

# **North Somerset – Britain Talks Climate approach to Solar Wizard engagement**

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# Project summary

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## Background

North Somerset Council are one of the participating local authorities in the Innovate UK Net Zero Living programme– Mission Net Zero (MNZ). There are several strands to MNZ but as part of the project The Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE) created two digital tools.

1. Britain Talks Climate (BTC) segmentation mapping

Britain Talks Climate<sup>1</sup> (BTC) is an evidence-based toolkit based on More in Common's Core Beliefs Model<sup>2</sup>. It supports communicators to engage the British public more effectively on climate change. The BTC mapping process uses Experian's demographic mapping tool 'Mosaic'<sup>3</sup> to estimate the prevalence of each of the seven segments at a Lower Super Output Area level.

2. North Somerset Solar Wizard Map

Solar Wizard<sup>4</sup> enables specific targeting of rooves with good solar potential (and good economic feasibility). The model has been developed over several years and used to support the development of local authority energy strategy plans. The tool estimates the solar generation potential of a roof including estimated installation costs and payback periods. The map allows the user to view the solar potential of multiple buildings across an area.

## Project summary

Additional funding was secured from the South West Net Zero Hub to explore the opportunities of combining the data and information from both tools to test different engagement approaches around solar panels in two separate locations in North Somerset.

In addition, the project explored what additional datasets are available to local authorities such as North Somerset Council to help them develop a detailed understanding of an area and how best to tailor engagement.

First, we used the use the Solar Wizard tool<sup>5</sup> along with other data sets to identify five streets with high solar potential. The Britain Talks Climate Tool was then used to tailor messaging approaches to see if this would increase the number of homeowners registering their interest in

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<sup>1</sup> <https://climateoutreach.org/britain-talks-climate/seven-segments/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.britainschoice.uk/media/53213rhs/britain-s-choice-chapter-3.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.experian.co.uk/business/platforms/mosaic/segmentation-groups>

<sup>4</sup> <https://solarwizard.org.uk/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://seven-segments.cse.org.uk/>

installing panels through the Solar Together scheme. Different types of messaging and messengers were used to try to understand the impact these make. Five control streets were also selected with similar demographics to the target streets to compare the impact of our targeted messaging.

## Key recommendations

Some key learnings that came out of the project were:

1. Ensure you have enough time to fully plan and implement your engagement plan.
2. Consider roof structures of the buildings in the areas you are looking to engage, as some may not be suitable to install solar panels.
3. Adopt a wider engagement approach using social media and follow this up with on the ground in person engagement using trusted messengers.
4. Data is useful when combined with local knowledge, make sure you link messaging to local issues people face.
5. Target a large enough area so that you feel confident you can understand which messaging approaches and which messengers work best from data you gather.

# Solar Together

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Solar Together<sup>6</sup> was identified and chosen as the best option when looking at metrics to determine the impact of the project.

Solar Together is run by Ichoosr<sup>7</sup> who operate in partnership with several local authorities and were commissioned by the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) to run the scheme across the WECA region and North Somerset. Their model operates through individual households registering interest in installing solar panels on their roof. Multiple households register across a local authority region and solar installers then bid based on the number of households, with a price per solar installation. This creates economies of scale and results in a reduction in the cost of installing solar panels for each household taking part.

From previous engagement projects focused on trying to increase household's uptake of renewable technologies, we know that providing a financial incentive is an important driver. This financial incentive provided a strong message on which to base our engagement. North Somerset receives regular updates on the number of households registered on the Solar Together scheme, therefore providing a tangible metric to determine if our engagement was successful.

The Solar Together scheme opened for registrations in August 2024 and was due to close at the end of October, however this was extended by two weeks until the middle of November 2024.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://solartogether.co.uk/west-of-england/home>

<sup>7</sup> <https://ichoosr.com/en-gb/>

# Engagement approach

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The project was split into two stages:

- Stage 1 - Selection of target streets using Solar Wizard and other data sources.
- Stage 2 - Tailoring messaging approaches based on the dominant BTC segments in those streets.

## Selecting target streets

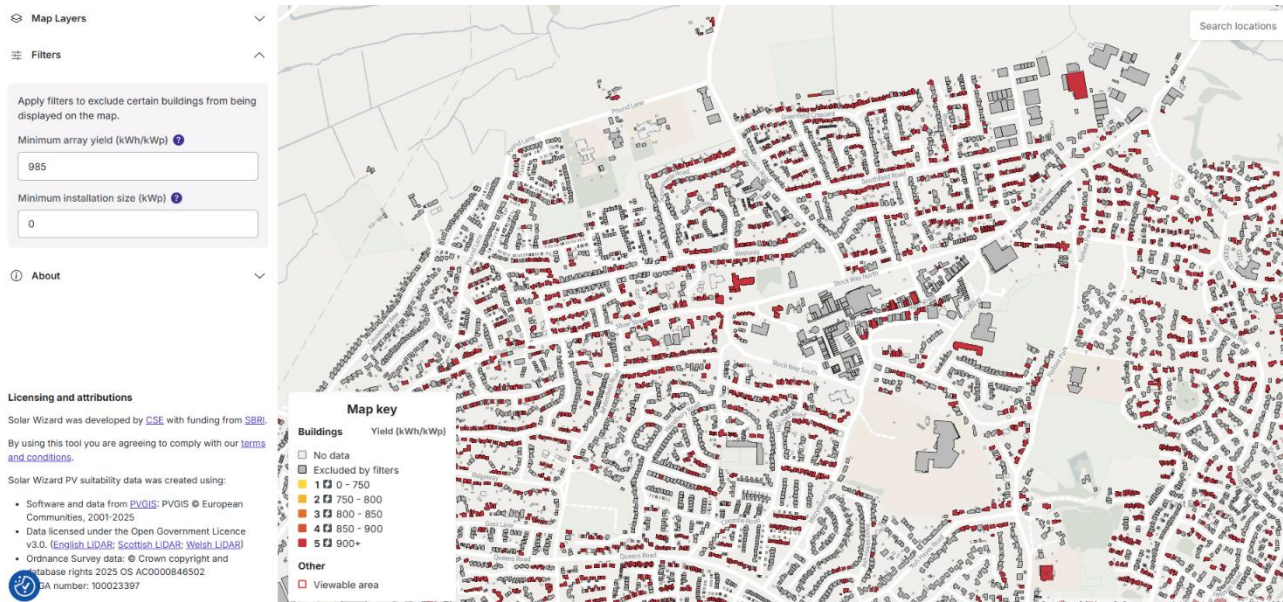
To select the target streets to engage, the project team started by building up layers of understanding for each area using the Solar Wizard tool, additional data and local knowledge. By building our understanding of potential locations we were able to build a picture of the local area and through this process refine a long list of potential areas down to five test streets split across Nailsea and Long Ashton.

