

new ideas  
new thinking



Solawise is a young Kent specialised in solar photovoltaic (PV) systems from design through to installation for domestic customers, businesses and the public sector.

Run by Jody Puch and his business partner John Matterforce, Solawise provides a full honest service on solar PV, and is accredited under the Government's Microgeneration Certification Scheme (MCS).

The company has the advantage of having a highly qualified team after having run an electrical contracting business for 20 years.

## Solawise

The introduction of the Feed in Tariffs (FiTs) in April 2010 and new building regulations in October 2010, which require property developers to make a 25 per cent reduction in carbon emissions on new buildings, were the catalyst for the launch of Solawise, Jody says. "It all meant that solar energy was a much more financially viable option," he explains. "We thought the time was right to move into it seriously, so we got our Microgeneration Certification Scheme and started trading last year." A step further encouraged by the "owner long term interest in renewables and customers feedbacks".

"It took us a little while to find our feet," he admits, but for a small firm, launching in the midst of the UK recession, Solawise have done remarkably well. "So far, we have managed to break even and expect to be in profit by the end of next year."

Jody puts the company's success down to keeping costs lean and getting the support of a unique European funded programme that supports SMEs operating in the low carbon goods and services sector. Called EcoMind, the programme is backed by Interreg IV A 2 Seas co-funding and helps SMEs take full advantage of the growing market for more environmentally acceptable products by overcoming the barriers in developing and promoting innovative eco-technology products and services.

EnviroBusiness is the EcoMind project partner on the ground that approached Solawise with the offer of free consultation.

**"The EcoMind scheme initially supported us with promotional work for a regional event, Kent 2020. This developed into marketing and commercial strategies for the renewable energy market," says Jody, who believes the advice has been invaluable for the start-up as the renewable energy market is so different to the director's background in electrical contracting.**

"People generally have electrical work carried out because they need to, whereas solar panels, particularly in this economic climate, could be seen as more of a luxury item," he notes.

To help the company market itself better, EnviroBusiness wrote up a consultation report and plan of action for Solawise. "We went to their offices, they looked at our website and suggested how we could change the layout," says Jody. "They also did a lot of research on how to market renewables."

Although the programme offers no financial help, Jody says, "It helped us to implement the changes that we needed to make."

Enviro Business

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But it was EnviroBusiness' network of renewable contacts, which was the most valuable element to come out of the EcoMind programme, according to Jody. "By giving us access to contacts within the renewable industry supply chain meant that we actually had a name within a company that we could talk to directly, rather than ringing up cold from an internet search. We spoke directly to these renewable wholesalers and manufacturers and we could negotiate better, so we have ended up with a much more competitively priced end product that we can pass onto our customers," he explains.

For Solawise, the EcoMind experience has been a vital element in the company's growth. "Getting the renewable contacts and talking to peers, helpful, like-minded individuals with a passion for renewable energy who want to help one another out has been a key element to us getting established over the last year. It is possible that without these contacts we wouldn't have broken even this year, or even been still trading in our second year, it has been invaluable," says Jody.



To find more about this company's exciting products and services please visit

[www.solawise.co.uk](http://www.solawise.co.uk)

or contact them directly on [info@solawise.co.uk](mailto:info@solawise.co.uk)

**EnviroBusiness supported Solawise through the EcoMind programme, helping them to grow their business and supplement their skills by providing marketing and strategic advice. EnviroBusiness uses knowledge of clean technologies and markets, extensive business and supply chain networks and relationships to help organisations identify and develop the best opportunities.**

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