Spelthorne Community Allotment Space in Sunbury: The new Spelthorne community allotment space in Sunbury has been equipped with essential tools and equipment, thanks to our funding. This allotment will provide residents with the opportunity to grow their own produce, encouraging healthy eating and self-sufficiency.

These projects mark the culmination of our efforts to enhance urban green spaces and promote sustainability within our community. We are immensely proud of the positive impact these initiatives will have on residents, schools, and organisations.



Spelthorne Leads the Way in Shaping a Unified Climate Future for Surrey

As Surrey moves toward a new model of government under the local government reorganisation, the importance of collaboration and strategic alignment across the region has never been greater. In this time of transformation, Spelthorne's Climate Change Team has taken a proactive leadership role to ensure that climate action remains at the heart of decision-making.

On **Thursday 3rd April**, we brought together climate leads and key government stakeholders from across all the government authorities in Surrey for a **Climate Strategy Workshop Day** held in the Spelthorne Council Chamber. The event created a unique opportunity to align understanding, build momentum, and foster a shared vision for a more sustainable Surrey.

The workshop focused on three central themes:

- **Regional Priorities:** What must we collectively prioritise to ensure a resilient, low-carbon future?
- **Strategic Alignment:** How do we build a coherent and unified climate strategy across all authorities in Surrey?
- **Future Ambitions:** What bold actions can we take together to push the boundaries of what's possible?

Through open dialogue, collaborative mapping exercises, and focused group discussions, we identified shared challenges and began shaping the framework for a Surrey-wide climate strategy.

This workshop marks the beginning of a new phase of joined-up climate action in Surrey. As local government structures evolve, Spelthorne is committed to ensuring that sustainability is not sidelined but strengthened—anchored in partnership, shared learning, and collective ambition.

Stay tuned for updates on the next steps as we continue to shape a greener, more unified Surrey.



EV vs Petrol: What's the Real Cost of Driving?

The conversation around electric vehicles (EVs) often begins with one key question: *"Aren't they more expensive?"* While it's true that EVs can have a higher upfront cost than traditional petrol or diesel cars, the full picture tells a very different story.

Purchase Price: EVs Are Closing the Gap At first glance, petrol cars still tend to be cheaper to buy. For example, a typical petrol hatchback might cost around £18,000, while a comparable electric model could be closer to £24,000. However, the gap is narrowing quickly as battery technology improves and more affordable EV models enter the market. Financial incentives, tax breaks, and salary sacrifice schemes can also significantly reduce the real cost of going electric.

Running Costs: Long-Term Savings This is where EVs really pull ahead.

- **Fuel:** Charging an EV at home can cost just 7p per mile, compared to 15–20p per mile for petrol.
- **Maintenance:** EVs have fewer moving parts, meaning fewer breakdowns and lower servicing bills.
- **Tax:** EVs currently benefit from zero or reduced road tax and are exempt from clean air and congestion zone charges in many areas.

Over a typical five-year period, these savings can add up to thousands of pounds.

Battery Life and Resale Value Worries about battery life have eased in recent years. Modern EV batteries are proving durable, often lasting well beyond eight to

ten years with minimal degradation. The second-hand market for EVs is also growing, with better data on reliability and performance helping to stabilise resale values.

Charging at Home and On the Road Having a home charger installed involves some upfront cost, but support is often available through grants or schemes. Charging at home is not only more convenient but also much cheaper than public charging. Public charging infrastructure is improving rapidly, though availability still varies by region, with rural areas and flats facing greater challenges.

The Bottom Line For drivers who can charge at home and tend to cover regular mileage, EVs are now often cheaper to run than petrol cars over the course of their lifetime. As the purchase price continues to fall and charging becomes easier, EVs are becoming an increasingly practical and economical choice.

Grant Grid

Grant Name	Purpose	Amount	Deadline	Who Can Apply	Link
Veolia Environmental Trust	Community buildings, outdoor spaces, biodiversity	£10k–£75k+	3 Apr 2025	Not-for-profits, local authorities	Veolia Trust
Green Heat Network Fund	Low/zero carbon heat networks	Up to £1m	11 Apr 2025 (Round 9)	Public, private & third sector	Gov.uk GHNF
Climate Action Fund	Community climate action	Up to £1.5m	Spring 2025	Partnerships incl. local authorities	Climate Action Fund
Powering Communities Fund	Community energy and education	Up to £3,750	28 Mar 2025	With PPA from Younity	Younity

Woodland Trust Tree Packs	Free trees for schools & groups	Up to 420 trees	Aug 2025	Schools, clubs, councils etc.	Woodland Trust
Tomorrow's Climate Scientists	STEM + climate projects	Up to £3,000	30 Apr 2025 (stage 1)	Schools w/ STEM partner	Royal Society
National Lottery Heritage Fund	Heritage + sustainability	£250k–£10m	28 May 2025	Not-for-profits, partnerships	Heritage Fund
Energy Resilience Fund (Key Fund)	Retrofit buildings, energy audits	£10k–£150k	Rolling	Community businesses	Power to Change
Ernest Cook Trust	Outdoor learning for youth	£500	Until filled	Not-for-profits	Ernest Cook
Nineveh Trust	Environmental education & access	Flexible	Rolling	Charities, schools	Nineveh Trust
John Ellerman Foundation	Environmental recovery (land/water/ocean)	£10k–£50k/year (3 years)	Rolling	Charities (£100k–£10m turnover)	Ellerman Fund
Stobart Sustainability Fund	Local environmental action	Flexible	Rolling	Not-for-profits, SMEs	Stobart Fund
Sport England Movement Fund	Repair sports facilities post-storm	Up to £15k	Rolling	Not-for-profits, schools, LAs	Sport England

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