



Severn Trent Costain is successfully pioneering the use of solar panels to power remotely located water meters for the Ministry of Defence (MOD). The environmentally friendly photovoltaic panels provide a neat solution to the challenge of providing electricity to remote sites, which are often a considerable distance from the nearest mains power source.

The units which are suitable for most outdoor locations and require minimal commissioning are being trialed in Severn Trent Costain's showcase 'Package C' contract, under which it provides water and wastewater services to 1,300 MOD sites across England.

Following a highly successful initial trial Severn Trent Costain are to extend the use of the cells to a further 20 sites. If ultimately used to power all 1,100 meters installed within the contract this will enable a saving of some 7,700 conventional batteries and reduce cost by £100,000 a year.

Using the solar panels also means fewer maintenance visits and less mileage incurred on routine battery changes. In addition, the transmitters that have been replaced with a photovoltaic panel can be re-used as spares for other equipment.

Severn Trent Costain has used the trial to rigorously test the potential of the solar panel system which has given the joint venture confidence that the continuity of data could be maintained even under adverse conditions such as very low light levels. Using the solar panels has also improved the continuity of measurement for leakage and consumption, and by reducing electricity consumption has diminished the carbon footprint and environmental impact of the sites.

The project was awarded Highly Commended in team category for the MOD's prestigious 2012 Sanctuary and Energy Awards in the energy individual class. These awards recognise individuals and teams for their efforts in the UK and overseas to conserve energy and cut carbon emissions.