

Homeowners aim to cut their electricity bills with solar panels

Powered by the sun

by Sam Bond

A MINIATURE power station has been built in a new Stroud housing development and is now feeding the grid.

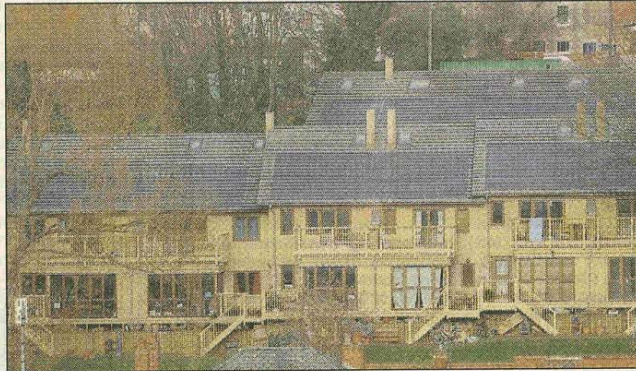
The Co-Housing Project development in Slad Road is taking part in government-funded field trials of solar panels which will meet a significant chunk of the homes' electricity needs and even pour energy back into the national grid on a sunny day.

"You'd have to be pretty frugal not to have to pay bills at all but it will all depend on lifestyle really," said the Co-Housing Project's David Michael.

"The heating and cooking in the houses is all done on gas, and most people will be using energy efficient lightbulbs.

"I think realistically they will save about 30 percent of the electricity bill.

"People will be able to go out and do



◆ New houses with solar panels off Slad Road

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their shopping in Stroud and the panels will be making them money while they are out."

The panels are now in place on 18

out of 20 of the houses and more are set to be installed as the development continues to be built next year.

Mr Michael explained how there

were two basic types of solar panel, photovoltaic which produces electricity and thermal which heat up water.

The Stroud houses will be fitted with photovoltaic roof tiles, which are usually very expensive.

"We wouldn't have been able to do it without the government funding and have to monitor them for two years, sending back reports," said Mr Michael.

"They are trying to work out the viability of it.

"I would say it would definitely be viable if it was subsidised to the extent other ways of generating electricity are.

"The government spends huge amounts of money subsidising nuclear power.

"If they spent just a fraction of that on solar panels I'm sure they would quickly become very popular."