

28 June 2011

UK's first solar powered business park opens

3,000 solar panels start generating clean electricity in Oxfordshire

The UK's first solar business park has been connected to the National Grid, with 3,000 solar panels now powering Howbery Business Park in Wallingford, Oxfordshire.

The ground-mounted solar array is expected to generate over 682 MWh of clean electricity a year for the park; an engineering, environmental and water research and development centre. Howbery Business Park accommodates nearly 1,000 employees working for more than 20 organisations.

The solar installation, 748kWp in size, is one of the first large scale ground-mounted systems of its kind to be connected to the National Grid under the Government's Feed-in tariff (FIT) scheme. The installation will power over a quarter of the business park and save over 350 tonnes of CO₂ emissions a year.

Developed by HR Wallingford Ltd., based at Howbery Business Park, and Lightsource Renewable Energy; the solar installation was funded by Octopus Investments and local private investor Andrew Troup. The engineering, procurement and construction was carried by British company Solarcentury, who has built similar parks in Europe, this is its first to be built in the UK after the government introduced a solar FIT in 2010.

John Ormston, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of HR Wallingford Group, said: "Howbery Business Park is proud of its green credentials. A centre of excellence with two highly sustainable, BREEAM Excellent rated office buildings and an operational Green Travel Plan, we are committed to leading the way in renewable energy and are proud to be showcasing the UK's first solar business park. Howbery Business Park will be one of only a few business parks in the UK where occupiers are able to secure a direct electrical supply from a solar array."

Derry Newman, CEO of Solarcentury, said: "The solar at Howbery Business Park provides a glimpse of how this technology can contribute to our clean energy future, hinting at the serious role solar power can play in our energy mix. It's fantastic that such a progressive and world class R&D centre continues to lead the way, now powered by 21st Century energy. Solar is not to be underestimated; it is the fastest growing energy technology in the world, simply because it is clean, reliable and a readily available alternative to fossil fuels."

Investor Andrew Troup said: "The local community has been critically important in making this solar park a reality. It's only been possible to meet the installation deadline because of the support from Wallingford Town Council and Crowmarsh Parish Council and the cooperation and efficiency of South Oxfordshire District Council and the District Network operator, SSE. The support has been widespread"

Press Release

Paul Latham, Managing Director at Octopus Investments, said: "This site demonstrates that through the right combination of ambition, investment and execution we can make solar power a reality for property owners and investors alike."

Nick Boyle, CEO, Lightsource Renewable Energy Ltd, said: "Lightsource is proud to have delivered this flagship solar photovoltaics project providing Howbery Business Park with over 25 per cent of its electricity needs. We look forward to helping more progressive organisations source their energy in a sustainable way."

This is not the first solar development for Wallingford. The Environment Agency's regional Headquarters, Red Kite House at Howbery Business Park, is shaded and powered by solar louvers, also from Solarcentury.

There are many hundreds of solar parks now in existence across the world and together with solar on buildings, they are an increasingly common way of generating renewable power. Solarcentury and its partners are currently building two additional solar arrays of significant size, due for connection within the next month.



Leading the way

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Notes to Editors

1. Generation of 682MWh based on simulations using local irradiance levels of 911kWh per kWp. The average irradiance levels in the UK are 850kWh/ kWp (Department of Energy and Climate Change). This is the equivalent electricity consumption of 200 homes, based on average of 3,300kWh consumption per year per home (EST, DECC)

2. CO₂ emissions savings based on a conversion rate of 0.517 kg of CO₂ per kWh, using current UK grid energy mix.

3. Exact number of solar panels is 2,994

About the companies

Howbery Business Park

Howbery Business Park is a 70-acre secure, prestigious business park situated by the River Thames in Wallingford, Oxfordshire. Owned by HR Wallingford, specialists in engineering and environmental hydraulics, the Park has been designed in keeping with its surroundings encouraging the natural environment to form a creative and efficient working place.

The environmentally sensitive, yet state of the art headquarters of HR Wallingford, Kestrel House, has received the prestigious British Council for Offices (BCO), Corporate Workplace award 2011. Tenants have use of the Manor House with its meeting rooms, restaurant, catering facilities and shop. There is also Puddleducks children's nursery, and other benefits include regular sports activities within the park and access to the River Thames via the park's boathouse. Howbery Park has been granted consent for 140,500 sq ft (13,053 sq m) of open B1 office accommodation and research, which includes detailed consent for 35,683 sq ft (3,315 sq m). When complete the Park will have a total developed area of 360,000 sq ft (33,445 sq m) gross, with potential for further recycling of earlier phases.

Howbery Park actively promotes sustainable development and encourages a green working environment with its car-sharing scheme, new traffic free footpath into Wallingford and by providing tenants with a pool of bikes to transport themselves around the Park.

www.howberypark.com

Solarcentury

Solarcentury is one of Europe's fastest growing and most innovative solar photovoltaics (PV) companies. It is the UK's most experienced PV company. The private company was founded by Chairman Jeremy Leggett in 1998. Solarcentury, now over 100 staff, continues to grow rapidly with staff levels expected to rise by another 30% in 2010/11 to meet increasing demand for products and services in the UK and throughout the EU. The company is led by CEO Derry Newman, ex Managing Director Sony UK, and based in London, with staff in the UK, France and Italy.

Since 1998, Solarcentury has managed the installation of well over 1000 solar PV turnkey projects. Solarcentury has helped over 9,000 homes go solar through its supply of systems to housebuilders and through its network of regional associate installers. It is the founding company of the schools initiative Solar4Schools. In 2008 & 2010, Solarcentury was named the UK's Fastest Growing Renewable Energy Company by UK's Sunday Times Tech Track 100. In April 2011 it was awarded a Queens Award for Enterprise for solar innovation. www.solarcentury.co.uk

Octopus Investments

Octopus Investments, founded in 2000, is a leading investment specialist. It offers innovative core and satellite investment solutions to UK investors, and a wide range of funding options for exceptional companies. Octopus' core investments include a discretionary management service, multi-manager multi-asset OEICs, and single manager OEICs. These are complemented by its range of satellite solutions, including venture capital trusts, enterprise investment schemes and inheritance tax products. Each product has been designed to solve specific problems faced by financial advisers and their clients.

Octopus' funding solutions cover the entire capital structure, from equity through mezzanine to senior debt, and it seeks out outstanding management teams in unlisted companies with whom we can partner. Octopus has built its business around three core pillars: customer led innovation, excellence in customer service and the quality of our people. It employs more than 200 people and currently have more than £2.3 billion in assets under management.

Octopus has won a number of awards for its products and customer service. It has twice been voted one of the best 100 SMEs to work for by the *Sunday Times*, and is one of only two fund management companies to be AAA rated by financial advisers for customer service. www.octopusinvestments.com

Lightsource Renewable Energy Limited

Lightsource Renewable Energy Limited is a UK based solar energy developer and operator with a number of projects currently under construction throughout the country. Lightsource is UK owned with a growing London based development team of experienced solar engineers, planners, and project managers. www.lightsource-re.co.uk