

Solar Panel Bird Proofing Case Study

September 2023



The problem

These solar panels were installed many years ago on a residential property and up until around a year ago, had never attracted the attention of any pigeons.

However, that all changed when a few feral pigeons started to use the panels to roost and ultimately nest.

As pigeons have multiple broods each year and like to stay very close to where they are born, it doesn't take long for the population to expand rapidly.

The homeowner noticed the increasing numbers but didn't realise the extent of the damage being done to the property until the gutters became blocked with pigeon guano.

In addition, they were very noisy, especially early in the morning and at dusk.

The homeowner had assumed the gaps under the panels being quite small, were too small for any large bird such as a pigeon to crawl under. However, it is very deceptive, especially when looking from the ground upwards – the gaps under the panels are almost perfect for pigeons and surprisingly easy for them to access.

Once under the panels, they feel safe, are protected from the elements, staying dry and warm too.

Solution

The circumference of the panels needed to be made inaccessible to the pigeons, and the whole area cleaned and sanitised too.

There are different products available on the market, and we select which is best suited according to the type of roof – be that slate, clay, concrete or even metal.

In this case, the best solution is a very strong plastic strip which can be cut to mirror the shape of each tile, thereby giving a very tight fit which is impossible for the birds to crawl under. Each strip is fixed with a clear adhesive to the outside of the panels, thereby never interfering with the panel's effectiveness, nor negating any guarantee either.

The plastic pigeon spikes range comes with a 15-Year warranty when installed in the UK from our supplier. They are made from high-quality Durolon UV Stabilised Polycarbonate and will not become brittle in direct sunlight.

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Access

Residential roofs present their own unique challenges.

Their pitch can be surprisingly steep, making it very difficult to crawl up – plus we need to be low down to access the panel sides of course.

The condition of the tiles is unknown, as they probably haven't been inspected for a long time.

Plus of course, being able to actually reach the roof and ridge line can be difficult as the panels will probably be in the way.

We treat every case on its merit and determine what will be the best solution to keep the cost as low as possible, whilst providing a safe working environment.

Hence we use either scaffolding erected by a professional firm (we arrange this using our preferred suppliers), our own scaffolding tower or a cherry picker which we will hire for the day. We won't work off ladders to proof panels, as they are not safe to undertake this type of work.

With this particular property, neither a scaffold tower nor a cherry picker would have sufficient space, hence scaffolding was erected up to the gutter line to provide a safe working platform.

You can see the pigeons immediately decided this gave them a great place to roost.



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The Job

This was a two person job.

Our technician Sam was in charge, and the first thing the team did upon arrival was to survey the job and make sure they understood the layout.

Together they worked through a Risk Assessment Method Statement (RAMS), checking they knew exactly what needed to be done and how the work would proceed, in what order and who would be doing what.

With full PPE, they then started work.

They raised a ladder onto the scaffolding using a rope pulley system. This ladder was secured and after fitting a push-off at the top of the ladder, this was gently lowered over the panels and onto the roof above the top panel.



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This provided a safe, secure platform to work off, without touching the surface of any of the solar panels.



The edges of all the panels were cleaned using biocide, to not only sterilise the area, but by having clean edges on each panel, this ensures a good surface for the adhesive that will be applied to each strip of plastic proofing. A clean surface makes for a very strong bond once this is applied.



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The gutters were also cleaned of all debris, being very careful to minimise any dropping into the downpipes.

All waste is bagged up, and we take this away at the end of the job, using our waste carrier licence. We don't use your own bin.

Any bird nesting material we can reach will be removed and bagged up too – being mindful that we mustn't disturb any wires or other electrical areas underneath the panels.

In this case, one substantial old nest was located near the bottom left hand edge which was totally removed and the area cleaned thoroughly. The nest itself was extremely dirty, with numerous maggots and other parasites clearly visible.



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The team then systematically work their way around every edge, cutting the plastic spikes to fit perfectly, and using the special adhesive, secure each strip into place.

Tricky, skilled work with the full sun on their backs.

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Once finished, everything is left clean and tidy with all waste removed from the site.

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Net Result

The panels are now totally bird proofed, any accessible nesting materials removed, the area has been sanitised, the gutters cleaned and the instruction given to strike the scaffolding.

The birds will endeavour to still gain entry under the panels, as it will take them a week or so to realise their folly. But they simply cannot gain access.

Eventually, the pigeons move on and the job is done.

01953 603390
service@abateltd.co.uk