### 1. Solar Wizard mapping

Long Ashton and Nailsea were mentioned in the original project specification and so the project team agreed to continue focusing on these areas.

The first step was using the Solar Wizard tool to filter for high solar potential streets across both towns. The filter was set to 985 kWh/kWp to narrow down streets across the two towns to a manageable shortlist. Solar Wizard uses this metric to determine the amount of electricity generated per m<sup>2</sup>. The higher the figure the better the roof's solar potential. Anything over 750 kWh/kWp is considered as good solar potential with very high potential buildings over 900 kWh/kWp.

The shortlisted streets are shown in figures 1 & 2. The buildings with high solar potential are shown in red.



**Figure 1. Nailsea solar potential streets**



**Figure 2. Long Ashton solar potential streets**

## 2. Additional data

The second step was to explore further data available for the shortlisted streets. CSE used our own internal data tool known as Albion, which combines several data sources such as energy



performance certificates (EPCs)<sup>8</sup> and Experian data<sup>9</sup>. These data sets are also available to local authorities and allowed us to identify additional information such as:

- House tenure
- Existing solar PV installed
- Average household income

Household tenure was important because trying to install solar PV on a rented property often comes with additional complications, such as trying to contact a landlord or convincing tenants to allow work to be done. Experian data was used to determine the number of owner-occupied homes for each street.

EPC data was used to understand the number of households on the streets that currently had solar PV installed. This was useful information because if one street already had several homes with solar PV it wouldn't make sense to target residents there, or if only a few homes had solar PV the familiarity of the technology within their street may increase interest. Although some EPCs are very outdated the data did help with an initial estimate. The maximum we found on any of the trial streets was two homes with solar PV already in place. Google maps<sup>10</sup> satellite imagery was used to review the accuracy of the EPC data to confirm the total number of homes with solar PV installed.

Finally, average household income was derived from CSE's Albion dataset which calculates this from Experian data. As Solar Together is a self-funded scheme it was important we targeted streets where it was appropriate. For example, a couple of streets identified had an average household income close to £30,000 per year, therefore it was felt that targeting these streets for a self-funded solar installation offer would not be appropriate, as households with an income below £31,000 are usually eligible for grant schemes such as the Energy Company Obligation fund (ECO)<sup>11</sup>.

### 3. Local knowledge

The final step was to consider local knowledge. Whilst the data analysed provided us with a good understanding of the short-listed streets it is not a substitute for local area knowledge.

A workshop was held with representatives from North Somerset Council on the 8<sup>th</sup> of August to refine the initial streets identified using the additional data sources listed previously and identify local community assets.

Local community assets mentioned included:

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/find-energy-certificate>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.experian.co.uk/business-products/data-sets/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.google.com/maps>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/environmental-and-social-schemes/energy-company-obligation-eco>

- A local climate advocate living on one of the streets who was involved with the town's sustainability group
- Town council links
- Local sports clubs
- A Passivhaus<sup>12</sup> in the local area
- A new housing development recently started (this may be a negative factor due to potential feelings of discontent against North Somerset Council)
- Local schools / nurseries
- A forest school
- A CSE volunteer living in the area

The purpose of this was to start to think and explore the different messengers we could test to engage residents and test who would be most effective.

Based on the additional data and different community assets identified five final streets were three in Nailsea and two in Long Ashton.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.passivhaustrust.org.uk/>

## Control areas

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To understand the impact of our engagement approaches, we needed to establish control locations, where no engagement took place to provide a comparison.

Whilst we could not select control locations within the exact same parameters as our first test streets, we considered the following when choosing them:

- Streets with high solar potential
- Similar number of households as our target streets
- Similar average household income
- Locations in other towns in North Somerset so as not to influence them by any engagement within Long Ashton and Nailsea
- Similar split of BTC segments
- Similar number of households with solar PV already installed

The five control streets were chosen three in Weston-Super-Mare and two across Portishead & Portbury

Ichoosr<sup>13</sup> ran their own marketing campaign for Solar Together which was done independently of this project. Their targeting and engagement methods were not made available to the CSE & North Somerset project team and therefore any influence this had on our project was seen as a factor out of our control and so any impact not considered when evaluating our engagements impact.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://ichoosr.com/en-gb/>

# Messaging approaches

The different BTC audiences in each location also played a factor in determining our streets to engage as we wanted to test different messaging and messenger approaches with two different BTC segments.

