



SUSTAINABLE WOOTTON COURTENAY



Newsletter No 24 September 2026

100
YEARS



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Somerset

Meet our winners - Love Your Countryside
Awards 2026

Countryside Changemaker Award

The awards were presented in Taunton on 11th June. A Countryside Changemaker certificate and a wall plaque were presented to Kate Mckenzie and James Macbeth, representing the village residents, by The Chair of Somerset CPRE Hugh Williams



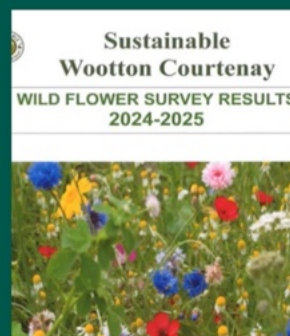
Hugh Williams Chair Somerset CPRE

James Macbeth

Kate Mckenzie

Sustainable Wootton Courtenay

- The whole community of this rural Exmoor village were encouraged to take part in biodiversity recording survey
- 71 people took part and the results were shared widely



Somerset Council: "We are preparing engagement materials for town and parish councils, and I would be very keen to highlight this as an exceptional and inspirational piece of work that others could follow".

Plug-in Solar Panels are Coming to a Shop Near You.



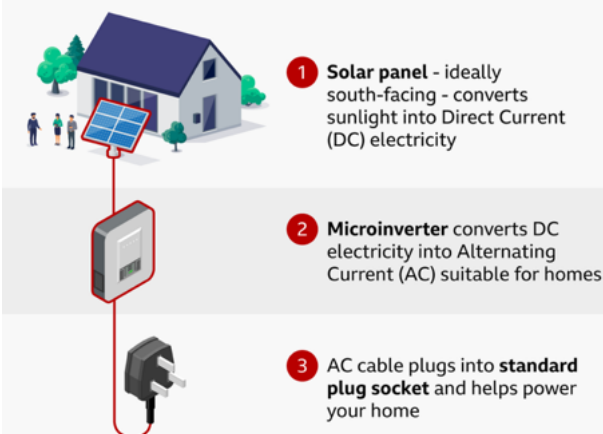
Jemma Crew, BBC Business reporter and Matt McGrath, BBC Environment correspondent

Plug-in solar panels will be hitting the shelves of DIY shops and High Street retailers after the government changed the rules to allow them to be legally sold in the UK. They are significantly cheaper than roof panels, can be installed without an electrician and are suitable for properties with outdoor space, including some balconies.

Retailers including Argos will be stocking products and the government expects other shops to follow suit. It hopes plug-in solar panels will help households save money and reduce reliance on overseas fuel sources, the price of which has fluctuated in recent months due to the Middle East conflict.

Customers should get their wiring checked by a professional to ensure it is safe before parting with cash, experts say.

How plug-in solar panels work



Source: Energy Saving Trust



Will plug-in solar panels save me money?

The government hopes the plug-in panels will offer people a more affordable way into solar energy compared to roof installation, although savings will be lower because they generate less power.

A one-panel kit will cost £699 while a two-panel kit will be £1,089, according to UK solar company UKSOL. The current regulations only allow people to plug in one device per property, but this may be changed in future. A single device may include more than one panel.

The government expects prices to settle at £400-£600 as competition increases and more products are developed. Its research shows a household could save between £70 and £110 a year on their energy bills. The precise amount will depend on how the panels are orientated and how long they run. An unshaded south-facing spot is best. Households which use energy during daylight hours will benefit most as the electricity must be used as it is generated.

Any power not consumed will flow back to the grid, but it's unlikely homes will get any cash for this. Unlike rooftop solar panels, these systems do not need to be certified under the official Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS), which is the UK's official quality mark for small-scale renewable energy systems.

But it also means they will not normally qualify for the Smart Export Guarantee that pays people for excess solar power.

How much energy can they generate?

The panels will make a difference to a household's power consumption but it is deliberately modest for safety reasons. While kits may come with panels that are capable of generating more power, the microinverter - which turns the current from the panel into electricity homes can use - will limit output to the home to 800 watts. That's enough to cover "always-on" electrical appliances such as fridges and devices left on standby. The government says it should power about a fifth of the average household's electricity use while the sun is shining.

