

# Power roll: bringing cheap solar power to Africa and India

[Power Roll](#) has installed two mini solar grid systems in rural locations in Africa and India. These grids demonstrate the use of their innovative solar film and energy storage technologies that have the potential to disrupt the global solar power market.

Paul Laidler, project lead at Power Roll, explained:

The mini solar grid systems use flexible solar PV that is thin, light, easy to install and can be used off-grid. This makes it very attractive to communities who might struggle to get access to technology, particularly if their location is remote.

Power Roll's solar film will be produced as a roll and can be used on a variety of surfaces in off-grid settings; for example, curved around a technology pole or attached to a fragile roof. Its lightness and versatility give it numerous advantages over silicon solar panels not only where it can be deployed, but also in ease of transport.

The technology can be applied in a number of ways in off-grid settings, including lighting, charging laptops and mobile phones and pumping water for irrigation purposes.

Laidler said:

We want to make solar energy affordable and available to everyone – and that means having a low-cost solution that works in off-grid locations where people have previously found it difficult to access power.

At scale, Power Roll's [solar technology](#) will generate electricity at a cost which is at least 40% cheaper than silicon PV, and it weighs as little as 2% of current silicon PV products, which is a distinct advantage.

The technology will also help the UK achieve its target of becoming net zero by 2050.

Power Roll participated in two Energy Catalyst brokerage events and achieved funding as a result. It received £492,000 in grant funding from the FCD0 (Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office) to develop, test and demonstrate its technology at an Energy Catalyst round 5 event.

It recently attracted a further £515,000 in grant funding from the Global

Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) in Energy Catalyst round 7. This second round requires the Sunderland-based company to include improvements to social inclusion and gender equality in its project scope.

Laidler explained:

Until now it's been about proving the technology, but now we are measuring what difference it can make to people's lives; for example, allowing women entrepreneurs to expand their business and making it easier for kids to learn because they can study at night.

Although the programme is concentrating on rural, off-grid locations in developing countries, Laidler says the mini grids could be installed anywhere in the world, including in developing countries, where they could open up the underdeveloped commercial rooftop market and enable solar power to be generated where it is not possible today.

As well as participating in the Energy Catalyst events, Power Roll was able to benefit from the government's Future Fund, which was launched in May 2020 in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. The Future Fund was designed to support firms across the UK to get through the pandemic by stimulating investment, so that they can continue to break new ground in technology and innovation.

Power Roll secured an initial £250,000 convertible loan from the Future Fund, which formed part of a £2.8 million funding round closed in August 2020.

Neil Spann, managing director at Power Roll, commented:

We were able to leverage the value of the Future Fund loan as part of our highly successful investment round in the summer of 2020. As of early 2021 we are close to completing a follow-up round that will raise a similar amount.

Spann continued:

The success of our funding round and the quality of our investors reflects the global commercial potential for our technology. Our investors are excited about the new markets we can exploit and disrupt. There's huge potential for solar and energy storage in a vast range of new applications including non-loadbearing rooftops, building integration, transport, off-grid and even powering Internet of Things sensors.

Through investment from Finance Durham and other investors, Power Roll is currently constructing a pilot plant in County Durham to further scale-up and commercialise its solar film technology.

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# Prime Minister appoints Dr. Alex George as Youth Mental Health Ambassador

- During Children's Mental Health week, the PM has appointed Dr. Alex George as Youth Mental Health Ambassador
- He will play an important role in shaping children's mental health education and support in schools
- Part of government plans to build back fairer from the pandemic and ensure all children and young people are supported with their mental health and wellbeing

The Prime Minister has today appointed Dr. Alex George as a Youth Mental Health Ambassador to advise government and raise the profile of mental health education and wellbeing in schools.

Dr. Alex is an A&E doctor and has been a passionate online campaigner for children's mental health since he tragically lost his brother to suicide last year.

As Youth Mental Health Ambassador, he will use his clinical expertise and personal experience to champion government's work on children's mental health and shape policy on improving support for young people in schools, colleges and universities.

Thanks to his huge social media following among young people, Dr. Alex is well placed to signpost the support that is already available, as well as provide input and feedback to government on what more can be done.

He will also sit on the new Mental Health in Education Action Group, chaired by Children's Minister Vicky Ford and Universities Minister Michelle Donelan – which will look specifically at how we support young people with their wellbeing as they return to school and university after this difficult year.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

Children and young people have heroically adapted to save lives and protect our NHS. This has understandably had a huge impact on their mental health, so I want to shine a spotlight on this vital issue ahead of their return to school. I'm delighted that Dr. Alex George will be working with us as we do everything in our power to improve people's mental wellbeing.

