



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

Hampshire County Farms annual newsletter 2022/23



Hampshire
County Council

www.hants.gov.uk/countyfarms



Foreword

Farming plays a vitally important role in our economy whilst also contributing to Hampshire's rich and varied quality of place and environment.

In the face of both sharply increasing fuel, feed and fertiliser prices, and also in the midst of transitioning agricultural policy at a national level, our farmers have continued to work tirelessly to produce food for us all.

In autumn 2022, following a Full Council Motion acknowledging the intense pressures facing the agricultural sector, I wrote to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to request that greater financial support be provided to enable farmers to continue to produce food for the UK market at sustainable prices. We will continue to lobby Government for a fairer deal for Hampshire's farmers, and the County Council will do whatever we can to support the sector. Furthermore, we encourage residents to play their part in supporting farmers for example, by buying local produce at markets, visiting farm shops, or enjoying farm open days and agricultural shows.

Working closely with our tenant farmers not only gives us direct knowledge of the difficulties

facing many agricultural businesses, it also enables us to provide inclusive opportunities for new entrants into the agricultural sector. This Spring we have offered five new farm tenancies to talented, aspiring, and knowledgeable individuals. The latest crop of tenants to join our estate, with all the vigour and fresh ideas that we've seen from our 2022 cohort, which has now enjoyed their first full year of farming activities with us.

Collectively our farm estate, comprising over 30 farms, is making valuable contributions to the County Council's wider environmental and land management ambitions including reducing carbon emissions, boosting biodiversity and planting hedgerows and trees. I've been hugely impressed by the commitment I have seen first-hand to modern farming practices and high

standards, alongside a desire to make a positive difference within local communities. On visits in the past 12 months, I've seen cover crops, pollinator margins, solar panels, and even the birth of a dairy calf. It was pleasing to see a Hampshire County Farm also feature on BBC's Countryfile as part of a programme exploring routes into farming for new entrants.

It is now two years since our new County Farms policy was adopted and in this second annual newsletter we showcase the achievements of our tenants, and report on the progress made on the policy commitments we set out. The County Council is proud to support our region's farmers, and I would like to thank all our tenants, and everyone involved in Hampshire's agricultural sector, for all their continued hard work and dedication.

Russell Oppenheimer

Cllr Russell Oppenheimer

Executive Member for Countryside and Regulatory Services



Our priorities to 2050

Hampshire County Council's overarching vision is to serve the people of Hampshire, with purpose and pride, to improve lives today and for tomorrow.

In line with the Council's vision, and Hampshire County Farms' vision for a better farming future (as set out in our policy), we have continued this year to focus activity on our four key priorities:

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.

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.

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.

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.

Countryfile filming

Our Hampshire County Farms tenants Lucy and Adam were excited to be involved in filming for BBC's Countryfile. The episode, 'Breaking into Farming' focussed on the issues facing new entrants, and the challenges that come with moving into the agricultural industry. Lucy says:

"We both welcomed the opportunity to discuss our journey into farming and its challenges, how Adam's below-knee amputation has shaped this, and how our business decisions at Lyde Green, including keeping dairy cows with their calves, are working out after our first winter at the farm".



Milk Fest at Lyde Green Farm, Hook

Adam and Lucy have been holding some very well-attended events for the community in their first year at the farm, including Milk Fest, to celebrate the arrival and opening of their new milk vending machine. Activities included milk bottle painting, a scavenger hunt around the farm's cow tracks and feeding the calves. There was also the opportunity to buy fresh milk, milkshakes, eggs, meat and other groceries from The Lyde Larder.

Camping at Little Church Farm, Hook

Jake Smith has also had a busy first year at the farm. In addition to getting the farm ready to accommodate his sheep flock and other livestock, Jake reports:

"I trialled a camping field for one month in the summer, attracting several campers – mostly local from the Basingstoke area, who wanted to share the experience of sleeping under the stars with their children for a night or two, but be close to home. Following positive feedback, I plan to re-open again this year and I'm looking to develop breakfast and BBQ boxes made up of my own produce to sell to guests."