We wanted to select two different dominant BTC segments to alter the messaging approaches in Nailsea versus Long Ashton.

## 1. Messaging

The three streets in Nailsea were in areas with Loyal Nationals as the dominant BTC segment, followed by Backbone Conservatives and Civic Pragmatists as show in figure 3.

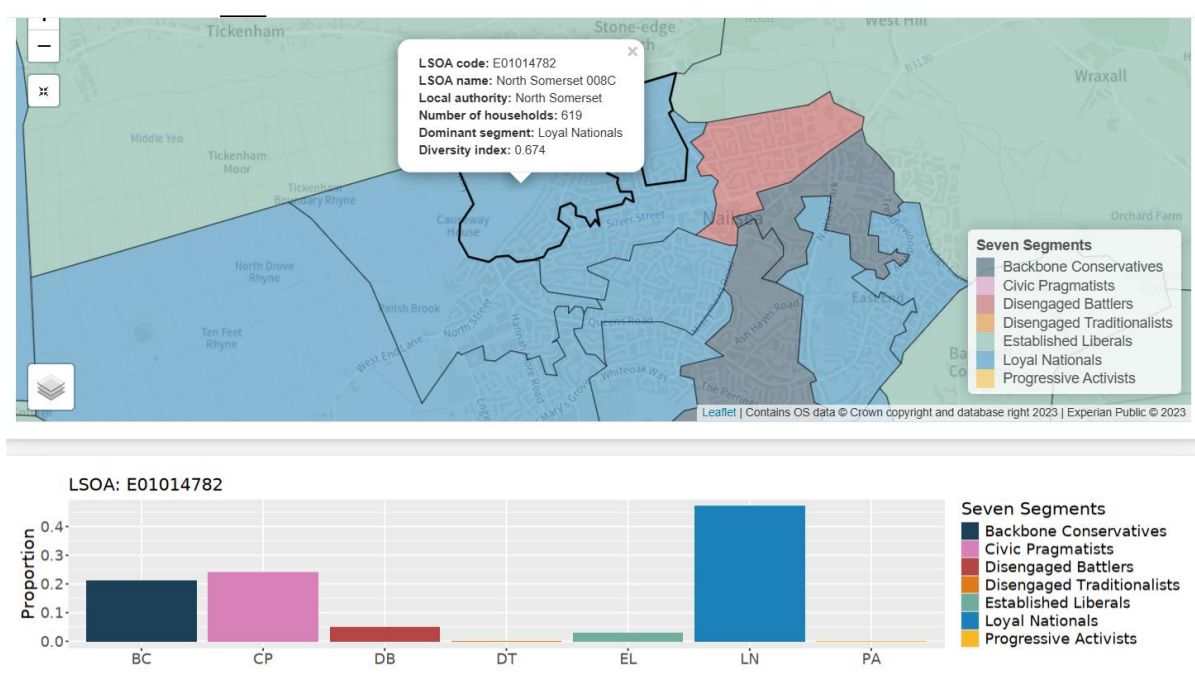


Figure 3. BTC segments in Nailsea

Loyal Nationals make up 23% of the British public and are highly concerned around climate change and are particularly motivated by fairness and are therefore untrustworthy of elites and activists. They are the most likely to say they are “proud to be British” and have a strong pride in their local community and care about their local natural environment.

The average age of this segment tends to be older, have a low or medium level of education and are the lowest earners of the segments. They are also the second most likely to describe

themselves as working class. That said, the average household incomes of the streets chosen was above £45,000 per year. They tend to lean left economically but right on social issues and have a more authoritarian perspective on crime and punishment.

The biggest worries around climate change for Loyal Nationals are:

- Causing bills to rise for themselves and others
- Harm nature & the environment
- Increase flooding risks

Therefore, when tailoring our messaging to this segment we focused on:

- Messages on fairness and local action
- Narratives around nature and protecting the environment
- The local connection and benefits of energy production

For Long Ashton, the dominant segment is Established Liberals followed by Backbone Conservatives as shown in figure 4.

