

Solar Trade Association Limited

Regarding the UK Energy Policy - submission in relation to solar water heating market

I am writing to you, as chairman of the Solar Trade Association Ltd. (STA), which is the oldest renewable energy trade association in the UK. Our mission is to promote widespread use of solar energy technology and to encourage excellence within the UK solar energy industry. Our interests cover thermal applications, such as the production of domestic or industrial hot water or the heating of swimming pools.

The UK solar domestic hot water (SDHW) market is only 2% of what it could be compared to a scenario with the appropriate proactive government support. This figure is supported by IEA figures. These same figures predict SDHW production of 16 TWh/year, emission reductions of 8 million tonnes CO₂ and employing 200, 000 people in 10 years for EU countries. Unless pro-active policies are engaged, the UK's contribution will remain insignificant. The other countries I refer to do not have significant climates differences nor significantly different technologies and yet frequently, their national governments have supported SDHW programmes.

Not only will this be our failing to reduce energy emissions but also a shortcoming in our obligation to fossil fuel depletion, national security through diversity and a positive balance of payments. And further, without a clear government lead, I fear a fall in standards of selling and installation to the detriment of consumers.

Solar energy captures our imagination like no other source and allows integration and personal, interactive experience like no other. There is no doubt in my mind that a government choosing to be pro-active in SDHW would receive wholehearted public support.

The solar industry would benefit from assistance with consumer awareness, a small installation skills base and conservatism of the construction industry. This can be from a mix of regulatory pressure and financial incentives, giving developers experience, encouraging indigenous solar industries and engaging major energy supply companies.

Above all, I ask for a cohesive strategy with a proper joined-up government where solar thermal issues do not fall between the cracks.

Chris Laughton
Chairman of the Association