Four million missed opportunities in 2020 to make UK homes greener

- At least four million homes could have been insulated and two million tonnes of CO2 could have been cut in 2020, if customers hadn't been put off by the high cost of green home products.
- In 2020, online searches that included phrases such as 'how much are heat pumps' and 'where to buy insulation' increased significantly.
- But sales of these products fell by an average of 10% vs 2019 with Ofgem data showing that the cost of going green is one of the biggest barriers for customers.

New research from Bulb, the green energy company, shows that the UK could have cut more than two million extra tonnes of CO2 in 2020 - the equivalent of taking over 1,500 cars off the road if UK sales had matched consumer interest.

The research found that online searches for terms such as "how much are heat pumps", "where to buy insulation" and "how much are solar panels" increased by an average of 6% compared to the previous year. Online searches for where to buy heat pumps and how much they cost increased by 35%. The same searches for household insulation and solar panels increased by 27% and 7% respectively.

However, the same research found that during this period there was only a small increase in sales or in some cases a decline. Sales of heat pumps grew by just 6%, while insulation and solar panels both fell by 6% and 29% respectively.

If sales of insulation and heat pumps had grown at the same level as interest, around four million more homes could have been insulated during 2020, and 14,750 more heat pumps could have been installed.

Ofgem data which shows that the cost of going green is one of the biggest barriers for customers, meaning that making products like heat pumps, solar panels and insulation more affordable could cause a huge boost in sales. As a result, there could be a huge drop in the UK's carbon footprint, totalling as much as 3% of current household emissions.

Green home products	**Percentage change in sales in 2020 compared to 2019**	**Percentage increase in searching for where to buy and the cost of green home products for the home from 2019 to 2020**
Heat pump	+6%	+35%
Insulation	-6%	+27%

Solar panels	-29%	+7%

Bulb is calling on the Government to scrap VAT on green products to make them more affordable for millions of people. Reducing VAT from heat pumps for example could reduce the price by an average of around £450.

Hayden Wood, Co-founder and CEO of Bulb said:

“Families shouldn’t be taxed for choosing green options, so let’s scrap VAT on green products from electric cars and heat pumps to energy efficient fridges and solar panels. This would make green technology more affordable for millions of people, as well as lowering their energy bills and carbon emissions."

ENDS

Notes to Editors

About Bulb:

Bulb is the fastest-growing company in Europe, providing 100% renewable electricity to homes across the UK, France, Spain and Texas and 100% carbon neutral gas in the UK and Texas. We’re on a mission to help 100 million people lower their bills and their carbon emissions by 2030 so we supply green energy as standard, with fair, transparent pricing, and technology to help our members manage and reduce their energy use. We’re a certified B Corp which means we adhere to rigorous standards around sustainability; showing how business can be a force for good. And when a new member chooses to join Bulb, we donate £2 to the Bulb Foundation, fighting to address the climate crisis.

About this research

Using various publicly available data sources, listed in Table 1, we were able to identify the percentage change in sales or installations of heat pumps, insulation and solar panels from 2019 to 2020.

Using Google trends data we were able to identify the percentage increase in number of searches from 2019 to 2020 for terms such as “how much are solar panels”, “buying solar panels”, “buying heat pumps”, “how much are heat pumps”, “how much is insulation” and “where to buy insulation”.

With this information, we were able to project the potential number of green products that could have been sold if sales matched interest. For example if in 2020 there was a 35% growth in heat pump sales, matching interest, then an additional 12,250 heat pumps compared to 2019 numbers would have been sold, instead of 2,000.

To calculate the CO2 reduction of insulation and heat pumps, we used their suggested percentage of CO2 reduction and applied it to the average amount of CO2 a household produces (2,745kg). This was then multiplied by the number of potential products sold. To calculate the CO2 reduction for solar panels we used the suggested amount of CO2 that a panel saves and multiplied it by the additional number of potential panels sold.

Calculating the car equivalent of 2 million tonnes of CO2

To identify the average annual CO2 of a car in the UK, we took the Government's most recent measurements for the average CO2/per km for newly licensed cars and multiplied this by the average number of kilometres (converted from miles) driven in the UK per driver per year. We divided 2 million tonnes by this figure to identify the annual car equivalent.

Table 1. Green product purchasing data

	Heat pump (Link)	**Insulation (Link)**	**Solar Panels (Link)**
2019	35,000		37,517
2020	37,000	-6% (an average of 15.45m households have wall or loft insulation)	26,500
Percentage change	6%	-6%	-29%

Table 1. Google Trends topic data

	Heat pump	**Insulation**	**Solar Panels**
Percentage increase in searching activity from 2019 to 2020	35%	27%	7%
Number of sales if purchasing/installations match consumer interest	12,250	4,171,500	2,626

Table 3. Possible CO2 reduction if interest is converted into sales

	Projected saving	**Saving converted into household CO2 (kg)**	**Total saving if all additional products are purchased (tonnes)**

Heat pumps	80% (link)	2,196	26,425
Insulation	20% (link)	549	2,157,171
Solar panels	900 kg (link)	900	2,210