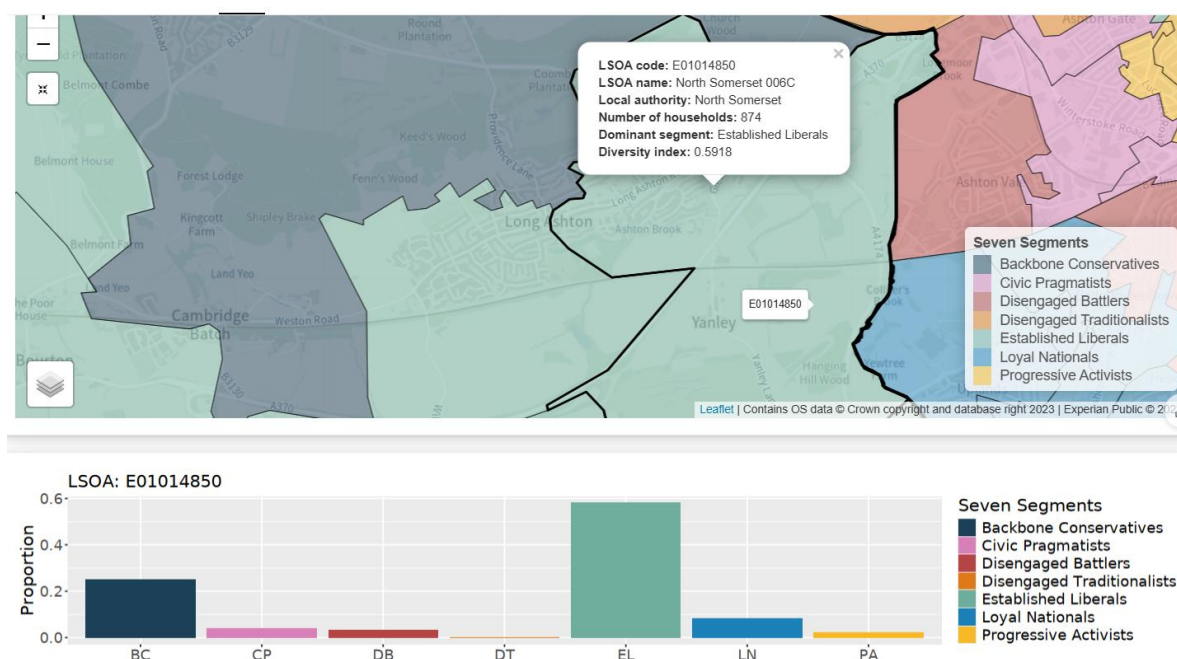


Figure 4. BTC segments in Long Ashton

Established Liberals make up 14% of the British public and fall in the middle of the seven segments with their concerns about climate change. They tend to have a more global outlook and are proud of cultural diversity, freedom and equality. They are the least likely segment to agree that the UK is getting worse. Like Loyal Nationals they also care deeply about their local natural environment.

They are found predominantly in more rural areas and are high earning which we saw across the average household income of our chosen streets. They tend to hold right leaning views about the economy but lean more to the left around social and cultural issues.

The biggest worries around climate change for Establish Liberals are:

- Harming nature and wildlife
- Increasing flooding risks
- Causing bills to rise for themselves and others

Therefore, when tailoring our messaging to this segment we focused on

- The UK playing our part towards overall decarbonisation
- Protecting nature and the environment
- Keeping the benefits of energy production local

The % comparison across the two streets of each BTC segment is shown in figure 5.

Segment	Nailsea	Long Ashton
<b>BC</b>	21%	24%
<b>CP</b>	24%	5%
<b>DB</b>	5%	4%
<b>DT</b>	<1%	<1%
<b>EL</b>	2%	57%
<b>LN</b>	46%	8%
<b>PA</b>	<1%	1%

Figure 5. BTC segments split

## 2. Messengers

Selecting different streets cross the two locations allowed us to test out different messengers. This allowed us to understand who the more appropriate messengers for each segment were and if this was reflected in the number of registrations to Solar Together across the five streets.

Within the BTC research five of the seven segments, including Established Liberals and Loyal Nationals said they had no clear messenger when it came to representing their interests and concerns.

We therefore chose to try a slightly different approach by using a local resident on one street as the messenger in Nailsea. We used branded leaflets using CSE as a charity that helps vulnerable

citizens (the second highest choice by both segments after “none of the above” on who best represents your interest”) and social media, again using CSEs branding.

We decided on a layered approach set out in figure 6.

Location	Test street	Door knocking	Leafleting x 2	Facebook advertising
Nailsea	1	X	X	X
Nailsea	2		X	X
Nailsea	3			X
Long Ashton	4		X	X
Long Ashton	5			X

Figure 6. Different engagement approaches

## Door knocking

One of the reasons Test street 1 was chosen was due to a resident on the street being member of the town’s climate community group. The resident agreed to door knock as a community representative and was briefed beforehand on the kind of messaging to discuss linked to the three focus areas we’d highlighted for Loyal Nationals. The resident handed out leaflets as part of their door knocking and discussed Solar Together to see if residents on the street were interested in signing up.

We also planned to include Nailsea Town Council’s logo on the leaflet as a local trusted organisation in Nailsea and CSEs logo as an environmental charity in Long Ashton to test the difference between using a trusted local organisations vs an environmental charity. However, due to time limitations this was not possible, so the CSE logo was used across both Nailsea’s & Long Ashton’s leaflets.

The door knocking took place across thirty-eight homes on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> October.

Feedback from the resident who conducted the door knocking was:

- Around a quarter of people didn’t answer.
- Eight people took a flyer with further information on the Solar Together Scheme and showed interested in learning more.
- Two people already had solar panels installed.
- One person indicated they would register their interest in Solar Together.
- Six people said they weren’t interested in the scheme with two giving the reason that they were too old and wouldn’t see a payback on their investment.

In summary, several homes showed interest, but none committed to register, with one strongly indicating they would. Cost was the main deterrent that was mentioned by those who didn’t want to commit, and several people didn’t want to engage or answer the door.

The door knocking seemed to be a good way to start the conversation with people but was not enough to gain concrete registrations for Solar Together. A local messenger worked better in terms of number of people engaged in conversations when comparing to door knocking conducted by CSE, covered later in this report.

## Leafleting

Three of the five test streets were leafleted twice over the course of a month. The design for the leaflet remained consistent across the three streets with minor changes.

- Naming the street on each leaflet
- A screenshot of the street from Solar Wizard showing their high solar potential
- Three benefits linked to the priorities of Loyal Nationalists and Established Liberals

The leaflet design can be seen in figure 7 for one of the test streets.



