Ireland's trusted **energy advisor.**

Harnessing The Power Of Solar For Your Business

Solar grants for business have doubled. For nine months only.

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Exemplar

Executive Summary

Understanding the evolving role of Solar PV in SME energy strategy

For many Irish businesses, solar PV is no longer a sustainability project first. It is a practical way to reduce grid reliance, improve cost certainty and make energy costs easier to manage over time.

Over the past decade, solar photovoltaic (PV) technology has become more efficient, more durable, and easier to monitor. At the same time, Irish businesses are dealing with wholesale volatility, rising regulatory charges, and growing pressure to reduce emissions.

That combination matters. A well-designed solar PV system can reduce exposure to imported electricity costs, support carbon targets, and strengthen long-term energy resilience. The commercial outcome depends on getting the design, sizing, procurement, and assumptions right.

This paper is for:

- Business owners and MDs considering solar PV
- Finance leaders assessing payback and risk
- Facilities and Sustainability teams planning site improvements
- Procurement teams comparing options and suppliers

This paper explains:

- How solar technology has evolved
- What performance businesses can expect
- How to approach sizing and investment decisions
- What the temporary 45% SEAI grant means for payback
- Where solar fits in your energy strategy



The 9 Month Window

SEAI has doubled grant support for business solar, but only until July 2027

As an action of the National Energy Affordability Taskforce, SEAI has temporarily increased the Non-Domestic Microgeneration Grant (NDMG). For applications made between 07/10/2026 and 06/07/2027, the per kWp grant rates have doubled, bringing support to an effective 45% of eligible costs. For most businesses, the share of a solar install covered by grant has roughly doubled overnight.

BEFORE 07/10/2026

~23%

of installation cost covered. Maximum grant €162,600.

07/10/2026 TO 06/07/2027

~45%

of eligible costs covered. Maximum grant €325,200.

Window opens
07/10/2026

Apply early: feasibility, design and quotes take time

Window closes
06/07/2027

What It Means for a 300 kWp System

	Previous grant	Temporary 45% grant
Installed cost	€240,000	**€240,000**
NDMG grant	€57,600	**€108,000**
Share of cost covered	24%	**45%**
Net cost after grant	€182,400	**€132,000**
ACA tax benefit (12.5%)	€22,800	**€16,500**
Net investment	€159,600	**€115,500**
Annual saving	€43,065	**€43,065**
Simple payback	3.7 years	**2.7 years**

An extra €50,400 of grant on the same system, taking a full year off the payback.

Why 300 kWp? The grant is paid per kWp in bands. With the inverter sized correctly, a 300 kWp system can go through the NC8 route for quicker ESB Networks approval.

Illustrative figures only. Assumes an installed cost of €800 per kWp, 900 kWh generated per kWp per year (270,000 kWh), 35% used on site at an avoided day rate of €0.27/kWh and 65% exported at €0.10/kWh. Grant calculated on SEAI's per kWp bands (€57,600 previously, €115,200 now) and capped at 45% of invoiced cost (€108,000). ACA shown as 12.5% corporation tax relief on the net cost after grant. Batteries are not eligible costs under the NDMG. Applications made before 07/10/2026 do not qualify for the higher rate. Actual results depend on site, design, tariff and tax position. Confirm current terms at seai.ie.

Introduction

Solar is becoming a core part of energy strategy

Electricity costs are no longer driven by energy prices alone. For many SMEs, the combination of wholesale volatility and steadily increasing regulatory charges has made cost forecasting more complex and long-term planning more important.

In this environment, solar PV offers something fundamentally valuable: control. By generating electricity on-site, businesses can reduce their reliance on grid imports and improve cost predictability over time.

Solar is not a complete solution to energy costs. It does not eliminate grid reliance on its own. But when designed correctly, it can materially reduce exposure to rising unit costs and improve the overall resilience of an energy strategy.

Panel Efficiency

One of the most significant advances has been the steady improvements in solar panel efficiency. Commercially available modules have moved from typical efficiencies of around 16% a decade ago, with some high-performing modules now approaching 24%.

That means more energy can be generated from the same roof or ground area. An important consideration for commercial sites where space is often constrained. Performance in low light and diffuse conditions has also improved, which is particularly relevant in Ireland's climate.

Panel durability has strengthened too, with lower degradation rates and stronger manufacturing standards. Many leading manufacturers now offer long-term performance warranties, with some guaranteeing close to 88% output after 30 years. Higher efficiency and longer life both improve the investment case.

