



**Hampshire
County Farms**
Supporting the future of farming

Hampshire County Farms annual newsletter 2021/22



Hampshire
County Council

www.hants.gov.uk/countyfarms

Foreword



Hampshire County Council is the proud custodian of over 30 farms – one of the larger local authority-owned agricultural estates – which provide opportunities for talented farmers to develop their skills in agriculture whilst contributing to Hampshire’s quality of place and environment.

Farming is a sector undergoing a once-in-a-generation change. Defra’s Agricultural Transition Plan is phasing out the Common Agricultural Policy and bringing in new domestic arrangements to reward farmers for producing public goods on their land. At the same time, it is recognised that ongoing challenges in supply chains, energy markets and in the Ukraine, have hit the agricultural industry hard with rocketing costs, short supplies and labour issues. To see our farm tenants succeed and thrive notwithstanding these difficulties and to support them through change to embrace new sustainable approaches is really important to us.

This year has seen a high level of change on the farms estate - we have said goodbye to 6 of our longstanding tenants who have moved onto the next opportunity having developed their experience and knowledge. As a result, we have been able to welcome an above average number of new tenants, who we now look forward to working with on our collective priorities in the coming years.

Our goal is to work hand-in-hand with our County Farm tenants, recognising the vital role of the rural economy in Hampshire, the barriers that can exist to becoming a farmer, and the vital importance of land management to tackle the climate emergency. Standout initiatives include our new lettings and tenant selection process which has given us the pleasure of interacting with so many aspiring agricultural entrepreneurs this year, and also the fantastic efforts by our farmers to enter environmental schemes and engage with their communities, whether by farm shop or through hosting some fun educational events.

One year has passed since our new County Farms policy was put in place, and in this report we have highlighted the progress on the commitments we made. We thank all our tenant farmers for their passion and dedication in furthering these aims.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Felicity Lee".

Director CCBS
Hampshire County Council



Our priorities to 2050

Last summer we rolled out our new policy which outlined our vision for a better farming future. Our priorities are now focused on:

Tenancy

To provide inclusive opportunities for new entrants into a sustainable and innovative farming environment, and opportunities for existing tenants to progress to larger holdings.

Land management and farming systems

To achieve sustainable and adaptive systems of farming and land management to support high quality environmental, social and economic outcomes for Hampshire.

Financial management

To support tenants to establish and grow viable agricultural businesses by providing farms from which they can operate and thrive for the duration of their tenancy.

The Farm Estate

To maintain the scale and quality of the land and assets available to Hampshire County Farms.



Supporting the future of farming to contribute to Hampshire's quality of place and environment.

Our farmers are making impressive progress both in the industry and with our farms at Hampshire County Farms.

Here's a quick overview of some of their achievements.

Brooklands Farm

Husband and wife team Dan and Sam started their tenancy at Brooklands Farm in 2015, an 80 acre farm on the edge of the New Forest. Last year they secured a Farming in Protected Landscapes grant to make Brooklands Farm resilient to climate change. They also formed a steering group with other land managers to improve water quality and wildlife habitat.

"We are always looking into being as sustainable as possible and the Hampshire County Farms team are always at the end of the phone for advice".



Ravenscot Farm and West Lane Farm

Richard and Patricia have just completed the first year of their new countryside stewardship scheme. They now cut hedges in alternate years and have introduced 5 acres of wild bird seed mix, 5 areas of low input grass and 13 acres of grass has been replaced with a grass and legume seed mix.

"We think it's best to embrace these schemes now as this is the direction of travel for agricultural land and it will only accelerate."



Little Abshot Farm

Peter Barfoot, longstanding tenant of Hampshire County Farms, has received his CBE for Services to Sustainable Farming.

“My first rule of sustainability is profitability, without being profitable as a farmer your business will not be sustainable for very long”.

South Stoke Farm

With 30 years' experience caring for other people's dairy cows in this country and abroad, Nicki and Jon Proctor felt it was time to have a go for themselves. South Stoke Farm now produces around 1 million litres of milk a year.

They've recently begun welcoming school children to their family-run dairy farm. Working with charity, the Country Trust, they're helping connect children with the land that sustains us all.

“Hampshire County Farms has given us the opportunity to farm in our own right in a productive, positive and enlightening way.”

Down Farm

The Shergold family have started a doorstep delivery service, branded Cross Valley Milk, to sustain their dairy farm, delivering their fresh pasteurised milk around the Winchester area.

“We have a very close and successful working relationship with Hampshire County Farms and this project would not have been possible without their support.”



Peter Barfoot receiving his CBE from the Princess Royal

It's been rewarding to see some of our longstanding tenants move on to the next step of their farming story.

William and Katy Fox were tenant farmers with Hampshire County Farms until spring 2022. Here's what they had to say.



"Hampshire County Farms did what it said on the tin - it got us going. We've now gone on and purchased a farm and we are really living our dreams now. Without Hampshire County Council and taking on our tenancy, that wouldn't have been possible. This really has been a good foot on the farming ladder for us."

Ray Caddy was a successful tenant of Hampshire County Farms, with us until autumn 2021. Here's what he had to say about his experience:

"Having my own farm was a dream come true, giving me the opportunity to farm in my own right and develop both my business and agricultural skills through both the highs and lows of farming."

"From my experience, Hampshire County Farms have been good landlords, allowing me the freedom to run my own business - I would never have been able to afford my own farm. It has been a privilege to bring up my family in a rural, agricultural environment too."

