

## THE COUNTY FARMS ESTATE NITRATE VULNERABLE ZONES

### 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):

1. That the contents of the report be noted.

#### **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The European Commission Nitrates Directive requires areas of land that drain into waters polluted by nitrates to be designated as Nitrate Vulnerable Zones. The aim of the European Commission is to reduce nitrate pollution to below 50mg/litre.
- 1.2 The Environment Agency reviews the data that supports the designation of Nitrate Vulnerable Zones every four years. The current review takes effect from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017. The Regulations which govern the review in England are The Nitrate Pollution Prevention Regulations 2015.

#### **2.0 Nitrate Vulnerable Zones 2017-2020**

- 2.1 On 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016 the Environment Agency published a map of proposed NVZs in England for 2017-2020. Areas have been removed where it is no longer deemed necessary to continue to include them and additional areas have been included where catchments show a nitrate concentration greater than 50mg/l.
- 2.2 Two farms on the Estate have been removed from the area effective from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017 (Lower Chitterley Farm (including land at Lower Dorweeke) and half of Endfield Farm, Sandford).
- 2.3 One area of land has been included in a new NVZ area at Kingsbridge. Land at part Combe Royal (farmed with Higher Leigh Farm, Churchstow) has been included in the new zone effective from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017. There will be transitional arrangements available to assist with the necessary change in management practices. The land at Combe Royal is being held for long term employment use and is farmed with Higher Leigh Farm which has recently been re-let. The new tenant will not be running a dairy enterprise at the farm and therefore there will be a limited effect on his overall business but he will be required to observe closed periods for spreading and keep records of what nitrogen is spread on the land.
- 2.4 A recent inspection of the land indicates that there are no obvious grounds or evidence to suggest an appeal against the inclusion of the land in the new NVZ would be successful. The new tenant has been made aware of the designation.

2.5 Importantly for the Estate, the recent change in farming policy for the holding should ensure no additional capital investment is required on the holding to comply with the NVZ regulations.

### **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, Head of Digital Transformation and Business Support*

Electoral Divisions:

All

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

None

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