A WORKS CO. MANUAL · NO. 17

The Solar Panel Cleaning Works

How to build a recurring round cleaning the panels people forget.

The Works Co. · Trade manuals

Starting and running a UK solar-panel-cleaning business — the honest, practical guide

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How to use this manual

This is a working manual for starting and running a solar-panel-cleaning business in the UK. It is written plainly, by someone who has done the work, for someone who is about to. There is no padding and no theory you cannot use on a Tuesday morning. Every promise in here is paired with its honest cost, because that is the only way you can make a real decision about your time and your money.

You own three things, not one. The manual is the core: it walks you through the trade, the method, the pricing, the kit, the customers and the admin, chapter by chapter. Alongside it sits a **10-file Excel toolkit** and a **60-prompt AI library**. The toolkit turns the ideas in these pages into spreadsheets you can open and fill in today — a pricing calculator, a profit-and-loss tracker, a job database, a quote template and more. The prompt library gives you 60 ready-made prompts for an AI assistant, grouped by chapter, so you can write quotes, draft marketing, plan a round and handle awkward customer emails without starting from a blank page. Appendix A indexes the toolkit and Appendix B indexes the prompts, so you always know what you have and where it lives.

You can read this manual front to back, and on your first pass that is what we would suggest. The chapters build on each other: the method comes before pricing, pricing comes before marketing, and the admin comes once you have decided this is for you. But once you are running, treat it as a reference. When you need to price a 12-panel array, go to the pricing chapter and open toolkit file 04. When a commercial enquiry lands, go to the commercial chapter and open the quote template. The cross-references in the text point you to the right toolkit file and the right prompt each time.

A note on honesty, because it matters more than anything else here. This trade is real and the demand is growing, but it is work — early starts, weather, water, and a van. We have written the numbers as they are in 2026, not as you might wish them to be. If, after reading the first two chapters, you decide this is not the business for you, ask for your money back the same day. Email **refunds@theworksco.co.uk**, and we will refund the £47 with no questions and no friction. Keep the manual, the toolkit and the prompts — they are yours either way. We would rather you spent the £47 on a coffee with someone you love than on a manual for a business that was never going to be yours.

Updates are free for life. When the trade moves, this manual moves with it, and you get the new version at no extra cost.

PART ONE

The Foundations

Chapter 01

The Solar Panel Cleaning Opportunity

On a cold, bright Monday in March, Neil parks his van outside a 1990s semi on the edge of Taunton. The owner, a retired teacher, has noticed her solar generation app showing lower numbers than last spring and she has been staring at a streaky, pollen-dusted array for weeks. Neil does not get the ladders out. He does not climb onto the roof. He connects a carbon-fibre pole to a tank of pure water in the back of the van, extends it up to the gutter line, and works the soft brush across all twelve panels from the ground. Pure water rinses the dirt away and dries spot-free, leaving no smears and no residue.

Twenty minutes after he started, the panels are clean and Neil is coiling his hose. The job is £90. The owner has already pulled up her generation figures on her phone and is watching the output tick up in the late-morning sun. Before he leaves, Neil hands her a quote on a printed sheet: bird-proofing mesh around the array, to stop the pigeons that have started nesting underneath, £420. She says she will talk to her husband. Two days later she books it.

That is the whole business in one driveway. A fast, safe, low-cost clean that takes twenty minutes and earns £90. A visible result the customer can see in their own data. A recurring need, because the panels will be dirty again next year. And a high-margin upsell sitting right there on the roof. This chapter explains why solar panel cleaning is a genuine opportunity in 2026, who it suits, who it does not, and how to use this manual to build a round of your own.

Why solar cleaning, and why now

The reason this trade exists is simple. Dirt, pollen, bird mess, moss and general grime sit on a solar panel and block light from reaching the cells. Less light means less electricity. A panel that is generating less is costing its owner money every single day, and most owners now have an app on their phone that shows them exactly how much. When the numbers drop, they want someone to fix it. That someone is you.

The timing is what makes this more than a niche. The UK is installing solar at a pace it has never managed before — on homes, on warehouse roofs, on schools, on farms, and across large ground-mounted solar farms. Every one of those installations is a future cleaning customer. The base of panels in the country is growing year on year, and unlike a one-off trade, cleaning is recurring. Panels get dirty again. Most domestic customers settle into an annual or biannual clean. Commercial sites run on fixed maintenance schedules. You are not chasing one-off jobs forever; you are building a round that comes back to you.

