

**Mayford House Solar Panels Project**

Mayford House Surgery has been keen to reduce it's carbon footprint for a long time. We have done many smaller projects including those that have required significant investment from the practice, such as all lights being changed to LEDs and key rooms and corridors being motion/sensor controlled. The bigger dreams of using renewable energy sources such as solar panels which would make the most impact on our carbon footprint always seemed out of our reach due to partners retiring and a lack of funds.

We heard about the North East and Yorkshire Net Zero Funding grants from the Greener Practice GP group and this seemed an amazing opportunity for us to finally make solar panels happen for the practice. We applied and were successful with the installation of 3 x 5kW single-phase FOX ESS inverters and 9.83 kWh of battery storage. 40 solar panels (16.2kW total solar energy generation system).

Measure of success

-Day One after installation and we did not use any electricity from the grid!! Yield was 63.10 kWh in May 2023.

-In 4 months, the financial saving is about £3145.39 (this has been over the summer however)

Challenges

The main challenge we had was dealing with the original contractor (a local family run firm deliberately chosen for being small and local!) Unfortunately, they were more used to domestic contracts than a business one and in the end they felt the project was too big for them and they pulled out of the contract. We felt at this point the project was unlikely to get completed within the deadline however we contacted a larger company who were able to requote us. Due to an increase in materials and installation costs we were not able to get the same number of panels and level of coverage we had initially hoped for however the project has still been a huge success and can be expanded in the future once finances allow.

In addition, there had been misunderstanding about the amount we would be match funded for the project and our practice finances changed significantly during this process due the cost of living, increase in bills/staff costs etc and the reserves in the practice we had planned on using were needed elsewhere. To overcome this, the practice took out a 5-year bank loan to pay off the bill.

Furthermore, our landlord in our initial correspondence, although giving permission, had not made us aware we would need to pay for a change in our contract with them which incurred a fee of approx. £2,000. This could have been factored into our application if they had told us at the beginning. We over-came this unexpected financial cost by thinking of the long term benefit the project will bring us and learning from this for future projects.

What advice would you give to others?

* Ask landlords what support they will give and if there are any additional costs that would be needed so this can be factored into applications
* Clarify what percentage match funding you will receive, and which quote option has been accepted to avoid confusion
* Don’t always go for small firms as what we were initially quoted and seemed like it was too good to be true was not realistic and showed the firm’s lack of experience
* Don’t give up. This has been an emotional rollercoaster investing so much time and passion into delivering a project we believe so much in and when it looked like it wasn’t going to happen, it was devastating. Take the time to think of alternative options, consider asking for an extension to the deadline if all seems lost (we were certain this would be rejected but felt we had nothing to lose at that point) and the North-East and Yorkshire Net Zero Hub team have been incredible and granted this, allowing us to complete this project successfully

 

