



Currys To Stock Photovoltaics

Posted by [Chris Vernon](#) on July 31, 2006 - 4:41pm in [The Oil Drum: Europe](#)

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Currys, a leading high street electrical retailer have announced they are to [start stocking photovoltaics](#). I sign of the times? I think so although I expect the move is as much a publicity stunt, jumping on the 'green' bandwagon as a viable stand alone product.

The announcement is covered in this [Guardian article](#).

They say it will cost the average three bedroom household about £9,000 to buy and install solar panels - compared to £16,000 in specialist stores. There are also grants available through the Low Carbon Buildings Programme.

Customers opting for solar power can expect to reduce their energy bill by up to 50% and could reduce carbon dioxide emissions by up to two tons per year. In addition, up to half of the cost of the panels can be offset by an increase in property value, Currys said.

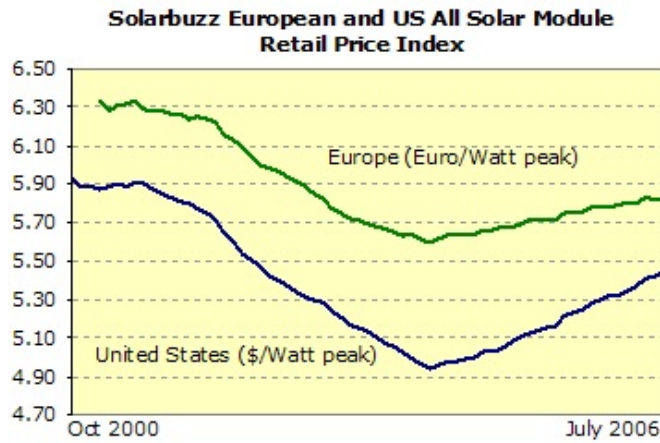
Curious they make the point that half the cost can be offset by increased property value. Isn't this just like saying you'll be able to sell them to the person you sell your house to for half the price you paid for them? That's not my only concern with this announcement though.

The Financial Times also ran the story [here](#) (may be behind the pay wall now).

The prices may be more than most consumers expect to spend in a Currys store but reflect a sharp fall in the cost of solar systems in recent years. Panels have come down in price by more than half in the past five years amid intense competition among global manufacturers.

UK industry estimates for further price falls are 5 per cent a year, but global prices could drop more quickly, in line with a wider slide in the cost of electrical goods such as flat-panel televisions.

So panels have halved in price in the past five years? That's not what SolarBuzz are seeing:



Source: [Solarbuzz](#)

Their All Solar Module Retail Price Index tracks 90 companies and close to 2000 products, it shows no such decline over the last five years. In fact since the photovoltaic industry overtook the computer industry as the largest user of Si the price has been trending upwards.

The module cost represents around 50 - 60% of the total installed cost of a Solar Energy System. Therefore the solar module price is the key element in the total price of an installed solar system. All prices are exclusive of sales taxes, which depending on the country or region can add 8-20% to the prices, with generally highest sales tax rates in Europe.

I am also wary of the economic comparison to consumer electronics, will the photovoltaic market really respond as the flat-panel television market has? I expect the cost structure is very different.

The Guardian article also writes:

Industry analysts predict £750m in sales in 2010 from a "standing start" now.

The panels are manufactured by Sharp UK, which has a factory in Wrexham, north Wales. Sharp has a 26% share of the solar panels market.

If the price remains at £9,000 that's 83,000 systems. If some price reductions do materialise maybe 100,000. Of the approximately 20 million houses that's 0.5% per year, pretty impressive.

On the Wrexham plant, we discussed this last time [photovoltaics came up](#) and it looks like they don't do any manufacturing there, only assembly of the panels from cells manufactured in Japan.

A positive development, certainly but I'm not sure the details we've been given really add up.



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