Figure 7. Leaflet design (front & back)

The three messages for Established Liberals in Long Ashton were:

- Create more locally produced and consumed energy
- Keep the benefits and savings of energy production local
- Support the UK's journey to a cleaner energy system

The three messages for Loyal Nationals in Nailsea were:

- Increase your energy independence



- Create more locally produced and consumer energy
- Reduce the need for larger solar farms

Two leaflet drops took place. The first round was delivered by a CSE member of staff on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> October and a follow up set delivered via a post order website during w/c 11<sup>th</sup> November.

## **Social media**

All test streets received a two 2-week period of targeted social media adverts. Based on the average age of residents across all streets Facebook was deemed the most likely social media platform with which they would engage. The smallest area you can target adverts on Facebook is postcode minus two digits i.e. BS48 2, therefore the social media adverts targeted wider areas than just our five test streets.

Two different approaches to messaging were trialled. The first two weeks (7<sup>th</sup>- 20<sup>th</sup> October) focused on tailored messaging for the local BTC segment based on the same three messages on the leaflets. The second two weeks (6<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> November) the messaging was amended to be more generic and not tailored for each segment. The idea being to test if there was more engagement with the tailored versus no tailored approach.




The tailored messaging text was as follows:

### **#1 Solar Together – v1 Nailsea and loyal nationalists (BS48 2 & BS48 4)**

*Install solar panels at a reduced cost*

*Solar Together uses group buying power to get you installation discounts. Homeowners get competitive bids from approved installers, personalised offers, and full support.*

*Plus, solar panels on your home can:*

-  *Increase your energy independence.*
-  *Reduce the need for large solar farms.*
-  *Increase local energy production to supply more locally generated power.*

*Register your interest for free, no obligation to continue.*

### **#2 - Long Ashton and established liberals (BS41 9)**

*Install solar panels at a reduced cost*

*Solar Together uses group buying power to get you installation discounts. Homeowners get competitive bids from approved installers, personalised offers, and full support.*

Plus, solar panels on your home can:

- ☀ Create more locally produced and consumed energy.
- ☀ Support the UK's journey to a cleaner energy system.
- ☀ Keep the benefits and savings of energy production local.

Register your interest for free, no obligation to continue.

The generic messaging text was as follows:

**#1 Solar Together – generic for Nailsea & Long Ashton (BS48 2, BS48 4 & BS41 9)**

Great news, the deadline to register your interest in getting solar panels has been extend to 15<sup>th</sup> November.

Solar Together uses group buying power to get you installation discounts. Homeowners get competitive bids from approved installers, personalised offers, and full support.

Register your interest for free, no obligation to continue.

The reason for the break between the tailored and generic posts was due to a last-minute extension for registrations for Solar Together, therefore the project team decided to use the opportunity to compare tailored to non-tailored messaging.

The three metrics were measured:

- Reach – The number of Facebook accounts that saw the advert at least once.
- Impressions – The number of times the advert appeared on someone's screen.
- Link clicks – the number of times someone clicked on the advert to learn more.

The combined comparative data for both locations are shown in figure 8.

	Tailored	Non-tailored	Difference
Reach	5708	4132	1576
Impressions	15303	14586	717
Link clicks	56	38	18

Figure 8. Social media engagement statistics

The statistics indicated there was more engagement through social media for the tailored versus the none tailored messaging with a 47% increase in link clicks for the tailored messaging.

Analysis of the number of signups across the wider post code areas for solar registrations for Solar Together are shown in figure 9.

	7 <sup>th</sup> – 20 <sup>th</sup> Oct (Tailored)	21 <sup>st</sup> Oct – 6 <sup>th</sup> Nov (no social media adverts run)	7 <sup>th</sup> – 19 <sup>th</sup> Nov (Non- tailored)
<b>Nailsea (BS48)</b>	10	7	2
<b>Long Ashton (BS41)</b>	9	4	6

*Figure 9. Solar Together registrations across the wider postcodes*

The figures indicate that potentially the targeted social media did have influence with more registrations during 7<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> October compared to no social media adverts run and the non-tailored approach.

We cannot comment on the effectiveness of the engagement when comparing the Established Liberals in Long Ashton and Loyal Nationals in Nailsea as the social media was over a wider area than just our target areas and therefore targeted different population levels, meaning direct comparison is not possible.

For the statistics from figures 8 & 9 we need to consider that the tailored adverts ran first and therefore this may have reduced the impact of the non-tailored messaging. The drop off therefore may not be relevant to the messaging but more the overall exposure to residents repeatedly to the adverts. Whilst we can draw some evidence from the social media advertising, we do not know the exact reasons why each household signed up to Solar Together and therefore cannot say definitively if the messaging is the reason.

## Project findings

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Data from the registered households for Solar Together during the period the communications show that one household registered across the five streets during the engagement window.

This household was on Test street 1 in Nailsea and was on the same day the door knocking by the local resident took place. Whilst it cannot be proven that they are linked it can be deduced that the registration occurring on the same day that the door knocking did have an effect. One person did strongly indicate they would register for Solar Together and therefore this does make it more likely there is a direct correlation.

Across the five control streets one registration took place during the same period.

From our findings from the social media advertising, we can tentatively say that the messaging does seem to make an impact when tailored for the local BTC segments in terms of engaging with the posts. However, it looks like it did not result in any registrations on the scheme on our test streets. Across the wider postcode areas, a slight increase in the number of registrations for the tailored messaging does indicate it may have made an impact.