Other essentials, such as the kettle which needs 3 kilowatts of electricity, will be powered through a mix of the 800 watts flowing from the panel with the rest coming from the national grid. British Gas said plug-in panels won't solely power a home but can "meaningfully reduce how much electricity you need to buy during the daytime".

How safe are plug-in panels?

Government tests found sample systems could operate with no unacceptable heating or unsafe energy flows. Each device comes with a microinverter which constantly monitors the connection to the grid.

If the electricity cuts out, from a power cut for example, or if the panel is simply unplugged, the microinverter senses that and shuts down in milliseconds so it can never push live electricity into dead wiring.

To be legally sold in Great Britain, new panels must be tested against the industry's G98 standard and the government's product specification. If a panel meets these requirements, it will appear as compliant on the [Energy Networks Association's public register, external](#), so it is definitely worth checking before buying.

Children Make Greenhouse Out of Plastic Bottles



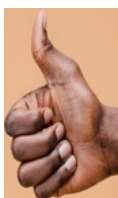
At Richardson Primary School in Canberra, Australia, a group of students and teachers took on a challenge that would reshape their schoolyard—and their approach to sustainability. By collecting and repurposing more than 2,000 plastic bottles, the school community constructed a full-sized greenhouse, known as the 'Plastic Palace', that continues to draw attention more than a decade after its completion.

The initiative began in 2015, when teacher Kate Davis and her third-grade class started planning a greenhouse built entirely from discarded bottles. Over the next several years, as the students advanced through school, the project grew in scale. By the time the structure was finished, it was large enough to accommodate an entire class, with walls and roof made almost entirely from bottles gathered by families and staff. The process not only involved collecting materials, but also engaging students in design decisions and hands-on construction.



Australia dropped thousands of carrots from the sky after wildfires left wallabies with nothing to eat. With the landscape reduced to ash, helicopters became lifelines, delivering their best chance of survival.

GOOD NEWS



Seawater quality off the Cornish coast is set to improve thanks to a seagrass restoration project, the largest in the UK. Funded by £1.8 million Mor Nature initiative, divers will plant ten hectares of seagrass in Falmouth Bay. **Known as "nature's water filter", seagrass also captures carbon and boosts biodiversity.** It has declined by more than 40% in UK waters, mostly due to pollution.



Don't Chicken Out: More than a year later, where's Nando's promised audit?

It has been more than a year since Nando's promised an independent audit into the environmental impact of its chicken supply chain, yet the audit is still nowhere to be seen.

Now, actor and environmental campaigner Jim Murray is back in the river, challenging Nando's and other major food retailers to prove that their suppliers are managing chicken waste responsibly and not putting our rivers at risk.

Nando's has repeatedly said manure from its chicken supply chain is responsibly managed and that an independent audit has verified those practices. Yet more than a year after the company first referred to the audit, it has still not been published.



However, this is about more than one company. More than one billion chickens are raised for meat and eggs in the UK each year. The vast majority of chicken meat is produced in intensive poultry units. These poultry units generate millions of tonnes of manure annually. **In the River Wye catchment, excess phosphorus from poultry manure has been identified as a major contributor to nutrient pollution and the algal blooms that have devastated the river.**

Practical solutions already exist to better process, transport and reuse manure. Restaurants, supermarkets and food businesses all have the power, and responsibility, to demand higher environmental standards from their suppliers.



3 teens invent a salt-powered refrigerator that doesn't need electricity. They're building 200 of them for hospitals to use.

Three teenagers designed a mini refrigerator that cools itself with salt and doesn't require an outlet. They're bringing it to hospitals to help transport medical supplies to rural areas without electricity. Dhruv Chaudhary, Mithran Ladhania, and Mridul Jain live in Indore, India, and all have parents working in the medical field. The boys decided to find a salty refrigeration technique after hearing how challenging it was to bring COVID-19 vaccines to rural areas without electricity. Their invention, which they call Thermavault, won them a 2025 Earth Prize. The award comes with \$12,500, which they plan to use to build 200 of their refrigerators and send them to 120 hospitals for testing.