Panels now generate more energy from the same surface area and perform better in the low light conditions common in Ireland.

Bifacial Cells

Capture sunlight from both sides

~24%

Some commercially available modules now approach this efficiency.

~88%

Output after 30 years under some manufacturer warranties

Inverters and Battery Storage

Inverter Technology

Inverter technology has played a critical role in improving system performance and reliability. Conversion efficiencies now typically exceed 98%, meaning a greater proportion of generated energy is usable on-site.
Modern inverter systems also provide monitoring, fault detection, and optimisation that gives businesses better visibility of system performance and helps issues to be identified and resolved more quickly.

Battery Storage

Battery storage has advanced rapidly, changing solar from a passive generation asset into a more flexible energy management solution.
Commercial battery systems can support peak shaving, load shifting, and higher onsite use of solar power. They are not essential for every project. Their value depends on tariff structure, site demand profile, and operating pattern.

For Irish businesses facing high daytime tariffs and capacity-related charges, batteries offer an additional lever to manage demand profiles and reduce exposure to grid costs.

The Cost of Energy

As outlined in Exemplar's paper, the real impact of regulatory charges on SME electricity bills, a growing portion of electricity costs in Ireland is driven by regulatory and network charges, not wholesale energy prices.

These charges are non-negotiable and expected to remain under pressure as grid investment and decarbonisation continue. That has a direct implication for solar. Every unit generated on site avoids not just the wholesale energy costs but a significant portion of the charges stacked on top of it.

Energy efficiency still matters. The strongest energy strategies reduce demand first, then offset the remaining requirement with on-site generation where it makes commercial sense. Solar sits alongside efficiency measures; it does not replace them.

Every unit generated on-site avoids not just the wholesale price but the regulatory charges stacked on top of it.

What does solar typically offset? Depending on the scale of the installation and the organisation's load profile, a well-designed rooftop solar PV system can typically offset between **20% to 30%** of a business's grid electricity consumption.

The Benefits

Economic

Solar can help protect a business against future electricity price increases by delivering more predictable savings over a long asset life. Until 06/07/2027, SEAI's Non-Domestic Microgeneration Grant covers up to 45% of eligible costs. Combined with the Accelerated Capital Allowance, paybacks on well-suited sites have never been shorter.

Environmental

Solar enables immediate and measurable reductions in carbon emissions, supporting sustainability targets, regulatory reporting, and practical decarbonisation plans.

Reputational

Visible investment in renewable energy can demonstrate progress to customers, investors, employees, stakeholders, particularly in sectors where environmental performance is increasingly scrutinised.

The Risk of Getting It Wrong

The case for solar has strengthened, but it is not risk-free. The financial return depends heavily on correct system sizing, robust technical design, appropriate procurement, and effective oversight during installation. Poorly specified systems, inadequate tender processes, or optimistic financial assumptions can materially undermine expected outcomes. This is particularly relevant in a fast-growing market where the quality of providers and solutions can vary significantly.

A time-limited grant adds a new risk. Demand for installers will spike before July 2027, and rushed designs, inflated quotes and stretched installation teams all become more likely. The grant improves the return; it does not fix a poorly specified system. For decision makers overseeing capital investment, independent and expert advice is essential protection. Exemplar supports clients from early feasibility through the project delivery, helping them assess the numbers, the technical design and the procurement route before capital is committed.

Through this work, Exemplar has helped organisations reduce energy consumption by more than 12 GWh annually, while ensuring renewable investments are grounded in practical site reality.

€325,200

Max NDMG grant for applications made by 06/07/2027 (was €162,600)

12.5%

Tax liability reduction on investment in energy-efficient equipment

Looking Ahead

Solar is now a proven, reliable, financially attractive option for many Irish businesses. What has changed is the technology, the energy cost context and, until July 2027, the level of grant support behind it.

The opportunity is not simply to install panels. It's to make the right investment on the right site for the right commercial reason. Businesses that approach solar in a structured and informed way will be better placed to manage cost, reduce exposure, and show practical leadership in the transition to a lower carbon economy.



Secure the 45% grant. Talk to Exemplar first.

Feasibility, design, quotes and the SEAI application all take time, and existing applications can't be moved to the new rate. We'll give you a clear, independent view of what solar can deliver on your site and manage the journey from feasibility through to commissioning, well inside the window.

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