

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 approves the recommendations as set out in the opening paragraph of section 1, 2 and 3 of this report.

1.0 East Week Farm I, South Tawton

It is recommended that the house, buildings and OS 5600 forming part East Week Farm I, South Tawton and extending to 2.74 hectares (6.76 acres) or thereabouts be declared permanently surplus to the operational requirements of the Estate at 25 March 2019, and sold on the open market.

1.1 The South Tawton Estate comprises:

- | | | |
|-------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (i) | East Week Farm I – | 2.74 hectares (6.76 acres) |
| (ii) | Part East Week Farm I – | 24.95 hectares (61.65 acres) |
| (iii) | Part East Week Farm I – | 11.58 hectares (28.61 acres) |
| (iv) | Part East Week Farm II – | 4.79 hectares (11.83 acres) |
| (v) | Lower East Week Farm – | 30.30 hectares (74.88 acres) |
| | Total – | 74.36 hectares (183.73 acres) |

1.2 In relation to East Week Farm I, members resolved at the County Farms Estate Committee meeting of 5 February 2015, minute ref. FE/68(a) that:

- (i) The tenants proposed early surrender of the three separate agreements covering the letting of East Week Farm I, South Tawton be accepted*
- (ii) That the house, buildings and OS 5600 forming part East Week Farm I, South Tawton will be regranted to the tenant on a fixed term Farm Business Tenancy Agreement commencing 25 March 2015 and terminating 25 March 2019, subject to terms being agreed*
- (iii) That 61.80 acres or thereabouts of land forming part East Week Farm I, South Tawton and more particularly described as OS 5553, 7745, 6633, 5727, 4100, 7017, 8323, 9215, 0023, 0525, 0010, 0410, 0005, 0501 and 1211 will be*

regranted to the tenant on a fixed term Farm Business Tenancy Agreement commencing 25 March 2015 and terminating 25 March 2035, subject to terms being agreed.

(iv) That first refusal of the 30.62 acres or thereabouts of land forming part East Week Farm I, South Tawton and more particularly described as OS 8649, 0036, 0438, pt0449, 1678, 2367 and 3560 will be offered to the tenant of Higher Fingle Farm, Drewsteignton on a fixed term Farm Business Tenancy commencing 25 March 2015 and terminating 25 March 2021, subject to terms being agreed'.

- 1.3 The Committee resolutions referred to above were subsequently actioned.
- 1.4 A S.5(1) Notice to Quit under the Agricultural Tenancies Act 1995 has been served on the tenant of Part East Week Farm I, South Tawton to secure vacant possession of the house, buildings and OS 5600. The Notice to Quit is effective on the tenancy term date of 25 March 2019.
- 1.5 The former Estate Plan identified the Lower East Week farmhouse, buildings and 10 acres or thereabouts as potentially surplus with the balance of land to be amalgamated with East Week Farm I. The Estate plan did however note 'consider whole parish disposal on an in/out basis'.
- 1.6 The current Asset Management Plan allocates East Week Farm I and Lower East Week Farm 'scores' of 10 and 9 out of 20 respectively. In terms of wider estate ranking this is quite a low social, economic and environmental score which would appear to endorse the alternative recommendation set out in the former estate plan to sell the entire parish on an in/out basis as and when, and arguably only when, replacement land better located to other holdings on the Estate is available to purchase.
- 1.7 The farm infrastructure at East Week Farm I is poor and would not lend itself to offering a viable, efficient and cost effective farming opportunity for either a new entrant or the landlord. Furthermore the traditional buildings have, subject to planning, significant development potential. It is therefore prudent to sell the farmstead at the earliest opportunity.

2.0 Part Firsdon Farm, Ashreigney

It is recommended that:

- (i) the 30.56 hectares (75.60 acres) or thereabouts of land formerly part Firsdon Farm, Ashreigney be let to the tenant of Furze Barton Farm, Ashreigney for a further 6 month term commencing 29 September 2018 and terminating 25 March 2019 (co-terminating with the lease of Furze Cottages Farm, Ashreigney), subject to terms being agreed.
- (ii) the 30.56 hectares (75.60 acres) or thereabouts of land formerly part Firsdon Farm, Ashreigney be advertised to let as an optional lot of land with Furze Cottages Farm, Ashreigney on a seven year Farm Business Tenancy commencing 25 March 2019 and terminating 25 March 2026, subject to terms being agreed.
- (iii) the tenant of Furze Barton Farm, Ashreigney has the option of tendering for the 30.56 hectares (75.60 acres) or thereabouts of land formerly part

Firsdon Farm, Ashreigney on a seven year Farm Business Tenancy commencing 25 March 2019 and terminating 25 March 2026, subject to terms being agreed, when it is advertised to let with Furze Cottages Farm, Ashreigney.