Pumpkin Pastures at Brooklands Farm, Fordingbridge

In October Dan and Sam ran their annual Pumpkin Pastures pick your own pumpkin event.

"It's a lovely event where we are able to speak to people about our farming practices and environmental efforts. The whole family are involved, and we support other local businesses by inviting them to trade at the event like face painters, caterers and a photographer who captured some fantastic photos. We support two local charities, as well as the Fordingbridge Federation PTA, which is the school our children go to. We have raised over £5,000 for the charities to date which is fantastic!"



Farm Shop and educational activities at Newhouse Farm, Botley

Holly and Lester have been holding regular community events in their first year.

"We have been very busy on the farm and loving every minute of it! We have relocated our new farm shop to the small stable, offering improved accessibility. We are now selling our own milk, cream, ice cream, meat, eggs and honey, as well as other local produce mainly from Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Our education engagement activities continue to expand. We've nearly finished building our educational animal garden. This is open to the public when the farm shop is open and can be used when school trips visit the farm, as well as children visiting with special educational needs.

We have had three school groups visit the farm recently and our mobile farm has already visited several schools this year."



LEAF Open Farm Sunday events at South Stoke and Newhouse Farms

Our tenants of both Newhouse and South Stoke farms each hosted enjoyable LEAF Open Farm Sunday events. Highlights included informative talks and the opportunity to watch the cows being milked at South Stoke Farm, Kings Worthy; and at Newhouse Farm visitors saw a range of animals and poultry, learned about beekeeping, and rounded off the day with a scarecrow-making competition.

Celebrity following for cows at Attwoods Drove Farm

Two jersey cows belonging to our tenant Oliver have recently diversified into show business alongside their careers in dairy!

"The cows spent a morning on set with Alan Titchmarsh, filming for a 'Love Your Weekend' episode. After it aired, we received considerable interest from local viewers to meet the cows, so we organised for them to come to the farm, and we shared information about milk production and how the supply chain works from farm to fridge."





Hedgerow Heroes project with CPRE Hampshire hosted on our coastal estate

In partnership with both CPRE Hampshire and Richard, our tenant of Upper Brownwich Farm, we have planted 2.11km of new hedging on our coastal farms' estate, exceeding the project's ambitions to plant 1.5km. CPRE Hampshire invited volunteers from local schools and the community to get involved with the project.

In addition to planting new hedgerows, the project has raised awareness of the incredible value provided by hedgerows for agriculture, and for tackling biodiversity loss and climate change.



Richard comments:

"We had volunteers helping to plant hedges, including the scouts and Meon Cross School. I then planted an additional 1,030 metres. It is very rewarding because you are providing forage, shelter, and shade for livestock, habitat for pollinators and predators, creating wildlife corridors, providing a food source during winter for the birds, and helping to reduce soil erosion from water surface run-off and with carbon absorption. I plan to plant another 1,000m this winter."



"I also had a fantastic invitation from CPRE to the House of Lords for afternoon tea and to talk to MPs, the Farmers Weekly and other farmers about planting 40% more hedges in England by 2050. It was an interesting experience to venture into the City, I must say I would choose the farm to London!"

Further hedgerow restoration work has also been undertaken, including a hedge-laying course for Hampshire County Farms tenants. Hosted at Lower Brownwich Farm, against the new England Coastal Path that runs through the estate, the farm tenants were joined by CPRE Hampshire Chair Margaret Paren and Councillor Russell Oppenheimer. In addition, a core team of local volunteers received training, and learned new skills in hedgerow management, planting and biodiversity monitoring.



The Country Trust

We have been working with The Country Trust to help develop confidence in those farm tenants wanting to host school visits, by giving them a better understanding of what is typically involved and the life-changing difference this could make to the children that visit. This year four school visits to county farms were undertaken by The Country Trust, with five more already arranged for 2023/24.

