

Meet Solivus, the startup rolling out the next generation of solar power

As part of our quick fire questions series – or QFQs – we spoke to Jo Parker-Swift, CEO at Solivus about decarbonisation, securing your energy supply whatever the scale of your needs and making partnerships to drive business forward.

What was the catalyst for launching Solivus?

I wanted a secure green energy supply for my home – but did not want ugly solar panels on the roof. This meant something in the garden, and the question in my head was how can I create something that looks good and can generate energy in small space? The initial idea was a solar tree and over time this has become the Solivus Arc.

Tell me about the business?

The Solivus team consists mainly of installers and product innovators using best-in-class thin-film solar panels. We aim to enable mega buildings and homes to decarbonise and secure their energy supply. We work with the best solar panel manufacturers, establishing preferential agreements and we own

our own IP for our Solivus products.

Solivus is partnered with Trivandi, a world class project management firm that helped to organise the London 2012 Olympics. We have had wide press coverage (BBC, The Times, The Guardian, Forbes) and had the opportunity to appear and speak at industry and global events such as COP26. This has allowed our name to get out there and reach new customers. Customers approach us currently for light-weight solar solutions.

How has the business evolved since its launch?

Solivus has evolved over the last four years from me working on my own, researching into technologies and raising investment, to a team of 13 brilliant people all supporting and catalysing our growth. Each person brings great value and I am incredibly grateful for their enthusiasm, hard work and help.

How are you funded?

Solivus has raised £2.6M to date initially through high net worth investors and a successful crowdfunding round at the start of 2021. We have received our first investment from an institutional investor as part of the pre-funding for our recent crowdfunding round. The team owns a majority stake in the business. The fact that Solivus is an EIS company has been an enormous help. The government EIS scheme offers fantastic support for new innovative technology companies in the UK.

What has been your biggest challenge so far?

Getting the initial investment is always tough, so often the case with all startups – it's a numbers game and it took time and a lot of grit and determination to get the right first investors. The EIS helped enormously with this. I am incredibly grateful to that group of first round investors who believed in the company and me. My children kept encouraging me to keep going as well.

How does Solivus answer an unmet need?

Solivus installs lightweight solar on commercial roofs that can't take the weight of conventional solar. Solivus has the Solivus Arc for domestic customers who want an aesthetic super clean ground mounted solution for their home .

What's in store for the future?

This year, Solivus is ramping up installations including an installation at Cotswold Airport on aircraft hangars. The solar panels from this installation will generate on-site energy to power an electrolyser used to create hydrogen from water. The hydrogen will in turn be used as super green fuel to power new electric planes. Decarbonising the built environment and transport simultaneously is a good fit for Solivus and its partners. The Solivus Arc launches this year.

What one piece of advice would you give to future founders?

Have at least 18 months of money saved in the bank to support yourself with no income to get going.

Jo Parker-Swift is CEO at Solivus.