

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 sections 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 of this report.

1.0 Part Higher Henland Farm, Kentisbeare

1.1 It is recommended that Part Higher Henland Farm Kentisbeare, amounting to 9.89 hectares (24.45 acres) or thereabouts of bare land be again let to the tenant of Higher Henland Farm, Kentisbeare on a Farm Business Tenancy agreement commencing 25 March 2022 and terminating 25 March 2024, subject to terms being agreed.

1.2 The Kentisbeare Estate comprises:

- Higher Henland Farm – 41.91 hectares (103.58 acres)
- Lower Henland Farm – 73.31 hectares (181.07 acres)

- Total – 115.22 hectares (284.65 acres)

1.3 Higher Henland Farm is let to the tenant in two separate agreements. The tenancy of the main holding is a 1986 Agricultural Holdings Act 'retirement' tenancy. With the legislative amendments made by the Agriculture Act 2020, the earliest date on which the landlord could take back possession of the holding under the Agricultural Holdings Act 1986 Case A provisions is now 25 March 2024. The tenant occupies the remaining 24.45 acres of bare land under a Farm Business Tenancy which commenced on 25 March 2003 and expires 25 March 2022.

1.4 Granting the tenant of Higher Henland Farm a new Farm Business Tenancy of the 24.45 acres of bare land for a further term of 2 years will afford the potential for both agreements to co-terminate.

2. Land at Newcombes and Glebe Farms, Roborough

2.1 That the land at Newcombes and Glebe Farms, Roborough be advertised to let in two lots and in internal competition between the tenants of Ten Oaks Farm, Roborough; Furze Barton Farm, Ashreigney; Furze Cottages Farm, Ashreigney; Lower Farm, High Bickington; Lower Northchurch Farm, Yarnscombe; and Great Blakewell Farm, Chittlehampton for a term of up to

five years and on a Farm Business Tenancy commencing 25 March 2022, subject to terms being agreed.

2.2 The Roborough Estate comprises:

(i)	Ten Oaks Farm	28.76 hectares (71.11 acres)
(ii)	Land at Newcombes and Glebe Farms	39.38 hectares (97.32 acres)
	Total	68.14 hectares (168.43 acres)

2.3 At the Farms Estate Committee meeting of 19 February 2016, (Minute Ref: FE/100(b)) members resolved:

“that the land at Newcombes and Glebe Farms, Roborough be advertised to let in two lots and in internal competition between the tenants of Furze Barton Farm, Ashreigney; Lower Farm, High Bickington; Lower Northchurch Farm, Yarnscombe and Great Blakewell Farm, Chittlehampton on a five year Farm Business Tenancy commencing 25 March 2017, subject to terms being agreed”.

2.4 Prior to the 25 March 2017 the land at Newcombes and Glebe Farm was occupied by the tenant of Ten Oaks Farm in accordance with the objectives of the 2002 to 2012 Management Strategy and Plan decision to create a large dairy progression holding at Ten Oaks Farm. In 2017 the former tenant of Ten Oaks Farm confirmed he no longer wished to farm this land in addition to his main holding. It was thus advertised to let internally amongst existing estate tenants in accordance with the committee resolution referred to above.

2.5 The topography, location and existing layout of the Ten Oaks farmstead renders it almost impossible to create a well equipped progression dairy holding at Ten Oaks. It is however still possible for the new tenant of Ten Oaks to farm some additional land without needing improved infrastructure at the farmstead.

2.6 There are a number of new estate tenants who have taken farms in the area recently and may also wish to secure a tenancy of the land at Newcombes and Glebe Farms. It is therefore proposed that all existing estate tenants within a reasonable geographical range of the land be invited to tender for it.

3.0 Land at Southwoods Farm, Uffculme

3.1 That the 28.76 hectares (71.11 acres) or thereabouts of land at Southwoods Farm, Uffculme be advertised to let in internal competition between the tenants of Great Southdown Farm, Burlescombe; Westcott Farm, Burlescombe; Higher Henland Farm, Kentisbeare; Lower Henland Farm, Kentisbeare; Dungeons Farm, Cullompton; and Tarrant's Farm, Payhembury for a term of up to five years and on a Farm Business Tenancy commencing 25 March 2022, subject to terms being agreed.

3.2 The Uffculme Estate comprises:

Land at Southwoods Farm 28.76 hectares (71.11 acres)

Total 28.76 hectares (71.11 acres)

- 3.3 At the County Farms Estate Committee meeting of 19 February 2016, members resolved under minute reference FE/100(d):

“that the 71.11 acres or thereabouts of land at Southwoods Farm, Uffculme be advertised to let in internal competition between the tenants of Great Southdown Farm, Burlescombe; Westcott Farm, Burlescombe; Higher Henland Farm, Kentisbeare; Lower Henland Farm, Kentisbeare; Dungeons Farm, Cullompton; and Tarrant's Farm, Payhembury on a five year Farm Business Tenancy commencing 25 March 2017 and expiring 25 March 2022, subject to terms being agreed”.

