

# Solar-powered cider? That'll do nicely!

David Stevenson, Mole Energy



## Founded in 2002 - when Barny Butterfield began pressing apples in his lean-to shed - the Sandford Orchards' story remains intertwined with Mole Valley Farmers two decades later.

Based in deepest Devon, Barny told us: "It's a perfect microclimate for growing cider apples and we're blessed with some of the finest bittersweet apple orchards in the world."

Sandford Orchards operates from the UK's oldest working cider mill. Barny added: "When I was growing up in the 1980s, The Old Ciderworks, that we've since restored, was being used as a Mole Valley Farmers' fertiliser plant. And the former manager of that plant is now a customer for our cider vinegar. His brother sells me apples - and Mole Valley Farmers is one of our best customers!"

### Solar solves a pressing problem

Since 2017, the partnership has expanded to include Mole Energy, the renewable energy division of Mole Valley Farmers. First with the installation of a 15kWp solar array, at the Old Ciderworks, and then with the installation of a 12.5kWp system, on the warehouse roof, in 2018.

Making the switch was a natural next step. "All farming is solar energy in the end," said Barny. "Our orchards capture the sun's energy and converts it into fantastically tasty apples to create the best possible cider."

"Our energy consumption was increasing as the business grew. Installing solar enabled us to better manage our costs and give us additional growth capacity."

Sandford Orchards decided to develop their solar even further, but first had to upgrade their three-phase energy supply from their substation, Western Power - now known as the National Grid. Barny told us: "Western Power handled that project very neatly and the whole process took eight months and cost around £8,000."

With the upgrade complete, Mole Energy were then able to install a further 96-panel, 37.44kWp system, capable of producing around 40,000kWh per annum - **with the potential to offset CO<sub>2</sub> by over 9,000kg**, over the same period.

**"I'm a big fan of renewable energy; I think it's nothing short of miraculous.** Our bills are still appreciable, but pleasingly lower than they would have been," concluded Barny. "And the best bit? Anything I can produce myself, I don't have to buy from someone else!"



"For us, **solar is an absolute open goal.** We are busiest in the summer when the sun is shining the longest. Having reviewed when we use the most power and what we use it for, we realised that solar power made perfect sense. **Most business owners will be surprised by how much free solar energy they can generate and use.**

"**Mole Energy has a great reputation regionally and I trusted them to do a good job.** They communicated well, worked quickly and did what they said they would."

"**Their service has been excellent,** and we've now booked two additional solar arrays: a 35.7kWp and 14.03kWp for installation in 2023."

Barny Butterfield - Founder, Sandford Orchards

For a quote or to discuss your solar power needs call our team today



01803 732946  
info@moleenergy.com

