

## Reaping the Benefits of Solar

### Case Study of Diversification on a Cornish Farm

A Solar Farm in Wadebridge has demonstrated that energy generation and agriculture can be combined effectively.

As a 4<sup>th</sup> generation livestock farmer, Andrew asked himself how he could optimise the grazing land. "It's in the nature of a farmer to harness what's around them and you need to diversify to keep farms going. I thought to myself, why not farm the sun?"

BELECTRIC recognise that solar farming must co-exist with traditional farming practices. They worked closely with the landowner to provide a harmonious approach to integrating the solar farm development into the wider farming operations. Together, the farmer and developer listened to the concerns of neighbours and elected to use thin-film frameless modules to greatly reduce the visual impact of the system. The system developer pulled out all the stops to construct the solar farm in just 4 weeks.

The 70-strong installation team stayed in The Olde House holiday cottages and "were a pleasure to host". The overall experience was extremely positive



*"Sheep farming is still our core business and the solar farm has blended in really well. The solar farm is a big part of our business now and visitors to the Olde House are really interested in it", Andrew Hawkey, Farmer [www.theoldehouse.co.uk](http://www.theoldehouse.co.uk)*

and Andrew would not hesitate to recommend that others undertake similar projects in an appropriate location.

A trailer ride around the farm has always been part of the holiday cottage offering but now the sheep grazing areas also demonstrate solar harvesting. Many visitors are interested in renewable energy and the tour highlights the diversification of modern day farming.



Andrew Hawkey installed one of Cornwall's first 250kW solar arrays at Penpont Farm in 2011 to supply electricity directly to The Olde House holiday cottages. In 2013 the 5MW ground-mounted system was developed on the 550 acre farm.

*The careful layout of the solar arrays means that only 5% of grazing land has been lost, the fields are still fully accessible to agricultural vehicles, and has also introduced shade which is of great benefit to the sheep during the warmer months.*

#### Funding for the Community

As part of the development commitment, under section 106 of the planning permission, the developer, BELECTRIC, has pledged £10,000 every year for the next 25 years for the benefit of the local community.

WREN (Wadebridge Renewable Energy Network) are administering the fund and launched an open competition for local projects that focussed on young people, fuel poverty and climate change. Following assessment from a panel of parish representatives the first tranche of funding has been divided up between extremely worthy local causes.



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