Jenny Gray Testimonial lecture at Sparsholt College

Hampshire County Farms delivered a short presentation about their activities and purpose at this special lecture held at Sparsholt College. The event was organised by the Denmead and District Growmore Club and Sparsholt College Group. The feedback was extremely positive, with Neil Rippington, Assistant Principal at Sparsholt commenting:

"I hope our networks continue to develop and we can find ways to support each other going forward."

Trading Standards

Trading Standards provided the farm tenants with a general overview of the role it plays, including its animal welfare responsibilities and other duties performed to regulate the farming industry. The findings of the Hampshire Farmers Wellbeing Survey were also shared, together with support available.

Risk Management advice

The North Hampshire NFU Mutual team delivered a helpful presentation to the tenants about both the insurance coverage that farm businesses should have in place to avoid common pitfalls, and also the management of Health & Safety at Work.



Current tenants moving onto new projects

Bill, outgoing tenant at Tynefield Farm

"We have had a wonderful time at Tynefield Farm and have built up, from scratch and by working hard, some very successful enterprises during our time here. I am very proud of all that we have achieved, and we now take some very positive memories with us onto our next chapter. I'd like to thank the Council and to wish all the very best to Flavian, who I hope to see do really well at the farm too."



Richard, outgoing tenant at Copse Farm

"When asked to write a brief account of the importance of County Farms and some of my experiences, my initial thought was that is the last thing I want to do, what with all the work involved in selling the livestock and having a farm sale, let alone moving home."

But then I thought about the opportunities I had to take on a farm and farm on my own account, which may never have happened if it was not for the County Farm system."

When Copse Farm was advertised, I believe there were over 40 couples who viewed it. The fact that so many came would indicate a severe lack of opportunities to enter the farming industry and gain practical experience in agriculture."

During my 38 years as a tenant, I have seen many changes, but I have always done what I considered best for the farm and treated it as if it was my own. There is an adage – farm as if you are going to live forever and live as if you are going to die tomorrow."

I would like to wish Billy and Alice, the new tenants of Copse Farm every success in the future and hope they enjoy living there as much as my wife Jill and I have."



Ryan, outgoing tenant at Annart Farm

"It has been a priceless first small step, and without that, I probably wouldn't be where I am now. Farming is a lot of work, but the lows still don't compare with the highs and that, and a passion for the job, is what matters."

Meet the new tenants

James, new tenant of Lower Brownwich Farm

"Farming is my passion, and it has been my lifelong ambition to have my own farm to manage, so being awarded a tenancy opportunity by Hampshire County Council is a slightly daunting but exciting move for my partner, Alison and me.

The holding is an ideal size for a starter arable farm. My vision for the farm is to run a profitable working farm whilst also enhancing wildlife by improving biodiversity and connectivity between neighbouring farms and nature reserves, engaging with the public, building organic matter and providing food."



Flavian, new tenant at Tynfield Farm

"My fiancé Nikki and I are going to be farming pigs, sheep and goats. We plan to supply our farm-produced meat, including charcuterie, to the local community via farmgate sales. We're keen to work alongside nature, and will record on-farm biodiversity, including bird and insect populations, with a view to increasing prevalence through our land management practices.

The gap between farmers and consumers is significant. We would like to work with local schools and charities to enable access by urban-dwelling children to the countryside."



Courtney and Rhiannon, selected tenants for Hazeley Farm

"As the new dairy tenants of Hazeley Farm, we aim to produce quality milk from grass as sustainable milk producers with our 80 Jersey/ Jersey Crosses. We hope to improve and protect the environment and farmland so the next tenant, like us, has an opportunity to be able to farm as a first-generation farmer – something both Rhiannon and I have always dreamt of."



