

Real-life solar success story

This is Darren and Jackie Brown's fifth solar installation – they are now running three homes and two business buildings almost completely off solar.

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The visitors' centre and cellar door at Puddleduck Vineyard is now running completely off solar power, along with the vineyard itself. Darren and Jackie Brown are somewhat old hats at this solar thing, with the cellar door being their fifth installation – three residential homes, the wine-making facility and now the cellar door are running almost entirely off solar.

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The vineyard runs just two months of the year, so the energy generated during the 10 down-months goes back into the grid, bringing in compensation from the power company.

The couple's main goal is to be energy neutral. The only leftover additions are the two homes requiring solar hot water systems. All the solar power systems have been installed for less than 15 months, with the cellar door panels recently installed supporting refrigeration and heating/cooling every day during business hours. This means the panels don't have a chance to reverse energy back into the grid, but supports itself perfectly with the scales balanced between incoming and outgoing. That means zero dollars in power bills.

Darren was impressed with the installation and the team, saying, "Easy, so easy. They were really good to deal with, the guys were fantastic; no mess - they turned up one day, and then they were gone."

'Easy, so easy.'

- Darren Brown,
owner and operator of
Puddleduck Vineyard



The Stats

Solar Panels

40 x 260W
(REC, Norway)

Inverters

1 x 10kW
(Fronius, Austria)

Annual Power Generated

12,100 kWh

Annual Power Savings

\$3,025

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While the other installations the couple have are a bit older and the new technology wasn't available then, the new installation comes with smartphone monitoring.

Austrian inverter manufacturer Fronius's advanced remote-monitoring system and SMS alerts allow users to monitor their systems from a user-friendly app.

Darren said he didn't have any immediate plans for more solar panels, but he did mention that there was room on some of the houses and the winery for a couple more panels should the time should come.

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