The method is the other reason this works. The standard, professional way to clean solar panels is a **ground-based water-fed pole using pure (deionised) water** — the same safe, ladder-free method used in modern window cleaning. You stand on the ground. You reach the panels with a telescopic carbon pole. You use a soft brush and pure water only, no detergents and no chemicals. The pure water dries without spots because there is nothing dissolved in it to leave behind. This keeps you off ladders and off roofs, which is safer for you and a genuine selling point for the customer.

It is worth pausing on why pure water matters, because it is the heart of the method and a constant talking point with customers. Ordinary tap water carries dissolved minerals. When it dries on glass, those minerals stay behind as spots and streaks — which is exactly what makes a panel look worse, not better. Pure water has had those minerals stripped out, either with a DI resin vessel or a reverse-osmosis system, so it rinses the dirt off and then evaporates leaving nothing behind. That is why no detergent is needed and why none should be used: the manufacturers generally require water-only cleaning, and chemicals can harm the panel surface or void the warranty. When a customer asks "but won't it streak?", the answer is the whole pitch in one sentence — pure water dries spot-free, with no chemicals near their roof or their electrics.

There are four things that turn a simple cleaning service into a real living:

- **Recurring domestic work** — the bread and butter, a growing base of homeowners who rebook every year.
- **The bird-proofing upsell** — fitting mesh around an array to stop pigeons nesting underneath. High margin, and almost every dirty array is a candidate for it.
- **Commercial and solar-farm contracts** — warehouses, schools, farms and O&M companies, priced bigger and contracted for the long term.
- **Easy cross-sell** — this pairs naturally with a window or gutter round. The pole, the pure water, the van: it is largely the same rig. If you already clean windows, you can add panels. If you start with panels, you can add windows.

The three income brackets

Let us be honest about the money, because that is what you came for. Here is the realistic shape of it in 2026.

Stage	What it looks like	Annual figure
Part-time round	Evenings and weekends, mostly domestic	**£8,000–£20,000/yr**
Full-time solo	Domestic round plus some commercial and bird-proofing	**£25,000–£50,000/yr**
Commercial and staff	Commercial and solar-farm contracts, a second van, employees	**£80,000–£200,000+** revenue

Read those brackets carefully. The first one is a part-time round you can build alongside another job — useful money, but not a replacement income on its own. The second is a full-time solo operator who has learned to add bird-proofing and a little commercial work; this is where most people who commit to it end up, and it is a solid living. The third is a business, not a job: it means commercial contracts, staff to pay, and the commercial kit (rotary brushes, longer reach, sometimes robotic systems) to service large arrays and solar farms. The figure at the top is revenue, not what lands in your pocket — wages and kit come out of it.

The jump from bracket one to bracket two is mostly about consistency and the upsell. The jump from two to three is a different decision entirely, and we cover it properly in Chapter 11 (Scaling the Business) and Part Four on commercial work.

> **COACH MOMENT** Do not start by aiming for the £200,000 number. Aim for your first ten recurring domestic customers and your first bird-proofing job. A round of forty homes that rebook every year, each paying £90, is £3,600 a visit before you have touched commercial work or upsells. Stack those, add the mesh jobs, and the brackets take care of themselves. Big numbers are built from small, repeatable jobs done well.

The model: domestic-recurring, bird-proofing, commercial

The shape of a healthy solar-cleaning business has three layers, and they reinforce each other.

The domestic round is the foundation. Homeowners with solar are a fast-growing group, the work is quick (a typical home array is twenty to thirty minutes), and once someone is on your round they tend to stay. A normal 8–16 panel home array earns a **typical per-job price of £60–£150**, or roughly **£5–£12 per panel**, with a minimum charge so small jobs are still worth your time. Forty to a hundred of these, rebooking annually, is a dependable income and the platform for everything else. We cover pricing in full in Chapter 7.

Bird-proofing is the margin. Pigeons love the warm, sheltered gap under a solar array. They nest there, the mess builds up, and it fouls the panels and the roof. Fitting mesh around the array to seal that gap is a job that typically earns **£300–£600+ per array**, and the margin on it is far better than on a clean. You are already on site, you have already spotted the problem, and you can leave a quote behind the way Neil did. Selling one mesh job can be worth more than a week of cleans. This is the single biggest reason to take the trade seriously, and Chapter 12 (The Add-On Stack) treats it as the headline earner it is.