2.1 The Ashreigney Estate comprises:

Furze Cottages Farm	42.51 hectares (105.08 acres)
Furze Barton Farm	54.32 hectares (134.23 acres)
Part Firsdon Farm	30.56 hectares (75.60 acres)
Total	127.39 hectares (314.91 acres)

2.2 In relation to Part Firsdon Farm, members resolved at the County Farms Estate Committee meeting of 15 July 2010, minute ref FE/40(a)(iv):

'That the residual 76.69 acres of land and buildings as detailed in the report be amalgamated with Furze Barton Farm, Ashreigney, subject to terms being agreed'.

2.3 The Farm buildings have subsequently been sold leaving 30.56 hectares (75.60 acres) or thereabouts of bare land which is currently let to the tenant of Furze Barton Farm on a short term Farm Business Tenancy terminating 29 September 2018.

2.4 In relation to Furze Cottages Farm, members resolved at the County Farms Estate Committee meeting of 15 May 2018, minute ref. FE/45:

(a) *that the existing tenant of Furze Cottages Farm, Ashreigney be granted a six month and final Farm Business Tenancy of the holding commencing 29 September 2018 and expiring 25 March 2019, subject to terms being agreed, such terms to include the Farm Business Tenancy being in accordance with the County Council's standard form and the rent for the holding being set at its open market value, as defined in the Agricultural Tenancies Act 1995;*

(b) *that in due course Furze Cottages Farm, Ashreigney be advertised to let on the open market on a seven year Farm Business Tenancy commencing 25 March 2019 and terminating 25 March 2026, subject to terms being agreed.*

2.5 The adopted Estates Management Strategy embraced an ethos of flexibility dispelling the rigid structure of the former Estate Plan. Recent open market reletting exercises have demonstrated that new entrants are seeking a range of farm tenancy sizes depending on individual circumstances and proposed business plans. Some new entrants are seeking modest sized, and occasionally part time starter farms, whereas other new entrants are seeking larger more viable units that have the potential of being operated as a full time business opportunity.

2.6 Prior to committee resolution FE/45 referred to in paragraph 2.4 above the Farm Business Tenancies of Furze Cottages Farm and the land at Firsdon

Farm co-terminated at 29 September 2018. To afford the Estate a degree of flexibility to support either the existing tenant of Furze Barton or a new entrant to Furze Cottages, it is proposed to extend the term date of the current occupancy of the land at Firsdon Farm and supersede committee resolution FE 40(a)(iv) of 15 July 2010 referred to in paragraph 2.2 above.

3.0 Part Little Stone Farm, South Molton

It is recommended that:

- (i) The Committee accepts the tenants surrender notice of Little Stone Cottage, South Molton
- (ii) Little Stone Cottage be amalgamated with Little Stone Farm, South Molton for a term commencing 29 September 2018 and expiring 25 March 2023, subject to terms being agreed.

3.1 The South Molton Estate comprises:

Great Stone Farm	73.19 hectares (180.86 acres)
Little Stone Farm	40.62 hectares (100.37 acres)
Little Stone Cottage	0.20 hectares (0.50 acres)
Total	114.01 hectares (281.73 acres)

3.2 Little Stone Cottage is currently occupied by a former farm tenant. The tenant has purchased a property and now wishes to vacate the cottage.

3.3 Little Stone Cottage is annexed to the Little Stone Farm main dwelling and is not currently required by the landlord for any immediate need however it would not be practical to sell the cottage given its proximity to the farmhouse and buildings.

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

6.1 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.

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

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

7.0 Considerations

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

8.0 Summary/Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations

8.1 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: Hatherleigh & Chagford; Torrington Rural; South Molton Rural

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers:

None

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