What does a solar site survey really cost your business?

By Ben Brockbank-Naylor | 26 October 2026 | Survey operations

A survey costs more than the time spent looking at the roof. Travel, preparation and the write-up are all part of delivering it. If those hours disappear from the calculation, an installer can underestimate both the cost of winning work and the pressure placed on its surveyors.

Start with the whole visit

For a straightforward planning example, allow two hours in total for travel, the site visit and the admin afterwards. Apply an effective all-in allowance of £25 per hour, including fuel and travel costs, and the survey costs the business about £50. At least 30 minutes of admin is included within those two hours, rather than added on afterwards.

This is an assumption for a worked example, not a surveyed industry average or a claim that every visit takes two hours. A distant rural job, a complex roof or a customer who needs more time can make the real cost higher. A short local visit may come in lower. The useful habit is to count the full job consistently.

Do not confuse the allowance with an hourly wage

The £25 is a blended business allowance. It is not a statement about what a surveyor should be paid. If you already calculate wages, vehicle costs, mileage, insurance and overhead separately, build your own cost from those actual inputs. Do not charge fuel twice simply because it appears in two different spreadsheets.

The same caution applies to admin. If the surveyor spends half an hour writing notes and a designer then spends another half an hour reconstructing the visit, that second period is additional work. Our simple £50 example does not quietly cover an unlimited amount of design and office time. Give that extra work its own place in the model.

Conversion changes the workload needed for the same result

Suppose the business wants 100 sales. If completed-survey-to-sale conversion improved by 50% relative to its starting point, the required survey volume would fall by one-third. Using a rounded illustration of 333 visits, that means about 222 visits for the same sales target, or around 111 visits avoided.

At £50 each, those 111 visits represent £5,550 of survey cost value. At two hours each, they represent 222 hours of surveyor capacity. Fuel is already included in this version of the £50 assumption. There is no extra fuel saving to add on unless you rebuild the model with fuel explicitly excluded.

Released time is not automatically cash in the bank

A salaried surveyor still receives their salary when the diary becomes lighter. The immediate benefit may be capacity: fewer evenings catching up, room for difficult jobs, better customer preparation or the ability to handle growth without immediately adding another person. Cash expenditure only falls where a cost is genuinely avoided.

If you pay per visit or rely on overtime, some of the saving may be more directly visible. If staffing is fixed, track what the released hours are used for. Do not present both the £5,550 and a second wage-based value for the same 222 hours as separate financial savings.

Admin is a good place to look first

A useful site visit should not depend on the surveyor remembering every detail several hours later. Equipment positions, likely cable routes, measured dimensions, customer requests and uncertainties should be captured while they are fresh. Photos help, but a folder of unlabelled images is not a complete handover.

A spoken debrief can make that capture easier. The aim is to organise the surveyor's knowledge into something the office can review, with measurements and estimates kept distinct. It should reduce repeated typing without pretending that every roof measurement or electrical detail can be inferred reliably from a voice note.

A more manageable diary matters to people

When every visit creates another write-up waiting at the end of the day, the diary is fuller than it looks. A lighter admin burden can make the surveyor's job easier and give office staff fewer fragments to chase. That can support morale and leave more attention for the customer, rather than simply filling every released minute with another appointment.

For your own business, measure total time from preparation to completed handover for a sample of jobs. Use that baseline to decide whether Solful or any other process change has actually removed work. The best cost model is the one your team recognises when it looks back at its week.

Ben Brockbank-Naylor is the founder of Solful and has over 10 years of experience in renewable energy. Solful is being built around voice-led surveying, proposal preparation and office review.

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