Dr. Alex George said:

The last year has been unimaginably difficult for all of us, but particularly for young people who have sacrificed so much.

I am honoured to be appointed for this role where I'll be working closely with government to make mental health an absolute priority and hope to have a positive impact on the lives of young people and their education for good.

Right now young people need a voice in government, and I hope that through this role I can advocate for meaningful change in this area.

Dr. Alex will also provide input on the issues being faced by children and young people and how this can be reflected in the tools and support teachers will need in order to provide high-quality advice and care to their students who need it, and what more could be done to ensure the mental health curriculum meets the standard children need.

His appointment comes on top of the existing support government is providing to ensure children's mental health is a priority – including the Wellbeing for Education Return project, which provides funding to councils so they can offer training and advice from mental health experts to schools and colleges on how best to support their pupils.

The NHS, in collaboration with the Department for Education, has also overseen the introduction of over 180 Mental Health Support Teams in England, with more currently in training.

These teams provide counselling for students, and also assist with training parents and teachers to help children and young people improve their mental wellbeing. During lockdown these teams have continued to work virtually.

Claire Murdoch, Mental Health Director, NHS England and NHS Improvement, said:

I welcome the appointment of Dr Alex George as a Youth Mental Health Ambassador, and look forward working closely with him on this important issue.

I met Dr Alex recently and was struck by his commitment to the NHS and to the mental health of our nation.

Children's Mental Health Week couldn't be a more important time to come together and help our youth improve their wellbeing.

It has been a tough year, but the NHS is here for children's mental health, and with the help of Dr Alex and our partners in health, education and charities, we will keep working hard to make sure every child in this country get the mental health support that they deserve.

Dr. Alex will start his role immediately, and will work within the Department for Education. He will remain independent of government and it is an unpaid position.

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## [Condemning the coup in Myanmar: G7 Foreign Ministers' statement](#)

News story

The Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, and the US and the High Representative of the European Union have issued a statement condemning the coup in Myanmar.



We, the G7 Foreign Ministers of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America and the High Representative of the European Union, are united in condemning the coup in Myanmar.

We are deeply concerned by the detention of political leaders and civil society activists, including State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and President Win Myint, and targeting of the media. We call upon the military to immediately end the state of emergency, restore power to the democratically-elected government, to release all those unjustly detained and to respect human rights and the rule of law. The November election results must be respected and Parliament should be convened at the earliest opportunity.

The military's restrictions on information flows are deeply concerning. Civilians, including civil society and the media, must not be subject to

reprisals in any form. We also call for unrestricted humanitarian access to support the most vulnerable.

G7 Foreign Ministers recall their 2019 communique in which we restated our commitment to Myanmar's democratic transition, peace and accountability for human rights violations and abuses.

We stand with the people of Myanmar who want to see a democratic future.

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## [Digital job surgeries launched to help 160,000 Brits get back into work](#)

- New Job Finding Support service launched to benefit 160,000 people over the next year
- Support ranges from job searches and interview practice to advice on how to switch careers
- Service to run in parallel to existing support available in jobcentres and by work coaches, as part of UK Government's Plan for Jobs

A new team of 325 Job Search Advisers are now available online or over the phone, to support those recently unemployed who already have the skills and experience needed to move into a new career, but might not be sure where to start.

Over the next 12 months, an expected 160,000 jobseekers will receive digital support and advice, as part of a new Job Finding Support (JFS) service in a further boost to the Government's Plan for Jobs.

The quick-fire support, which takes place across four one-to-one sessions and aims to be completed in a matter of weeks, offers mock interviews, help to identify transferable skills and advice on how to switch industries, as well as online group sessions to improve job search techniques.

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Therese Coffey said:

Job Finding Support will help jobseekers brush up on interview skills and advice, giving them a helping hand to move back into work quickly.

Our Plan for Jobs is helping us build back better and fairer, getting job support to people who need it right across Britain and

levelling up opportunity.

The service is completely voluntary to all jobseekers who have been unemployed for less than 13 weeks and are claiming benefits. Participants are referred to the scheme through their Work Coach.

As the Department for Work and Pensions drives forward the Plan for Jobs, it has supported over 40,000 people to retrain and upskill on the Sector-based Work Academy Programme; and recruited 8,500 new Work Coaches to spearhead efforts to get Britain working again.

Chief Executive of ERSA, Elizabeth Taylor, said:

The government's Plan for Jobs package of labour market initiatives is helping people to provide for their families throughout the pandemic, and Job Finding Support is another important step in helping jobseekers in these difficult times.

