

**THE COUNTY FARMS ESTATE
FRESH START LAND ENTERPRISE CENTRE**

Report of the Head of Digital Transformation and Business Support

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Committee before taking effect.

Recommendation(s):

That the Committee approve:

- (i) supporting the development by the Estates Land Agents, working with Alison Rickett, Managing Director of Fresh Start Land Enterprise Centre, of a Fresh Start Academy and an individual mentoring scheme, open to all County Farms Estate tenants.
- (ii) sponsoring the cost of running the Fresh Start Academy up to a cap of £5,000 per annum with the intent that attendance by Estate tenants should be free or substantially subsidised. Funding to be made available from the County Farms Estate revenue budget.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Fresh Start Land Enterprise CIC (Community Interest Company – not for profit) has brought together a number of national projects and initiatives aimed at supporting farming businesses from start up through to succession. Fresh Start is supported by The Prince's Countryside Fund, NFU Mutual, Elizabeth Creek Charitable Trust and Frank Parkinson Agricultural Trust.
- 1.2 Fresh Start Business Academies started in 2006 designed to support and develop the next generation of farmers and growers, land managers and land based businesses.
- 1.3 Alongside the Business Academies Fresh Start also offer mentoring on an individual basis to provide access to someone to discuss and sound out new ideas and business considerations.
- 1.4 Fresh Start have set up a Land Partnership service to match land and business owners with land and business entrepreneurs.
- 1.5 The Senior Land Agent has supported past and current Fresh Start Academies organised by the Devon Federation of Young Farmers Clubs. These Academies have, in part, existed to provide the training, knowledge and skills required by aspiring young famers to get into the industry.

2.0 Fresh Start Academy for Devon County Farms Estate tenants

- 2.1 Although Estate tenants will have demonstrated sound business knowledge, acumen and experience sufficient to secure their first tenancy, competition for tenancies in the private sector remains strong and only the very best tenants, potentially those with a 'unique selling point', are likely to secure those progression opportunities.

- 2.2 Furthermore, for some more established Estate tenants the requirement to sit down and prepare a tenancy application, business plan and cashflows and budgets may now be a distant memory and those tenants may well benefit from 'refresher' training. Those tenants may not have attended an interview for many years either and as such their interview skills and techniques may also benefit from further development.
- 2.3 It is noted that as part of a recent private estate farm letting exercise, prospective tenants were asked to prepare a video clip demonstrating their skills and experience and setting out why they should be offered the tenancy. How many tenants would be able to prepare a professional looking video clip? What other multimedia technology might be required in the future?
- 2.4 Many former tenants of this Estate have undoubtedly proven themselves capable of winning a significant number of tenancies in the private sector but it is considered a Fresh Start Academy might improve the chances of a greater number of existing and future Estate tenants to win those highly competitive tenancies advertised to let in the private sector.
- 2.5 The potential opportunity and the legal arrangements of other ways to progress such as contract farming, share farming or partnership agreements are often misunderstood but some evidence exists of an aging population within the private farming sector considering these options to move towards retirement without having to retire completely or to sell their farms. Improved understanding of how such alternative opportunities could or should work may assist a greater number of tenants to progress beyond the Estate.
- 2.6 There may also be tenants who may benefit from access to the services of a mentor and this is also something Fresh Start could potentially facilitate.

3.0 Tenant's competencies

- 3.1 Attending an Academy or working with a mentor could be of significant benefit to new tenants on the Estate at the beginning of their farming careers. It is therefore suggested that attendance and participation in an Academy or working with a mentor could form part of the new entrants competency assessment.

4.0 Options/Alternatives

- 4.1 Alternative options have been considered and discounted, as they are believed to either be contrary to current Estate policy and/or not in the best financial interests of the Estate.

5.0 Consultations/Representations/Technical Data

- 5.1 The views and opinions of the Devon Federation of Young Farmers Clubs and the Estate Tenants Association will be presented by the two co-opted members to the committee.
- 5.2 No other parties have been consulted and no other representations for or against the proposal have been received.
- 5.3 The technical data is believed to be true and accurate.

6.0 Considerations

6.1 The Author is not aware of any financial, sustainability, carbon impact, equality, legal, risk management or public health issues arising from this report

7.0 Summary/Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations

7.1 The Author has prepared this report in accordance with the findings of the County Farms Estate Strategic Review (April 2010)

Rob Parkhouse, Report of the Head of Digital Transformation and Business Support

Electoral Divisions:

All

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

None

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