- 3.4 As this land does not adjoin any other existing holdings but is within reasonable travel distance from a number of estate farms it is proposed that all existing estate tenants within a reasonable geographical range of the land be invited to tender for it.

- 4.0 Land at Bulleigh Elms Farm, Ipplepen

- 4.1 That parts NG 4649 and 4955 forming part Bulleigh Elms Farm Ipplepen and amounting to 0.27 acres or thereabouts be declared permanently surplus to the operational requirements of the Estate and sold to the neighbouring special purchaser, subject to terms being agreed.

- 4.2 The Ipplepen Estate comprises:

(i)	Bulleigh Elms Farm	89.04 hectares (220.02 acres)
(ii)	Part Combefishacre Farm	11.18 hectares (27.62 acres)

Total 100.22 hectares (247.64 acres)

- 4.3 At the County Farms Estate Committee meeting of 24 February 2020, members resolved under minute ref FE/123b(a)(iv):

“That the farmhouse, buildings and 220.02 acres or thereabouts of land at Bulleigh Elms Farm, Ipplepen be advertised to let as an equipped residential progression dairy farm in internal competition between existing tenants of the Estate and on a Farm Business Tenancy for a term of up to fifteen years commencing 25 March 2021 and expiring 25 March 2036, subject to terms being agreed”.

- 4.4 A neighbour and potential special purchaser has subsequently expressed interest in purchasing a small area of land surrounding their property.

- 4.5 The land is largely overgrown and has not been farmed by the current tenant. Part of the land historically formed an access lane. This lane has not been used by the former tenant for many years. There is now no sign of a gateway off the lane into the retained land.

4.6 It is difficult to see how the land could add any economic benefit to the farm tenant and, if sold to the neighbour as a special purchaser, would generate a capital receipt over and above that which could be achieved otherwise.

5.0 Great Stone Farm, South Molton

5.1 That:

- (i) the tenants proposed surrender of the holding be accepted
- (ii) the farmhouse, buildings and 73.19 hectares (180.86 acres) or thereabouts of land at Great Stone Farm, South Molton be advertised to let as an equipped residential progression dairy farm in internal competition between existing tenants of the Estate and on a Farm Business Tenancy for a term of up to fifteen years commencing 25 March 2023 and expiring 25 March 2038, subject to terms being agreed'.

5.2 The South Molton Estate comprises:

(a)	Great Stone Farm	–	73.19 hectares (180.86 acres)
(b)	Little Stone Farm	-	40.68 hectares (100.51 acres)
	Total	–	113.87 hectares (281.37 acres)

5.3 Great Stone Farm comprising a house, buildings and 180.86 acres or thereabouts of land and is let on a Farm Business Tenancy Agreement under the Agricultural Tenancies Act 1995.

5.4 Great Stone Farm has proven to be a successful and profitable farming opportunity for the current tenant. Having now progressed beyond the estate by purchasing a farm and securing a tenancy of a second farm in the private sector, the tenant now wishes to surrender his tenancy of the Council's holding.

5.5 The holding is a reasonably well equipped dairy holding complete with NVZ compliant slurry store. The farmhouse is listed and it is understood some of the operational buildings may also be listed. The current tenant has invested in a number of tenant's fixture or improvement buildings, some of which ought to be taken over by the landlord at end of tenancy. In terms of maintenance and running costs for both landlord and tenant, Great Stone Farm is arguably more expensive than a typical progression holding. Nevertheless, the size of farm and number of cows that could potentially be carried by the next tenant suggests it should afford an existing starter farm tenant with a progression opportunity. It is therefore proposed to advertise the farm to let internally.

6.0 Options/Alternatives

6.1 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.

7.0 Consultations/Representations/Technical Data

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 No other parties have been consulted and no other representations for or against the proposal have been received
- 7.3 The technical data is believed to be true and accurate.
- 8.0 Financial Considerations
- 8.1 The Author is not aware of any financial issues arising from this report.
- 9.0 Environmental Impact Considerations (including Climate Change)
- 9.1 The Author is not aware of any environmental impact (including climate change) issues arising from this report.
- 10.0 Equality Considerations
- 10.1 The Author is not aware of any equality issues arising from this report.
- 11.0 Legal Considerations
- 11.1 The Author is not aware of any legal issues arising from this report.
- 12.0 Risk Management Considerations
- 12.1 The Author is not aware of any obvious risks to manage.
- 13.0 Public Health Impact
- 13.1 The Author is not aware of any public health impact.
- 14.0 Summary/Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations
- 14.1 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: Cullompton & Bradninch; Torrington Rural; Willand & Uffculme; Ipplepen & The Kerswells; South Molton.

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers: None

Who to contact for enquiries:

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