Emma, new tenant at Annart Farm

"I still can't quite believe how lucky I am to have been given this amazing opportunity. Annart Farm was an old dairy farm for many years, back when dairy farms were smaller, and is perfect for my micro dairy enterprise. The small buildings will be suitable for calf rearing and other redundant buildings will be given a face-lift to house a few rare breed goats, sheep and pigs. This will add to what's on offer for visiting groups. I'm passionate about opening the doors to British agriculture and have plans for a modest farm shop, selling milk, milkshake and ice cream from our cows. I want to increase food production to include beef, pork and lamb next year."

Alice and Billy, new tenants at Copse Farm

"We are really excited to have taken over the tenancy at Copse Farm. The farm will give us an opportunity to grow our flock numbers, whilst integrating cattle into our farming system. We are planning on taking advantage of the CSS (Countryside Stewardship Scheme), by planting herbal leys which will help the pollinators but also help us finish our lambs' sustainability. We hope to invite schools to the farm soon, whilst growing our meat box sales."



Emma, pictured with outgoing tenant Ryan

Creating more room for wildlife on the farms' estate

The tenants have gathered both virtually and in person this year for advice about how to promote biodiversity on-farm.



Our Winchester tenants were invited to attend local farmer cluster meetings with other local farmers in the landscape. We also arranged some Farm Wildlife and Advisory Group (FWAG South East) advice to discuss potential management options and associated grant support.

A webinar was held on farmland birds and pollinators, and we also held a walk and talk at Yew Tree Farm, Compton, on barn owls and kestrels (Hampshire's county bird) and their habitat requirements. Barn owl and kestrel boxes have been offered to all tenants, together with ongoing monitoring support and advice.



Making Brooklands Farm more resilient to climate change

2022 was a good year on the farm according to tenants Dan and Sam Burden:

"We were able to apply and receive grant funding over three years through the FiPL scheme (farming in protected landscapes). We have planted over 1,300 metres of native hedgerows to link up original hedgerows and create wildlife corridors. We also planted trees and wildflower areas and added several rainwater harvesting systems, allowing us to hold 80,000 litres of rainwater at a time. We will have solar panels on the farm this year, which will not only be great from an environmental view but also financially with the current economic crisis."

Cover Crops and other first-year activities at Upper Brownwich Farm

Richard was quick to get a spring barley crop in when his tenancy started in 2022 and, after selling his first harvest for malting quality, he went on to implement cover cropping into his arable rotation to protect and improve soil health and water quality and sequester carbon. The first mix contained stubble turnips, fodder rape, tillage radish, phacelia and vetches, all direct drilled into the spring barley stubble.

"The mix had a slow start due to the lack of rain in August but in February I direct drilled 60 acres of spring beans after the overwintered cover cropping, and I think the soil structure has already improved with the added organic matter. The field drainage is also improved."

I have also entered my fields into the countryside stewardship scheme, with wild bird seed mix, wildflower margins, pollen and nectar margins, along with fencing and hedging grants. We now have a barn owl box and a kestrel box installed on the farm too.

Students from Sparsholt College came for a farm walk end of February. I spoke about being a tenant and the process of applying, showed how I grow arable crops and talked about why hedges are important to a farm."

Looking forward to 2023/24



Farm visit from Suella Braverman, Home Secretary and local MP for Fareham

A recent visit from Suella Braverman, the Home Secretary and MP for Fareham, to Little Abshot Farm near Titchfield, provided a great opportunity to showcase the important role of County Farms and the issues facing farmers, including the availability of seasonal labour.

Peter, an experienced farmer who holds the tenancy of Little Abshot Farm, grows produce for all major supermarkets and recently received a CBE for sustainable farming.

The Hampshire Hedge

Further collaboration is being discussed with CPRE Hampshire, following our joint project this year. The charity has an ambition to span the distance between Hampshire's two national parks with some extensive hedgerow planting and restoration, over a 3-year period.

The project will again involve training opportunities for our new entrant farmers, this time on our Compton estate where we will look to both restore and plant new hedges.

Care Farming provision


Having completed further CEVAS Training, our farm tenant Holly will be starting a Care Farm one day a week at Newhouse Farm, specifically for children with special educational needs.





For more information contact:

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