The data also infers that the door knocking may have had a slight impact, with one household registering. However, the leafletting had no direct impact on engaging residents.

A meeting was also held with Ichoosr in November 2024 who market the Solar Together scheme to gain learnings from their experience of running the scheme.

Key findings shared were:

- Ichoosr's current marketing strategy is focused primarily on socio-demographic factors such as household income. Solar potential is not considered when looking at targeting. This is something that is being looked at being built into future rounds of Solar Together because of this project by WECA.
- Marketing and engagement are a multilayered and long-term approach. The best results occur from multiple engagement methods over a prolonged period.
- No matter where the scheme is run the best messenger is always the local authority with the majority of signups for Solar Together occurring due to the local authority backing the scheme. However, the benefit of trialling the BTC approach could show how to engage those that wouldn't necessarily trust the local council as a messenger.
- It can take two or three rounds of Solar Together for people to build up confidence in the scheme. Many people register in the first or second years to get an understanding of how it works before committing to installing solar panels.

Combining their learning with our finding this seems to indicate that multilayered, long term engagement strategies are important through multiple engagement methods but an in person local trusted voice, whether that be a local resident or trusted local body makes more impact. Whilst the targeted messaging was not enough to convince residents to look at investing in solar panels it did help to engage a broader audience.

# Follow on engagement

## Door knocking

Door knocking took place on two of the streets previously leafleted as part of the project. These streets were Test street 2 in Nailsea and Test street 4 in Long Ashton. The door knocking took place on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2025 from 10am – 1pm.

The data from Solar Together sign-ups indicated that the leafleting made no impact on the numbers of people registering for the scheme. The purpose of the door knocking was therefore to gauge the residents' understanding of solar panels and what the potential barriers might be for them.

We planned to engage residents through door knocking using the following four questions as conversation prompts.

1. Is solar something you have thought about? If so, how are you getting on?
2. What has stopped you taking it up to this point?
3. What sort of things would help you?
4. What type of communication would work best for you in future?

The conversations however were more spontaneous, the focus being on letting the resident talk with us responding as appropriate to gain as much information as possible.

A leaflet was prepared in advance to cover potential topics of conversation we thought might come up. Topics are listed in figure 10 and the leaflet in figure 11.

Topic	Potential support to signpost to
<b>I'm interested but don't know where to start</b>	CSE's about solar PV webpage & the Solar Wizard website
<b>I don't know much and want to learn more</b>	CSE's about solar PV webpage & the Solar Wizard website
<b>I don't know where to look for a contractor or to get an estimate of price</b>	The Microgeneration Certification Scheme & Trustmark Contractor Databases
<b>Too expensive for me currently</b>	Solar Together & Lendology
<b>I'm not sure if my house is suitable</b>	Solar Wizard postcode look-up
<b>I don't plan on being in the house long enough to pay back my investment in panels</b>	There wasn't much we thought we could signpost towards for this kind of query

*Figure 10. Potential topics of conversation when door knocking*

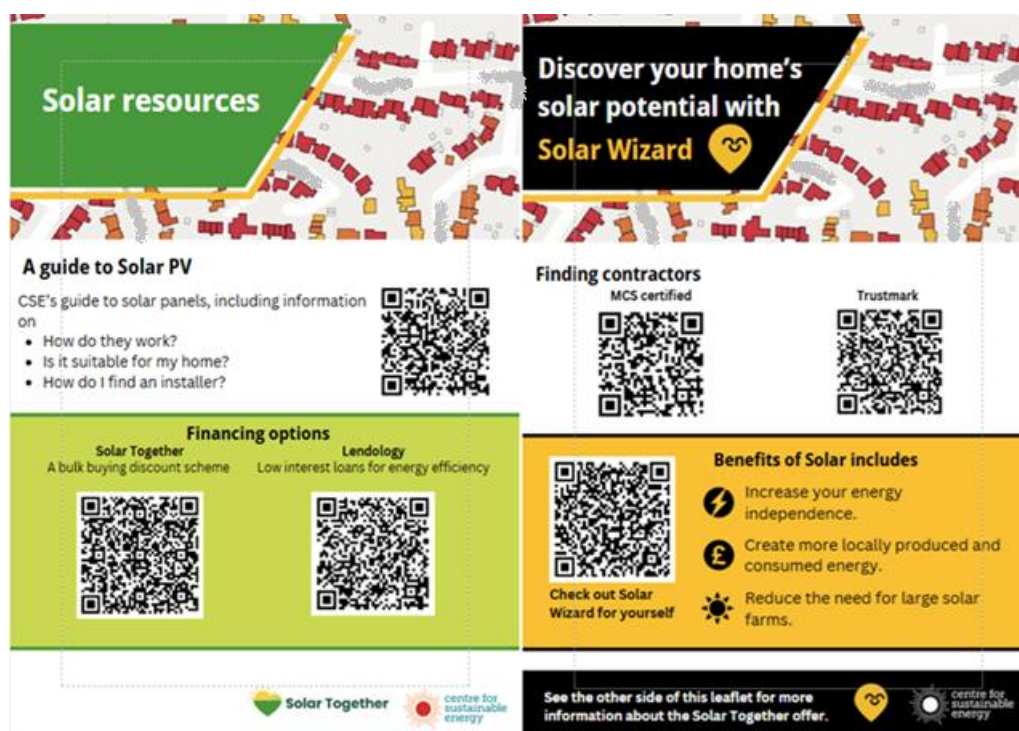


Figure 11. Additional solar resources leaflet

Feedback was different across the two streets with more residents engaging in Test street 2 compared to Test street 4.

