



ILLUSTRATION BY JAMES COWEN

HOW CAN I STOP PIGEONS NESTING ON SOLAR PANELS?

Q Last year a pair of mating pigeons roosted underneath my solar panels. Now I have eight to ten. Apart from the constant cooing, eggs roll out of the nests and land on the conservatory roof and the guttering gets blocked when the nests break up. I would have to erect scaffolding to put a net up. Is there another deterrent? *Wayno*

A Solar panels fitted to frames on top of roof tiles tend to be the most cost-effective

method of installing a solar panel system on a roof. However, they do create a void between the top of the roof tiles and the underside of the solar panel. During installation, it is worth fitting netting or installing anti-roosting spikes around the void. If it's too late for that you could consider installing a three-dimensional model of a raptor that produces sounds – an ultrasound pigeon repeller – or you could hang reflective surfaces such as old CDs.

Bob Richardson, head of technical, National Federation of Roofing Contractors

READERS' CLINIC

How do we stop our shower curtain getting dirty at the bottom? Send tips and questions to homehelp@sunday-times.co.uk Advice is given without responsibility.

CAN I MOVE ELECTRICITY METERS?

Q I own a ground-floor flat in an Edwardian semi that has been converted into three flats. Unbeknown to me when I purchased it, the electricity meters for all three flats are in my property. I have requested that the owners of flats two and three arrange for these to be relocated because they are causing much inconvenience, but they refuse unless I pay for it – I have to move furniture in order to access them. Surely I am legally entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of my home? I am the sole director of the freehold management company. What can I do to get them moved? *Anonymous*

A I can understand how inconvenient it must be to have all the meters inside your flat. The legal answer will depend on the terms of your lease. One way to approach the problem would be to deny access to your flat, thereby making it the other leaseholders' problem to resolve. However, your lease might require you to give access to your flat for various

purposes. If it does and you agree on how to handle the cost of moving the meters to a communal area, you might find a solution in your capacity as director of the freehold company.

The lease will probably give the freeholder the right to carry out various works and provide services, and to recover the costs of doing so from the leaseholders via a service charge. Moving meters is unlikely to be on the list of services, but typically there is a clause allowing for other services to be provided where they are reasonably required for the proper management of the building.

It is arguably reasonable for meters to be moved to a communal area where they can be freely accessed by all leaseholders. As a leaseholder, you would need to contribute to the costs of the works in the proportion set out in your lease. Any works that would cost an individual leaseholder over £250 would require statutory consultation. You can find out more about that from the Leasehold Advisory Service (lease-advice.org).

Ed Cracknell, partner, Russell-Cooke solicitors

CHEAP ALTERNATIVES TO YORK STONE?

Q Could you recommend a stone paving product that is like natural York stone? Unfortunately we have a large patio and original York stone would be out of our budget. *Peter Dawson*

A The two products I usually see are Marshalls' Heritage York and Stonemarket's Millstone, which is moulded from York stone. These will cost almost half the price of the real stone; Heritage, for instance, is about £55 per sq m and York stone is about £90 per sq m. These alternatives are made from concrete rather than natural stone, so they are not good for the environment.

Another option would be to scour the internet and see if anyone is selling their York stone secondhand – or even giving it away on Freecycle.

Check reclamation yards, and sometimes local builders have excess stone they will sell to you at cost. You may need to collect from several sources, so the colour is likely to differ. More importantly, make sure the dimensions tally.

Georgina Burnett, TV presenter and property vlogger



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