Job Finding Support will run in parallel to existing support that is available in jobcentres, and will complement the role of Work Coaches who provide more intensive support for jobseekers, including anyone facing specific difficulties returning to work. This service will also free up frontline staff as they continue to help people access the financial support they need through the welfare safety net.

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 3267 5144

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## [\*\*New Code of Conduct to ensure a fairer dairy supply chain\*\*](#)

The UK Government and Devolved Administrations have today (Wednesday 3 February) published their response to last year's consultation seeking views from dairy farmers and processors across the UK about how contracts and relationships could be improved.

The 12-week consultation was launched in June last year by the UK Government, with input from Devolved Administrations, to explore whether regulations could be introduced to ensure fair treatment across the UK's dairy sector. Imbalances of power within the dairy supply chain were believed to be causing instability for dairy farmers, such as where milk buyers have the ability to set and modify the terms of a contract at short notice.

The responses to this consultation clearly demonstrated the need to introduce new regulations to require certain standards for contracts between those producing and buying milk for processing. The consultation also revealed that the distinctive circumstances in Northern Ireland may need to be reflected in regulations, and this will be considered.

The UK Government, working in close collaboration with the Devolved Administrations, will develop a new statutory Code of Conduct for the sector, using section 29 of the Agriculture Act 2020, delivering on the Government's promise to increase fairness in the supply chain and help farmers become more competitive.

Building on the evidence shared as part of the consultation, the new statutory code will seek to provide a guiding framework, establishing minimum standards but also providing businesses with the flexibility to adapt contracts to their individual circumstances. Further engagement with industry remains necessary to develop the standards to be specified within this framework.

Department For Environment Food and Rural Affairs Farming Minister, Victoria Prentis said:

It is only right that any contracts drawn up between farmers and processors deliver fair conditions across the board, for an industry that works hard year-round to provide the dairy products for which we are world-renowned.

This new Code of Conduct will crack down on unfair practices within the supply chain, supporting the dairy sector and ensuring that our dairy farmers remain competitive as they look to the future.

Scottish Rural Economy Secretary Fergus Ewing said:

This is an important moment for the Scottish Dairy Industry, as we take the necessary steps to promote fairness and ensure that Scottish farmers can sign contracts that are equitable and provide them with much needed stability.

The dairy mandatory code of conduct consultation demonstrated that Scottish respondents were the strongest supporters of putting transparency into contracts to protect our farmers. It is very important that we listen to the views of both our hard-working dairy farmers and processors here in Scotland.

We will now work to put together a new Code of Conduct which will increase transparency within the supply chain moving forward and enable Scottish farmers to compete more fairly in the Dairy Supply Chain.



Lesley Griffiths, the Minister for Environment, Energy and Rural Affairs, said:

The Welsh Government has been clear if the Voluntary Code of Best Practice did not address the imbalance of power in the dairy supply chain, a legislative solution would be an alternative to ensure our dairy farmers are able to secure fair deals for their produce.

Those within the sector have reported many contracts do not adhere to the voluntary code, and the resulting imbalance of power leads to reduced profitability for our hard-working dairy farmers, and unsustainable distribution of profits along supply chains.

We will continue to work collaboratively with the sector, and governments across the UK, to ensure a resilient future for our Welsh dairy industry.

Northern Ireland Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Minister, Gordon Lyons MLA, said:

I, along with previous Minister and colleague Edwin Poots, am committed to ensuring fairness for Dairy farmers within Northern Ireland.

Feedback from the Northern Ireland consultees show that there is an appetite for legislation. Clearly the NI dairy sector differs to that in the rest of the UK due to the prevalence of co-operatives and the existing highly integrated cross border supply chain with the ROI.

Given the differences between the NI and GB dairy sectors, further stakeholder engagement will be required to ensure any potential legislation would be appropriate in Northern Ireland. I wish to explore the relevant issues further to inform my position on this matter. I welcome the plans for further consultation and I encourage local stakeholders to participate in this next phase of engagement.

[Evidence gathered during the Groceries Code Adjudicator Call for Evidence in 2016](#) highlighted how unfair practices have persisted in the dairy industry. Last year's consultation looked at whether regulations could be introduced to ensure farmers are treated fairly within the supply chain.

This evidence suggested unfairness in the supply chain has sometimes been caused by milk buyers having the power to set and modify the terms of a contract, often with little notification. This leads to uncertainty and ambiguity that can be unfair to dairy farming businesses.

Government officials will continue to engage with industry representatives of

both producers and processors as they design the new code to ensure it delivers fairness and transparency for the entire supply chain across the UK.