Commercial is the scale. Warehouses, schools, farms, businesses and full solar farms all have arrays that need cleaning, and the dirtier they get the more generation — and money — their owners lose. These jobs are priced per panel, per kWp, or as a day rate, and they run on annual or biannual maintenance contracts. One commercial contract can be worth more than a chunk of your domestic round, and it is predictable income you can plan around. It also demands more: RAMS (risk assessments and method statements), height and electrical-safety awareness, and proper insurance. Part Four of this manual is dedicated to winning and running this work.

> **MENTOR MOMENT** The operators who do best are the ones who treat the clean as the start of a relationship, not the end of a transaction. Neil did not just clean twelve panels for £90. He left a £420 bird-proofing quote, he will rebook her next spring, and when her neighbour asks who did it, he gets the referral. The £90 is the door opening. What you do once you are through it — the upsell, the rebook, the review, the cross-sell to her windows — is where the business actually lives.

Who this suits, and who it does not

We would rather you knew the truth now than spent £47 finding it out later. So here are two honest lists.

This suits you if you are:

- Comfortable working methodically with your hands and a bit of kit, outdoors, in British weather.
- Happy to sell a benefit — "your panels generate more when they are clean" — without overpromising.
- Organised about routing and rebooking, because a recurring round only pays if you actually keep it on the calendar.
- Willing to learn commercial and height safety properly if you want to move beyond domestic work.
- Patient enough to build a round customer by customer, mostly through local marketing, reviews and referrals.

This is not for you if you are:

- Tempted to cut corners — using detergents to speed a job up, or climbing on a roof you should be reaching from the ground. Detergents can damage panels and void warranties, and shortcuts in this trade get people hurt and lose customers.
- Uncomfortable with the pole-and-pure-water method, or unwilling to spend time getting good at it.
- Looking for money with no effort. A round takes months to build. The first customers are the hardest.
- Not prepared to do commercial safety properly. If you want the bigger contracts, RAMS and electrical-awareness are not optional paperwork — they are the entry ticket.

If that second list describes you, spend the £47 on something else. We mean that plainly: we would rather you spent it on a coffee with someone you love than on a manual for a business that wasn't yours. If the first list sounds like you, read on.

The cost of getting started

Honesty about money cuts both ways, so here is the cost. A realistic start-up sits at **£1,000–£3,500**. At the lower end that is a carbon water-fed pole, a soft solar brush, a DI resin vessel to make pure water, a tank, and the vehicle you already own. At the higher end it is a full van-mounted pure-water system that lets you work all day without refilling. You do not need the top of that range to begin. Chapter 4 walks through the kit list and shows you exactly where the money goes and what you can defer.

The maths is friendly. If your kit costs £1,500 and a typical home clean is £90, you have covered your equipment in roughly seventeen jobs. Add a couple of bird-proofing jobs at £400 and you are clear faster than that. This is a low-capital trade with quick payback — one of the reasons it is worth your attention.

There are running costs beyond the kit, and you should know them up front. Public liability insurance is the main one, because you are working around customers' roofs and electrical equipment. Then there is fuel, the consumables for your pure-water system (DI resin needs replacing as it gets used up), and the ordinary costs of being in business — a bank account, simple accounting, and a little spend on local marketing to find your first customers. None of these are large on a domestic round, but they are real, and we work through the legal and financial setup properly in Chapter 3 (Setting Up the Business), including sole trader versus limited, HMRC registration, and the £90,000 VAT threshold you will want to keep an eye on as you grow.

How to use this manual, the Toolkit and the Prompt Library

You have bought more than a book. The bundle is this manual, a **10-file Excel toolkit**, and a **60-prompt AI library**, all for £47, with free updates for life and a same-day, no-friction refund if it is not for you (email refunds@theworksco.co.uk and keep the materials).

Use the three together. The manual teaches the trade chapter by chapter — foundations, then the craft, then customers, then commercial, then growing. The **Toolkit** turns the teaching into working spreadsheets: the self-assessment scorecard (toolkit 01), your accounts (toolkit 02), the job database and CRM (toolkit 03), the pricing calculator (toolkit 04), the quote template (toolkit 08), quality standards (toolkit 07) and the 90-Day Checklist (toolkit 10). The **Prompt Library** gives you ready-made AI prompts for the parts most people find hardest — writing quotes, framing the output-and-ROI pitch, drafting commercial outreach, and producing local marketing.

Read in order if you are new. If you are already a window or gutter cleaner adding panels, you can move faster — skim the foundations and go straight to the craft and the cross-sell in Chapter 6. Either way, keep the Toolkit open beside you. A chapter you read and a spreadsheet you actually fill in are two different things, and the second one is where the business gets built.