"My advice to any incoming tenant would be make sure you have a realistic business plan and a passion for farming - and go for it!"



It's been a busy year for Hampshire County Farms with an unusually large number of new tenants joining us. This has provided a valuable opportunity to ensure our tenants' farming plans work towards County Farms newly refocused priorities.

Our new tenants have agreed to deliver the following outcomes:

- Keep sustainable food production at the core of farm activities.
- Protect the farm's soil health and structure, keeping it in good condition and putting in organic matter content.
- Protect the farm's natural resources including the local water environment which will be vulnerable to nitrate and pesticide leaching.
- Improve on-farm biodiversity and connectivity between neighbouring farms, local sites of importance for nature conservation, and within the wider landscape through good management and by providing joined-up wildlife-rich habitats.
- Strive towards net zero greenhouse gas emissions with a well-considered plan for monitoring, mitigation and adaptation.
- Boost pollinators and promote farmland bird abundance on farm through good management, monitoring and land management practices.
- Farm sustainably, adopt better performance measures, with a willingness to undergo independent accreditation and/or periodic auditing to evidence strong performance.
- Adopt and uphold exemplar animal welfare standards.
- Engage with the public and play an active part in increasing the understanding of farming and rural Hampshire in the local community.

Meet the new tenants

This year we've been delighted to welcome many new tenants who we're excited to be working with in the coming years.

Bushfield Farm

Two existing County Farm tenants, Andy Kirby and Tom Comley are collaborating on a new forward-thinking venture by taking on Bushfield Farm as a shared opportunity. They plan to add value to their existing farm businesses while embracing County Farms' priorities by developing their regenerative farming practices.

Andy and Tom's working relationship grew out of a mentoring arrangement set up informally between the neighbours when Tom took on his starter farm a few years ago.

Andy Kirby:

"In a time when farming faces significant change, more than perhaps seen in a century, it is exciting to have the opportunity to take a bold step in a new direction diversifying into retailing our own produce and hopefully collaborating with other county farm tenants to supply locally produced high quality food, with a business partner equally as passionate about sustainable practices, building resilience to climate change and aiming to achieve the highest standards.

"County Farms has been a springboard and lifeline for my arable contracting business, enabling me show my farm to build trust in my customer base".



Andy Kirby



Tom Comley

Tom Comley:

"Andy and I have differing, but complementing, skillsets including precision arable, livestock and contracting experience, and are very supportive of Hampshire County Farms. Together we plan to open a farm shop at Bushfield Farm, themed to showcase the best of Hampshire County Farms produce and possibly to include a small café and farm education facility".

Andy and Tom will enhance soil health over the period using rotational herbal leys and livestock. Biodiversity will get a boost with the introduction of pollen and nectar-rich margins, tying in with nearby nature reserves significant for their butterfly interest. Stepping stone and corridor habitat between their farms, such as wild-bird seed covers, improved hedgerows, and beetle banks, will be introduced to significantly improve wildlife connectivity within the landscape.

Meet the new tenants

Little Church Farm

Farmer Jake Smith intends to grow his flock of sheep and rear more animals during his tenancy at Little Church Farm. He's in the midst of applying for sustainable farming and stewardship schemes, and plans to introduce herbal leys which will increase the numbers of insects and pollinators as well as low input grassland to protect the River Whitewater that runs through the farm.



Jake Smith



Newhouse Farm

Newhouse Farm

Lester Brooks and his family have been busy starting up their micro dairy since taking over the tenancy at Newhouse Farm, welcoming the arrival of their first calf. Community is at the heart of their future plans with well-considered educational visits and a brand new farm shop: they'll be making their own ice-cream too. The couple are striving to get the farm onto an environmental stewardship scheme, farming in a sustainable way.

Lower Wangfield Farm

Young Liam Harvey has always been interested in agriculture and giving back to the community, and this is central to his plans for his new tenancy at Lower Wangfield Farm. He sees the farm business expanding to include sheep, cattle as well as hay and straw with a longer-term vision of farm visits for the local community and schools and a farm shop.



Meet the new tenants

Lyde Green Farm

Lucy and Adam Johnstone, together with their son Freddie, are fulfilling a lifelong dream in their new tenancy at Lyde Green Farm. Their efforts in sustainable food production, exemplar standards and high animal welfare have already led to an impressive seal of approval by Arla Foods, who have recently awarded them a milk contract. The team have now set their sights on achieving the exemplar Arla 360 accreditation and driving forward their dairy enterprise, while immersing themselves within the local community.



Lyde Green Farm



Richard Stiles

Upper Brownwich Farm

Richard Stiles, who has recently taken on the tenancy of Upper Brownwich Farm, is focused on outcomes which meet Hampshire County Farms' priorities. These include bringing in livestock at what has been an arable farm to increase organic matter and soil health. He's also introducing environmental stewardship schemes and farming methods which support biodiversity and wildlife habitats such as the installation of barn owl boxes.

Looking forward to 2022/23




Ten county farms have now joined farmer cluster groups. These will enable the farms to deliver joined up and enhanced biodiversity for the benefit of the wider landscape.


Newhouse and South Stoke Farms both hosted LEAF Open Farm Sunday events, just one of the ways that our tenant farmers involve local communities with their work.

We have formed a **partnership with CPRE Hampshire** for the second phase of their Hedgerow Heroes project. Together we will be working with local schools and the community, to restore and replant hedges on our coastal farms estate with the aim to raise awareness of the incredible value provided by hedgerows for tackling biodiversity loss and climate change, and for more sustainable farming.

For more information contact:

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