Key findings from Test street 2 were:

- Many of the homes faced south and had dormer windows built into their roofs which limited the available roof space to install solar panels therefore making many roofs not suitable. This was primarily due to loft conversions and the addition of dormer windows into their roofs. One of the residents was interested and motivated to install solar for environmental reasons and energy security but couldn't install panels due to their roof structure. They mentioned around engaging estate agents to discuss how installing solar panels could increase house prices.
- One had never really considered installing solar panels and hadn't really considered the benefits. They were happy to discuss solar generally and were interested in the resources on the leaflet shared.
- A couple of older residents were not interested in getting solar as they didn't believe they would be in their home long enough to justify the time, effort and cost to install panels.

Key findings from Test street 4 were:

- It may also have been the day and time we conducted the door knocking but doorbells with inbuilt video cameras seemed to reduce the likelihood of someone answering their door.
- One home already had solar panels installed on a part of their roof not visible from the road. They were not interested in discussing their motivations.
- One resident hadn't considered installing solar panels. They did point out neighbours who'd had solar PV, so were aware of them being on their street. They were younger and thought they would be likely to move before getting the payback of installing panels. They also thought as they were east/west facing their house might be less suitable.

Learnings from the conversations across the two streets are:

- Consider potential roof structures on streets you might look to engage with about installing solar panels. Bearing in mind roofs that might have more dormers or other structural elements which may make solar more challenging.
- Door knocking in some areas may not be a suitable way to engage residents.
- Look at how to make information on solar panels more suitable for those that have never considered it before and highlight the ease of schemes like Solar Together to save people time.
- Leafletting doesn't seem like a good way in which to engage people as no one really engaged with the leaflets delivered to them.

### **Dundry Earth Day**

CSE attended Dundry Earth Day on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> April. We gave a 30-minute presentation on Solar Wizard at the morning's plenary sessions including time for questions and hosted a stand about solar panels in the afternoon.

Approximately 20-30 people were present at the plenary session. CSE demonstrated the postcode look up functionality and the North Somerset map and then ran through things to consider as next steps for buildings with good solar potential. This included things like roof strength & shading, possible financing options, how to find contractors and how to make the most of your panels.

Follow up questions from attendees mainly focused on practical elements such as what's the average lifetime of solar panels and more detail on how to identify contractors.

Attendees were also interested in whether the tool looked at the potential for mounted solar panels as well as rooves, for those with large gardens or areas of land close to their properties.

Overall, the tool was well received with a number of questions asked and many of the attendees from the plenary sessions coming to the afternoon stand to look up their property's solar potential and discuss their options in more detail.



CSE operated a stand to promote Solar Wizard from 1pm – 4pm. This included a laptop with Solar Wizard open for people to look up their home's solar potential. We also had fact sheets with guidance on how to engage contractors and the kinds of questions to ask them. In addition, we had more general building fact sheets on topic such as damp & mould and other fabric improvements for buildings.

During that time roughly 30-40 people interacted with us. The majority asking about the solar potential for their building and next steps. A handful took fact sheets on solar with a few people taking fact sheets on damp & mould.

Key findings from conversations on the stall were:

- Quite a few people (circa 10) already had solar panels and wanted to learn more about how to maximise their usage or talk more generally about the benefits they had seen. These often-involved conversations about whether installing a battery was a useful addition to their current system.
- Some residents had investigated installing solar panels on their homes already but had been unable to due to either being in a conservation area or their building was listed. Some officers and councillors from North Somerset Council were present at the event so these people were encouraged to engage with them around potential solutions to this.
- Quite a few people were interested, particularly those who had recently moved into their homes and weren't quite sure how to approach solar. They valued being able to look up their home and talk through what the data suggested and what their next steps should be.
- A few people understood the technology quite well but hadn't had the time to engage any further so valued some time and a space to discuss this, noting down the contractor databases and financing options.
- There were a few couples where one of them was trying to convince their partner to engage on installing solar panels and saw Solar Wizard as a good way to do this.
- Some more complex cases where we weren't able to offer much advice, including a couple that lived in a block of flats with an ownership partnership and a mix of tenures in the building who wanted to look at installing solar on their building. We also spoke to the local vicar, who lived in the parsonage owned by the diocese and wasn't sure if he or the diocese would receive the benefit if panels were installed.

Overall Solar Wizard seemed to be of interest to attendees and was a good way to engage people who were already considering solar panels, as well as those who hadn't yet had the time to think about it. The main take away was that having someone to talk through the findings from solar wizard for someone's home was very valuable and gave the opportunity to add more context and offer more useful and bespoke advice to them.

# Project reflections

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The project team from North Somerset Council and CSE attended a project reflections workshop on 1<sup>st</sup> July 2025.

The focus of this was to review and think about if and how we could have approached each stage of the project differently.

## Location selection.

We talked through the decision to use Nailsea and Long Ashton as the two target locations.

General thoughts were:

- The two towns chosen were due to previous high engagement with Solar Together and being slightly more affluent areas, residents were more likely to have the finance to self-fund their own solar installation.
- Other locations such as Weston-Super-Mare had larger concentrations of harder to engage BTC segments such as disengaged battlers.
- The process wasn't fully data led and more focused on local knowledge of the different towns/villages in North Somerset.

We were happy with the two locations chosen but recognise this process could be more data led in future.

## Solar Together as an evaluation metric

We discussed whether Solar Together was the best choice of metric for evaluating the project's success and if any alternatives would have been possible. This also included our experience of engaging with iChoosr through the project.