What success looks like in one year

Picture Neil twelve months from that Monday in Taunton. He has a domestic round of around sixty homes that rebook every spring, most paying £80–£100 a clean. He has fitted bird-proofing on roughly one in five of them, each job £300–£600, which on its own has been some of his best-paid work of the year. He has cross-sold window cleaning to a third of the round, so many visits now earn twice. And he has landed his first two commercial contracts — a local primary school and a small warehouse — on biannual maintenance, which gives him income he can count on before the year even starts.

He is comfortably inside the **£25,000–£50,000** full-time solo bracket, and he can see the path to the next one if he decides to hire and take on more commercial work. He got there one driveway at a time.

That is the opportunity. The next chapter helps you decide, honestly, whether it is yours to take. Turn the page, open toolkit 01, and let us find out.

Chapter 02

Is This For You?

It is a wet Wednesday morning in Crewe, and Saira is standing in a customer's back garden looking up at a 14-panel array on a south-facing roof. The owner is hovering at the patio door with a mug of tea, half-watching, half-sceptical. Saira has done this before. She checks the panels for cracks, confirms nothing looks damaged, fills her tank from the van, and feeds the carbon-fibre pole up to the roofline. Twenty-five minutes later the panels are spotless, drying spot-free because the water is pure, and she has not touched a ladder once. The job is £95. Before she leaves she hands over a written note: the panels were heavily soiled with pollen and a band of bird mess along the bottom row, and there is a gap under the array where pigeons have started nesting. She quotes £420 to fit bird-proofing mesh. The owner books it on the spot.

That is the work. Quiet, methodical, ladder-free, and more profitable than it looks from the patio door. The question this chapter answers is simple and honest: is it for you?

We are not going to talk you into it. A solar-panel-cleaning round suits some people very well and other people not at all, and the difference is mostly temperament, not talent. The core method is genuinely low-skill — you can learn to clean a panel safely in an afternoon. The money, though, grows with the things that take more from you: organised routing, the confidence to sell bird-proofing, and the willingness to learn commercial and height safety properly. So read the markers below honestly. The point is not to pass a test. The point is to spend your £47, and the months after it, on something that is actually yours.

The green lights: who this suits

There is a recognisable shape to people who do well at this. None of it is glamorous, and all of it is learnable, but if several of these already describe you, the road is shorter.

You are methodical. The work rewards doing the same thing the same way every time. Fill the tank, check for damage, work top to bottom, rinse, move on. Panels that are cleaned in a careful, repeatable order come out spot-free; panels cleaned in a rush come out streaky and earn you a callback. People who like a system, who do not mind a slightly boring routine done well, thrive here.

You are comfortable with the pole and the pure-water method. This is the heart of the trade: a soft brush on a telescopic carbon-fibre water-fed pole, fed with pure (deionised) water, worked from the ground. Pure water dries with no residue, so you never wipe or buff — you brush, you rinse, you leave. If the idea of handling a four-or-five-metre pole and reading a roofline from below feels manageable rather than alarming, you are most of the way there. It is the same safe, ladder-free method professional window cleaners use, and plenty of people in this manual come to it from exactly that direction.

You can sell the output benefit. This is the one that separates a £25,000 round from a £45,000 one. Dirty panels generate less electricity. A customer does not buy "clean panels" — they buy more generation from the system they already paid thousands for. If you can explain that calmly, point at their own dirt as the evidence, and let the numbers do the talking, you will close jobs and win the recurring annual or biannual rebook. You do not need to be a smooth talker. Honest and specific beats slick every time.

You are organised about routing. A solar round is a logistics business wearing overalls. Money is made or lost in how tightly you cluster your jobs. Drive forty minutes between two £80 jobs and your day falls apart; line up six homes on three neighbouring streets and you are home by two with £500 in the diary. If you naturally think in routes, postcodes and "while I'm over there", you have an edge. The same instinct keeps your recurring book healthy: when a street has three solar homes, the operator who cleaned one and quietly noted the other two will be the one cleaning all three by next spring.

You are honest about what you find. Saira's written note — heavy pollen, bird mess along the bottom row, pigeons nesting in the gap — is not a sales gimmick. It is the truth, written down, and it is why the owner trusted the £420 quote that followed. The operators customers keep are the ones who report what they see plainly, including when a panel looks cracked or an array is past its best and should not be cleaned at all. If you are someone who tells people the real state of things, that habit is worth real money here.

