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Meet the team

This month: MD Erica Robb



Erica started Spirit in December 2009 because she is passionate about renewable energy and the need to combat global warming.

Since 2009 Spirit has grown rapidly and now employs 50 people, installing renewable energy systems throughout the country.

Recently Erica has spearheaded our diversification into heat pumps and biomass, launching the renewable heating division in January 2012.

FITs Update

Install by 31st March 2012 to avoid the need for C-rated EPC

On October 31st 2011, the government cut the Feed-in Tariffs applying to solar PV installations with only six weeks' notice. The tariff applying to a sub-4kWp installation was cut from 43.3p to 21p, still a good rate, but not such a giveaway as 43.3p. Furthermore, the cuts took effect before the period of consultation relating to the cuts had ended. The industry challenged the cuts in the High Court and the High Court ruled that the cuts had been made unlawfully. The government appealed this decision in the Court of Appeal in January, but the Court of Appeal upheld the High Court ruling. The government has now said they will appeal again, this time to the Supreme Court.

Meanwhile, the government tabled legislation to ensure that whatever happens in the courts, the rates will definitely be cut by March 3rd 2012.

The net effect of all this is that anyone installing before March 3rd 2012 has a good chance of receiving the higher (pre-cut) rate, but this will not be confirmed until the outcome of any appeal to the Supreme Court is known.

Possibly the **more important deadline is March 31st 2012**. After this it is expected that in order to receive even the 21p rate, a homeowner will have to ensure their home receives a C-rated energy performance certificate (EPC). It is estimated that only 14% of houses already qualify; in order to qualify most homeowners would have to spend around £3000 on insulation, double glazing and other such measures. **To avoid the EPC requirement, install by 31st March 2012!**

Woodhouse College goes solar

Spirit Solar has installed 70 ET-235W panels at **Woodhouse College**, giving the college 16kW of capacity. The installation was completed by Spirit in just five days.

The head teacher, Carol Kirkland, commented: *"As a Sixth Form College for young people, Woodhouse College wants to set the right environmental example. We chose Spirit Solar after going out to tender and were not disappointed. At what turned out to be a very stressful time for all concerned the team were quick to respond and provided all the help necessary for us to meet the revised Government deadlines. The installation team worked around our students, nothing being too much trouble"*





free spirit

Spirit MD Challenges David Cameron

Following the High Court ruling just before Christmas that the cuts to the Feed-in Tariff were unlawful, there was utter confusion as to what tariff would apply to an installation made between December 12th 2011 and March 31st 2012.

DECC said the tariff would 'almost certainly' not be less than 21p. 'Almost certainly?' When you are spending £10,000 or more you want 'certainty' not 'almost certainty'.

By contrast Greg Barker tweeted:

@SolarChampion 2 b clear DECC r consulting on 21p (not lower) 4 anyone fitting pv btwn 12 Dec & 31 March. #FITs

(Is this really how Cameron runs his government I hear you ask?! Call me old fashioned)

This appeared to give more certainty, but then DECC said "It's up to the minister what he says on twitter – this is not an official DECC outlet".

What a ludicrous situation. In exasperation our MD had no choice but to take her question right to the top!

So on 6th January, at a meeting of local business owners, Spirit Solar MD Erica Robb made her feelings known.

First she accused the Prime Minister of causing chaos in the solar industry. After wondering how he could be attending a meeting designed to encourage entrepreneurs when his government had so undermined business confidence with its appalling handling of the Feed in Tariff cut, she then told him "If you ring up DECC and ask them what tariff applies today, they can't tell you if its 43p, 21p, 0p or somewhere in between."

Finally she asked him "How can the government justify its appeal which is set to cause weeks more chaos and uncertainty, and can you tell me what tariff rate applies in the mean time?"

A very nice girl from Number 10 came up to our MD after the meeting and proffered her email address. So our MD wrote an email to MD seeking further clarification. We didn't get a reply, but we did get the following statement via REAL:

"The tariff rate for PV installations less than or equal to 4kW will not fall below 21p for installations with an eligibility date between 12th December 2011 and 31st March 2012."

So 'almost certainty' was replaced with 'certainty'. Victory!

Hydrotherapy Centre benefits from the RHI

A hydrotherapy centre in Bristol is to become one of the first commercial operations to benefit from **Phase I of the Renewable Heat Incentive**.

Under the RHI, any non-residential installation of a renewable heating technology (for example solar hot water, biomass, heat pumps) will receive a tariff for every kWh of energy generated by the system for up to 20 years after the system is installed. In the case of solar hot water, a tariff of 8.5p per kWh is payable for 18 years.

Spirit is installing eight flat plate solar collectors. The system is expected to generate **9867 kWth** per year, providing **66%** of the centre's hot water demand for heating the pool and three accompanying shower units. The annual savings and RHI income exceed **£2100** a year, against a system cost of **£11,850**. The payback time is 5 ½ years, after which the centre will enjoy a further 12 ½ years of free hot water and RHI income.

For commercial customers heating large quantities of hot water, solar hot water is now an absolute must. **Funding is available to make the investment self-financing.** Contact 0118 951 4490 for more details.

Introducing EMMA



EMMA is a clever device to maximize the use of electricity produced by a solar PV system. It diverts surplus electricity into your immersion heater, thus minimizing export back to the grid and reducing your hot water bills. EMMA is considerably cheaper than solar thermal for domestic customers and can be installed in less than a day. For more information contact the Sales Team on 0118 951 4490.