General thoughts were:

- Within the timeline of the project, it felt like a good overlapping scheme and metric to incorporate.
- Other options could have involved identifying a trusted contractor and tracking enquiries to them or directing to more general information online and tracking engagement. However, given the complexities of these Solar Together felt like an easier and better metric.
- Perhaps targeting across a bigger area than street by street would have enabled us to understand the impact of the project more.

- The added financial incentive of the Solar Together scheme was a nice easy benefit to promote within our communications.
- Solar Together is also a regular and trusted brand.
- A good step would be to link information on solar panels and Solar Together with wider information on energy efficiency / retrofit measures.
- There were challenges generally in trying to engage iChoosr and complexities around data sharing.
- There may be a lot of households missed through iChoosr's methodology of using Experian data to only target high income households.

We still felt that using Solar Together was a good choice for the project but in an ideal world there would have had more time to develop a more comprehensive communications and engagement plan in advance of Solar Together launching. Unfortunately, we only had 1 month from the project's inception before the Solar Together launch and therefore had to develop our engagement approach and materials quickly. A positive impact of the project would be if solar potential data is included within WECA's procurement of a solar bulk buying scheme to hopefully target more households beyond just household income.

### Street selection

We discussed the data sourced we used when short listing the streets to engage.

General thoughts were:

- From our feedback when door knocking, in future we would consider roof layout & structure in a bit more detail when picking target locations, given the number of roofs with dormer windows in Test street 2.
- Door knocking focused only on discussing solar panels gave the impression we were trying to sell something to the resident. It would have been better to go in with a broader topic such as asking about energy bills and if people had noticed a change or tried to reduce them.
- We didn't consider things like the age demographics of the streets. Feedback from older residents in door knocking was that they wouldn't be in the house long enough to get the payback from installing panels. However younger residents also said the same thing as they may move. It would therefore have been difficult to pick an exact age demographic to target.

It was felt that our analysis was pretty comprehensive and did arrive at suitable streets. The roof structure would be a good one to consider in the future, most likely having to use satellite images such as google maps.

### Local knowledge

We discussed about our approach to deciding on local messengers and working with them.

General thoughts were:

- A lot of those local community assets identified were schools or sports clubs. You would need to make sure what you're trying to engage on has some link / relevance to them such as solar on their own buildings. They are also generally difficult to engage, unless you have an individual who is enthusiastic about what you're trying to achieve.
- You could explore funding a local group to put more resource into local messaging.
- It can be difficult to decide who is the best trusted local messenger.
- A trusted place-based organisation who are well known, with a locally known brand could add trust to any engagement campaign.
- We could have done more to try and utilise local messaging more but struggled due to the timing of the Solar Together registration window. For example, engaging Nailsea Town Council as a local messenger but never heard back from them within the required time period.

### Messaging approaches

We discussed the two different dominant BTC segments in each area and the differing approaches taken when engaging each including social media.

General thoughts were:

- The messaging focused on Nailsea talked about reducing the need for larger solar farms, however there are none locally and so this may not have been relatable for people and focusing more on very local issues may have been better.
- The language used may have been too technical such as the term Solar PV. However, those that might be interested may already have a bit of knowledge or look things up.
- It was hard to try to not make the information look sales like.
- Potentially we could have linked the marketing materials to bill saving more and including figures on % or £ saved on the leaflets and social media posts.
- QR codes have been used in scams and so may not be as trusted anymore and may have put people off.
- The leafleting made no impact and doesn't feel like a useful exercise for future engagement.
- Over a longer period you could consider looking at using some time ahead of Solar Together going live to start a base level of engagement such as a social media campaign to start to warm people up, build trust and get them used to seeing information about the scheme.

Overall given the time we were happy with the materials and messaging used but recognise some minor changes like emphasising bill savings more might have been more useful. If we were to repeat the project we would be unlikely to look at leafleting, focusing more on wider social media engagement and then hyper local street by street engagement.

## Future recommendations

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If we were to repeat this project we would choose to:

1. Have a longer lead in time before a scheme like Solar Together launches to fully plan our engagement campaign.

We had to develop and deliver our engagement plan in quite a short period in this project. A longer lead-in time would have allowed us to deliver our campaign over a longer period, allowing us to gather more data on our different approaches. We could have also conducted additional leaflet drops and door knocking.

2. Consider roof structure when short listing areas to target.

The presence of dormer windows on many of the homes in Test street 2 meant solar panels were not suitable and therefore not relevant for many of the buildings, which means we may have picked a different street to engage with had we considered this at the start of the project.

3. Adopt a wider approach to engagement.

Learnings from this project indicate that using social media with tailored messaging worked well to get peoples attention. This could be combined with hyper local in-person engagement using trusted messengers to build more interest in solar.

4. Data is useful when combined with local knowledge.

By combining the different data sources we analysed with local knowledge we were able to build up a good understanding of each area. Engaging more local organisations would have helped to further strengthen this and potentially tailor messages to be more relevant to residents.

5. Target larger areas of streets or whole towns to gather more data and understand the impact of different messaging approaches and the impact of different messengers.

By only targeting five streets with a combined total of around five hundred households we limited the amount of data we were able to collect and so limited the conclusions we could draw. By running an engagement campaign across a larger area we would have been able to understand in more detail what the best messaging approaches were and who the best messengers are. Whilst we were able to gain learnings through this project expanding the area would help us understand additional lessons for engaging residents.