You are willing to learn commercial and height safety. The bigger money — warehouse roofs, schools, farms, solar farms — comes with real responsibility. RAMS paperwork, height awareness, treating every array as live electrical equipment, never cleaning a damaged panel. You do not need any of this on day one of a domestic round. But the operators who break past £80,000 are the ones who treated commercial safety as a skill to learn properly rather than a hurdle to dodge.

> **COACH MOMENT** Read those five again and be honest about which ones are already true and which are aspirations. Here is the reassuring part: only two of them — methodical, and comfortable with the equipment — really need to be near-natural. The other three are skills. Selling the output benefit, routing tightly, and learning commercial safety can all be built in your first ninety days (see Chapter 14). If you scored yourself low on those three but high on the first two, you are a better candidate than you think.

The red flags: who this does not suit

We would rather lose a sale here than have you ten weeks in, frustrated and out of pocket. Some traits make this work a poor fit, and a couple of them are genuinely dangerous.

You are tempted by detergents and shortcuts. This is the big one. The method is water-only for a reason that is both a rule and a selling point: panel manufacturers generally require water-only cleaning, and detergents can damage panels or void the warranty. If your instinct when faced with stubborn bird mess is to reach for a chemical or a stronger scrub, this trade will fight you. The operators who last are the ones who trust pure water and a soft brush, and who would rather make a second pass than risk a customer's £6,000 array. There is no shortcut that is worth a warranty claim.

You are uncomfortable with the equipment. If working a long pole feels permanently awkward, if you dislike the kit, if managing a tank and a pure-water setup feels like a chore you will resent every morning — that discomfort does not usually fade. The equipment is the job. You will spend most of your working day with a pole in your hands. It should feel like a tool you are glad to own, not one you are wrestling.

You will not do commercial safety properly. Cutting corners on a domestic roof from the ground is hard to do — the method is forgiving. Cutting corners on a commercial array is how people get hurt and how you lose the contract and the insurance behind it. If you can already tell that you would skip the RAMS, ignore the live-electrical awareness, or talk your way past an accreditation rather than earning it, then either commit to doing commercial work properly or stay domestic-only. Both are honest choices. Half-doing the safety is not.

You need fast, predictable money from week one. This is less a flaw than a timing problem, but it sinks people, so it belongs here. A round takes weeks to build. Your first jobs come slowly, your recurring book is empty, and the bird-proofing and commercial income that lift the numbers arrive later, not on day three. If you are walking into this with no buffer and a need to bill £600 in your first week, the pressure will push you towards underpricing and shortcuts — the exact habits that wreck a round. The trade rewards patience in the first quarter. If you cannot give it that, fix the buffer before you start.

> **MENTOR MOMENT** Years in, the operators I have watched fail almost never failed at the cleaning. They failed at one of two things: they got bored of the routine and let standards slip, or they got greedy on a commercial job they were not ready for and frightened a facilities manager into never calling again. The craft is the easy part. The discipline is the trade. If you read the red flags and felt a small flicker of recognition on the shortcuts one, that flicker is worth more to you than anything else in this chapter. Respect it.

The honest reality of the money

Here is the shape of it, with no gloss. The core method is low-skill and quick to learn. That is good news and a warning at the same time, because it means a domestic-only round of one-off cleans is a modest living. Realistically, a part-time round earns **£8,000–£20,000 a year**, and a full-time solo operator doing domestic work plus some commercial sits around **£25,000–£50,000 a year**. That is a real, honest, ladder-free income, and for a lot of people it is exactly the size of business they want.

The money grows in two directions, and both ask more of you. The first is **bird-proofing**. Fitting mesh around an array to stop pigeons nesting underneath is a high-margin add-on, typically **£300–£600 or more per array**, and on the right job it can earn more than the clean that introduced it. Saira's Wednesday morning is a perfect example: a £95 clean that surfaced a £420 mesh job. The clean gets you on site and builds the trust; the bird-proofing is where a chunk of the profit lives.

The second direction is **commercial**. Warehouse roofs, schools, agricultural sites and solar farms, priced per panel, per kWp, or as a day rate, on annual or biannual maintenance contracts. This is how operators reach **£80,000–£200,000 or more** in revenue, usually with staff, a second system, and commercial kit such as rotary or robotic cleaners for the largest arrays. It is a different business from a domestic round — more paperwork, more responsibility, more reward — and you do not have to go there. But it is the ceiling, and it is worth knowing the ceiling is high.

