

# The Marlowe Theatre

## Q&A with The Marlowe Theatre team about their decision to fit solar arrays

### What was the background to the works/what was the trigger for looking into getting solar arrays fitted?

#### *At a glance*

*Location*  
Canterbury

*Tags*  
Solar  
Energy saving

As a forward-looking organisation, we had been looking for ways to reduce our climate impact for a while. We worked with Julie's Bicycle Creative Green programme to audit our environmental impact, identifying several areas for improvement. As well as highlighting opportunities to reduce energy usage, they also recommended we use the previously under-utilised roof as a source of green energy.

Kent County Council were eager to support us, helping with researching, surveying, planning and procurement. They also supported us in our bid for partial funding from the Theatres Trust, who contributed £20,000 to the project. To this we added a further £39,000 to the works, which were completed and fully operational in February 2022.



### Did you encounter any issues along the way?

While we didn't encounter any issues during the process, it's useful to note that there were certainly changes to our initial plan and a lot of learnings along the way. During the procurement process, for example, we learnt about how best to maximise our space and ended up installing more panels than we'd originally planned and budgeted for. This transpired to be a net positive, giving us much more energy for a slightly higher initial cost.

There are also considerations relating to notifying your insurance company and updating policies, as well as creating a monthly cleaning regime to maximise energy creation and to protect against wear and tear. Despite not having known the details of these processes beforehand, these have proven to be relatively easy to carry out.

### What has been the outcome that you have seen?

Within two years of the installation being completed, we had already seen net return on our investment – a milestone that we'd expected would be achieved over a much longer timeframe! We've been really impressed by the amount of energy produced. For example, between May and June of last year, our panels generated 13975 kWh of energy – effectively the equivalent of 20 performances on our stages.

As at the end of September 2024, the total cost saving is £61,347.81, so the investment has been repaid in savings in 32 months.

## **Do you have any advice for venues looking to make similar changes?**

We believe that any theatre considering investment in solar energy should absolutely do it and the sooner it can be completed the better. It's an easy way to reduce dependence on the national grid and lower our impact on the environment. Solar panels can provide roof space that might otherwise be underused or not used at all a viable purpose, and there is an increasing number of resources online and in the community that can assist you in your installation, making the process as seamless as possible.

One such opportunity is working with Theatres Trust, which offers a range of grants which can support the project development and implementation costs of similar projects.

Furthermore - from an operational aspect - the cost of energy keeps fluctuating, so it makes sense to alleviate outgoings as soon as possible and have a consistent in-flow of energy. Solar panels are also less labour-intensive than you might think - once installed, they require monthly cleaning and maintenance checks but can largely be left to run by themselves. So, you don't need a large team to make solar power work for you.

But away from the financial and operational considerations, we'd highly recommend beginning your solar energy journey as it's just the right thing to do. In the face of the ongoing climate emergency that faces the world, we as an industry should be doing all we can to protect our planet.



***Content provided by***

***Millie Brierley***

*Senior Producer, The Marlowe Theatre*