

How solar helps the Hawking family farm with a lighter touch



David Stevenson, Mole Energy

Diversification isn't always about helping farms to survive. For David Hawking, it's about ensuring sustainability and enabling his business to thrive in the future. And solar plays a key role.

Nestled between Bath and Bristol, the Hawkings have tended to the 121ha (300 acre) beef and arable holding at Manor Farm, Upton Cheyney, for five generations.

The family is focused on farming with the lightest touch possible, linking production to the local landscape and wildlife. That means using organic and stewardship methods, grass-feeding their beef, planting trees and hedges, embracing regeneration and cutting their carbon footprint wherever possible.

For the Hawkings, everything comes back to the environment

Their drive to diversify is no different. In recent years, the family has launched a farm shop, chilli farm, flower farm and forge. Tourists stay in the family's holiday cottage and glamping tents, and their Tythe Barn hosts weddings, retreats, workshops and more. Eight other businesses also call Manor Farm 'home': including a sausage maker, florist, engineering firm, artists and a range of complementary health, fitness and yoga practitioners.

Revenues from these business streams are re-invested back into the farm, to help support the delivery of its carbon neutral plan now and in the future.

The Solar Factor

Solar has played a pivotal role in the Hawkings' sustainability journey.

Earlier this year, the family commissioned Mole Energy to install a 66 panel, 22kW solar array and Tesla Powerwall battery storage system which helps power the eight independent businesses operating on the site.

The farm's business tenants love the solar panels and now pitch themselves as part of a sustainable business community, to attract eco-conscious customers.

The Hawkings have also benefited from the marketing perks that come with solar. New sustainability-focused businesses have leased units on the farm, and several couples and families have chosen to book weddings and holidays having visited and seen their panels.

In this way, solar sustainability is now a key selling point for the Hawkings. More money is spent in the family's non-agricultural businesses, which is then reinvested into making their farming operations more environmentally friendly.

Better for business, better for the environment. Everybody wins!

Straightforward Solar

Installing solar panels and battery storage is one of the easiest and most impactful ways to build sustainability into your business operations and significantly reduce energy bills.

"Mole Energy did everything they said they would. **It was so well organised. The whole process was seamless from start to finish.** They met every deadline and installation date.

"It was incredible given everything else that is going on right now. The team were really lovely. Not only that, but it was also great fun.

"I WhatsApp my daughter every day to update her on how much energy we are generating. **My family have their fingers crossed that I'll get over it - I don't think I will!**"

David Hawking - Farmer



To find out how solar and battery storage could benefit your business, speak to the Mole Energy experts today.



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