

THE COUNTY FARMS ESTATE MANAGEMENT AND RESTRUCTURING

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 approved the recommendations as set out in the opening paragraphs of sections 1 and 2 of this report.

1.0 Baxters Farm, Musbury

1.1 It is recommended that:

- (i) The Committee approves the farmhouse, buildings and 2.45 acres or thereabouts of land at Baxters Farm, Musbury being declared permanently surplus to the operational requirements of the Estate, and sold.
- (ii) The Committee approves the 68.81 acres or thereabouts of land at Baxters Farm being offered to the tenant of Waterford Farm on a fixed term Farm Business Tenancy Agreement commencing 25 March 2018 and terminating 25 March 2022, subject to terms being agreed.

1.2 The Musbury Estate comprises:

Baxters Farm	28.84 hectares (71.26 acres)
Waterford Farm	26.50 hectares (65.48 acres)
Total	55.34 hectares (136.74 acres)

1.3 The tenant of Baxters Farm, Musbury has recently indicated that he wants to vacate the holding at 25 March 2018 and has signed an Agreement to Surrender and a Deed of Surrender effective at 25 March 2018.

1.4 The Estate Asset Management Plan suggests Baxters Farm is a holding that should NOT be retained and relet in accordance with the objectives of the Estate Policy and Strategy.

1.5 The holding is located in very close proximity to the Musbury village. Furthermore the County Council has considered the farmstead has some material development potential for many years. As a consequence the farmstead has not been improved by the landlord.

1.6 The former Estate plan (2002 to 2012) also suggested the Baxters Farmstead should be sold and the retained land amalgamated with and let to the tenant of the nearby Waterford Farm.

2.0 The Marwood Estate

2.1 It is recommended that:

- (i) The Committee endorses the acceptance of the tenant's early surrender of Chapel Farm, Marwood effective at 25 March 2018.
- (ii) The Committee approves the reletting of the bungalow, buildings and up to 268.23 acres (in lots) or thereabouts of land at Chapel Farm, Marwood as an equipped residential dairy holding:
 - (a) Firstly in internal competition as a progression opportunity for existing estate tenants on a Farm Business Tenancy commencing 25 March 2018 and expiring 25 March 2033 or an earlier term date affording the successful applicant a maximum 25 years on the Estate, subject to terms being agreed, but if the farm is not let internally, or if not let internally,
 - (b) To then advertise the holding on the open market to new entrants and on a Farm Business Tenancy commencing 25 March 2018 and expiring 25 March 2025, subject to terms being agreed.
- (iii) The Committee approves in principle granting landlords consent to the prospective tenants of Chapel Farm, Marwood, to install a new herringbone milking parlour and potential dairy and all associated services, plant and equipment in the landlords new building, subject to:
 - (a) the physical/structural works to construct the parlour pit, cow standings, walls, ceilings and drains, and the dairy having a life expectancy of 25 years and thus the value of this part of the improvement will be written down on a straight line basis from the approved cost of making the improvement (the lowest of three competitive quotes) to £100 over a 25 year term.
 - (b) the tubular steel work for the parlour, the plant and equipment, services and in parlour feeders having a life expectancy of 10 years and thus the value of this part of the improvements will be written down on a straight line basis from the approved cost of making the improvement (the lowest of three competitive quotes) to £100 over a 10 year term.
 - (c) should the tenant be required to replace any significant items of worn out plant and equipment such as compressors, milk pumps, plate coolers etc during the residual term of the tenancy then the cost of any such replacement will be written down on a straight line basis over a period of 10 year commencing on the date the replacement is made and added to the compensation value of the remainder of the original parlour and dairy referred to in paragraph 2 above.
- (iv) The Committee approves the reletting of the bungalow, buildings and 94.10 acres or thereabouts of land at Prixford Barton Farm, Marwood as an equipped residential mixed livestock holding (expressly excluding the use of the holding as a dairy unit) on the open market to new entrants and on a Farm

Business Tenancy commencing 25 March 2018 (or as soon as possible thereafter) and expiring 25 March 2025, subject to terms being agreed.

- (v) That the 123.99 acres or thereabouts of land forming part Middle Winsham Farm, Braunton be temporarily offered to let to the prospective tenants of Chapel Farm and/or Prieford Barton Farm, Marwood for the term 25 March 2018 to 25 March 2021, subject to terms being agreed.

2.2 The Marwood Estate comprises:

Chapel Farm	79.96 hectares (197.59 acres)
Prieford Barton Farm	66.67 hectares (164.74 acres)
Total	146.63 hectares (362.33 acres)

2.3 Chapel Farm, Marwood currently comprises a bungalow, buildings and 79.96 hectares (197.59 acres) or thereabouts of land.

2.4 The current tenant of Chapel Farm has also been temporarily farming 123.99 acres or thereabouts of land at Middle Winsham Farm, Braunton in accordance with the Committee Resolution FE/45 of 22 February 2017. This land maybe amalgamated with Middle Winsham Farm at 25 March 2021.

2.5 The current tenant has recently indicated that he wants to vacate the holding at 25 March 2018 and has signed an Agreement to Surrender and a Deed of Surrender effective at 25 March 2018.

2.6 The holding is a well equipped dairy unit albeit with a large number of buildings currently belonging to the current tenant. The landlord has invested in an NVZ compliant slurry store suitable for the size of the holding and a large general purpose building, part of which has been designed to accommodate a future new milking parlour, should a new tenant wish to install one.

2.7 The Estate Asset Management Plan suggests Chapel Farm is a holding that should be retained and relet in accordance with the objectives of the Estate Policy and Strategy.

2.8 Prieford Barton currently comprises a bungalow, buildings and 66.67 hectares (164.74 acres) or thereabouts of land.

2.9 Prieford Barton Farm is also expected to become vacant at 25 March 2018 although it is likely works will be required to the bungalow before it can be made available to occupy. This holding is a reasonably well equipped stock farm but given the narrow and blind access and very close proximity of the farmstead to neighbouring domestic properties, it is considered unsuitable for dairy farming.

2.10 The Estate Asset Management Plan suggests Prieford Barton Farm is a holding that should be retained and relet in accordance with the objectives of the Estate Policy and Strategy.

2.11 Although Prieford Barton was last let internally as a progression mixed livestock holding, the opportunity of both farms falling vacant at the same time provides a unique chance to carry out further more radical restructuring, by creating a larger progression dairy unit at Chapel Farm and reducing Prieford Barton to a mixed livestock starter holding.

3.0 Options/Alternatives

3.1 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.

4.0 Consultations/Representations/Technical Data

4.1 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.

4.2 No other parties have been consulted and no other representations for or against the proposal have been received

4.3 The technical data is believed to be true and accurate.

5.0 Considerations

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

6.0 Summary/Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 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:

Axminster; Combe Martin Rural

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

None

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