



Catching the sun: Mark Eagles from Smartsparky and Greenspace owners Annie Perkins and Dave Campbell about to install a photovoltaic solar power system at The Greenspace. Photo: MARK TAYLOR

Sunny times for firms testing new solar system

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On a nice sunny day, a 1.2kW photovoltaic solar power system can generate enough electricity to run five refrigerators for 24 hours.

Such a system has just been installed at eco-friendly Hamilton East meeting venue, The Greenspace, as part of a Wel Networks trial of such small-scale solar technology.

Wel Networks is investigating innovative ways to manage network capacity and reliability as demand for electricity grows, and photovoltaic systems – which use solar cells to convert energy from the sun into electricity – are considered the fastest growing power generation technology in the world.

Wel Networks chief executive Julian Elder said alternative technologies could help manage the electricity in their network more efficiently.

“If the innovations we’re trialling prove to provide the advantages we suspect they can, rolling them out to the mass market could also help save customers money on their power bills while

providing environmental benefits.”

The Greenspace co-owner, Annie Perkins, believes the photovoltaic system – which now covers 11.4 square metres of roof space at her Te Aroha St premises – will enhance her company’s commitment to sustainability.

“We’ve put a lot of investment into an eco-retrofit of our building and surrounding grounds,” Ms Perkins said. “But, when we started our project five years ago, this solar technology wasn’t available.

“For us, working with Wel on this trial is a great opportunity to enhance what we’re already doing in terms of energy efficiency and sustainability.” Any excess power generated and not used by The Greenspace can be sold to its electricity retailer.

Wel Networks is also installing a photovoltaic system on the Community House in Raglan, following on from installation of the technology at the company’s corporate headquarters in Te Rapa in August. This system has generated 393kW of electricity since then and averages 4.3kW a day.