A simple way to picture the three tiers:

Tier	Typical annual figure	What it takes
Part-time round	£8,000–£20,000	Domestic cleans, evenings/weekends, tight local routing
Full-time solo	£25,000–£50,000	Domestic round plus bird-proofing and some commercial
Commercial + staff	£80,000–£200,000+	Maintenance contracts, a team, a second system, larger kit

The honest summary: the entry is easy and the floor is modest, but the upside is real and it is earned with bird-proofing skill, commercial discipline, and a recurring book of work rather than with anything clever. Chapter 7 covers the pricing in full, and Chapter 12 lays out the whole add-on stack.

The self-assessment scorecard

Reading markers in a chapter is one thing; scoring yourself honestly against them is another. **Toolkit file 01** is a self-assessment scorecard built from exactly the green lights and red flags above. It walks you through a short set of questions — your comfort with the equipment, your appetite for routine, your willingness to sell, your attitude to commercial safety and to the water-only rule — and gives you a candid read on where you sit.

Use it before you spend another penny on kit. Be hard on yourself, especially on the shortcuts question and the commercial-safety question, because those are the two that genuinely matter for whether this is a fit. The scorecard is not there to flatter you into the trade. It is there to tell you the truth while the truth still costs you nothing. If it points you towards a domestic-only round rather than a commercial empire, that is a useful answer, not a failure — plenty of good livings are built entirely on tidy local rounds.

A word on the £47, and what to do next

This manual, the 10-file Excel toolkit, and the 60-prompt AI library cost **£47** together. If you reach the end of this chapter, run the scorecard, and conclude this is not your trade, we mean this plainly: we would rather you spent the £47 on a coffee with someone you love than on a manual for a business that was never going to be yours. The refund is same-day and friction-free — email refunds@theworksco.co.uk, keep all the materials, and we will not ask you to justify it. Updates are free for life. We would honestly rather give you your money back than have you stuck.

But if the green lights mostly fit, if the red flags did not catch you, and if a wet-Wednesday £95 clean that turns into a £420 bird-proofing job sounds like the kind of work you would be glad to do — then you are exactly who this manual was written for. The next step is to make it legal and safe before you touch a customer's roof. Chapter 3 covers the business setup: sole trader versus limited, HMRC, the £90,000 VAT threshold, the water-only rule, insurance, and the height and electrical-safety awareness that keep you and your customers protected. Run the scorecard first. Then turn the page.

Chapter 03

Setting Up the Business

Grant cleaned his first paid array on a Friday morning in March, on a quiet cul-de-sac in Redditch. Eleven panels on a south-facing roof, thick with winter grime and a grey streak of pollen along the bottom edge. He worked from the ground with a carbon pole and pure water, twenty-five minutes start to finish, and left with £85 in his account and the owner watching the inverter app on his phone.

What Grant did not have that Friday was a clear answer to a simple question the owner asked while the kettle boiled: "So are you a proper business, then? You insured?" Grant said yes. He was telling the truth, just about. He had registered as a sole trader the week before and bought a public liability policy two days earlier. But it had been a scramble, and a scramble is a poor way to start something you mean to keep.

This chapter is about doing that part properly, before the kit and before the first knock on a door. The good news is that setting up a solar-panel-cleaning business in the UK in 2026 is genuinely simple. There is no licence to clean panels. There is no exam. What there is, instead, is a short list of decisions and rules that, once you have them straight, you never have to worry about again. Get them right on a quiet week and they protect you on every busy one.

Sole trader or limited company

This is the first fork in the road, and most people starting out take the simpler one.

A **sole trader** is you, trading as yourself. You register with HMRC, you keep records of what you earn and spend, and once a year you file a Self Assessment tax return and pay income tax and National Insurance on your profit. There is no separate legal entity. The business is you, and you are the business.

A **limited company** is a separate legal person. It owns the contracts, the bank account and the liabilities. You become a director and usually the shareholder. You file accounts and a confirmation statement at Companies House every year, run payroll or take dividends, and pay corporation tax on company profit. It is more administration and usually means an accountant, but it caps your personal liability and can look more solid to a commercial client.

For a one-van solar-cleaning round, **start as a sole trader.** It is free to set up, you can register online with HMRC in under an hour, and the paperwork is light. You can register the moment you start trading, and you must tell HMRC by 5 October following the end of

That was Chapter 1.

The other twenty chapters, the Excel toolkit and the AI prompt library are in the full bundle.

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