

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 to 7 of this report.

1.0 Part East Week Farm II, South Tawton

It is recommended that the 11.83 acres or thereabouts of land at part East Week Farm 2, South Tawton and more particularly known as OS 8375, 8300 and 9300 be advertised to let in internal competition between the tenants of Lower East Week Farm, South Tawton; Smithscross Farm, Drewsteignton; Higher Fingle Farm, Drewsteignton; and East Fingle Farm, Drewsteignton on a three year Farm Business Tenancy commencing 25 March 2023 and expiring 25 March 2026, subject to terms being agreed.

1.1 The South Tawton Estate comprises:

- (i) Part East Week Farm I – 24.95 hectares (61.65 acres)
  - (ii) Part East Week Farm I – 11.58 hectares (28.61 acres)
  - (iii) Part East Week Farm II – 4.79 hectares (11.83 acres)
  - (iv) Lower East Week Farm – 25.52 hectares (63.05 acres)
- Total – 66.84 hectares (165.14 acres)

1.2 In relation to part East Week Farm II, members resolved at the County Farms Estate Committee meeting of 3 December 2018, minute ref. FE/70(a):

*‘that the 11.83 acres or thereabouts of land at part East Week Farm 2, South Tawton and more particularly known as OS 8375, 8300 and 9300 be advertised to let in internal competition between the tenants of Lower East Week Farm, South Tawton; East Week Farm 1, South Tawton; Smithscross Farm, Drewsteignton; Higher Fingle Farm, Drewsteignton and East Fingle Farm, Drewsteignton on a three year Farm Business Tenancy commencing 25 March 2020 and expiring 25 March 2023, subject to terms being agreed.’*

1.3 The Committee resolution referred to above was subsequently actioned.

1.4 The current approved Farm Business Tenancy will expire 25 March 2023 and thus a new resolution is required for the future management, occupation and use of this land thereafter.

## 2.0 Part Greenhills Farm, West Anstey

It is recommended that the current tenant be offered a further short term Farm Business Tenancy agreement of the 19.87 acres or thereabouts of land forming part Greenhills Farm, West Anstey and more particularly described as OS 2327, 3226, 4623 and 3009 for a term commencing 25 March 2023 and expiring 25 March 2026, subject to terms being agreed.

2.1 The West Anstey Estate comprises:

Part Greenhills Farm	8.04 hectares (19.87 acres)
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Total	8.04 hectares (19.87 acres)
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2.2 At the County Farms Estate Committee meeting of 3 December 2018, members resolved under minute ref: FE/70(b):

*'that the current tenant be offered a further short term Farm Business Tenancy of the 19.87 acres or thereabouts of land forming part Greenhills Farm, West Anstey and more particularly described as OS 2327, 3226, 4623 and 3009 for a term commencing on 29 September 2020 and expiring on 25 March 2023, subject to terms being agreed';*

2.3 The Committee resolution referred to above was subsequently actioned.

2.4 The current approved Farm Business Tenancy will expire 25 March 2023 and thus a new resolution is required for the future management, occupation and use of this land thereafter.

2.5 Part Greenhills Farm is isolated. The nearest County Farm to this retained land is Nutcombe Farm, Rose Ash, some 7 miles or thereabouts distance by road.

2.6 The retained 19.87 acres of land is being held by the Estate pending some long term development potential.

2.7 While that development potential exists, the land does need to be occupied and managed. Accordingly it is recommended that the current tenant and good custodian be offered, on a subject to contract basis, a further short term Farm Business Tenancy of it.

## 3.0 Endfield Farm, Sandford

3.1 It is recommended that Endfield Farm, Sandford be advertised to let on the open market to new entrants as a starter farm for a term of seven years commencing 25 March 2023 and terminating 25 March 2030, subject to terms being agreed.

3.2 The Sandford Estate comprises:

Endfield Farm	48.58 hectares	(120.05 acres)
Part Endfield Farm	4.66 hectares	(11.52 acres)
Total	53.24 hectares	(131.57 acres)

3.3 At the County Farms Estate Committee meeting of 10 February 2011 members resolved under minute reference FE/68(d)(ii):

*'that the following Committee resolution of 15 July 2010 under Minute Ref. FE/40(c) be reaffirmed:*

- (i) that the tenant of Endfield Farm, Sandford be offered a further but final ten year Farm Business Tenancy of the holding for a term commencing 25 March 2013 and terminating 25 March 2023, subject to terms being agreed:*
- (ii) the length of tenancy offered is contrary to policy, but approved so as to reward the tenant for his commitment to share with the landlord the capital investment costs of making the Estate compliant with the NVZ regulations:*

3.4 More recently, members of the County Farms Estate Committee resolved at its meeting of 21 September 2020, under minute reference FE/136(ii):

- (a) The tenant of Endfield Farm, Sandford be invited to surrender his lease of OS 7400, 0005, 6200, 5203, and 5200; and*
- (b) That OS 7400, 0005, 6200, 5203, and 5200 forming part Endfield Farm, Sandford and amounting to 11.52 acres or thereabouts be declared permanently surplus to the requirements of the Estate so that it can be sold to the tenant of Endfield Farm, Sandford.*

3.5 It is assumed that the land sale of Part Endfield Farm, Sandford referred to in 3.4 above will proceed and complete.

3.6 The main holding comprising a house, well equipped set of buildings and 120.05 acres or thereabouts of land represents a viable and productive dairy starter farm.

4.0 Part Manor Farm, Holcombe

4.1 It is recommended that part Manor Farm, Holcombe and more particularly described as part OS 2355 (4.46 acres or thereabouts) be let on a Farm Business Tenancy to the current tenant of Manor Farm, Holcombe for a term of two years commencing 25 March 2023 and expiring 25 March 2025, subject to terms being agreed.

4.2 The Holcombe Estate comprises:

Manor Farm	49.65 hectares (122.32 acres)
Part Manor Farm	1.80 hectares (4.46 acres)
Part Manor Farm	0.04 hectares (0.10 acres)
Part Manor Farm	1.05 hectares (2.60 acres)

Part Manor Farm	0.43 hectares (1.08 acres)
Total	52.97 hectares (130.56 acres)

4.3 At the County Farms Estate Committee meeting of 22 June 2017 members resolved under minute reference FE/7:

(e) *That part OS 2355 (4.46 acres or thereabouts) be let on a Farm Business Tenancy to the current tenant of Manor Farm, Holcombe for a term of five years commencing 25 March 2018 and expiring 25 March 2023, subject to the landlord being able to serve upon the tenant an open break clause terminating the lease for any purpose on giving the tenant no less than 12 month's notice in writing, and subject to all other terms being agreed.*

4.4 The above committee resolution was made as part of a surrender package for Manor Farm as a whole and as part of the former tenants phased retirement.

4.5 The Farm Business Tenancy of Part OS 2355 will expire on 25 March 2023 and thus a new resolution is required for the future management, occupation and use of this land thereafter.

5.0 Lower Parks Farm, Crediton

5.1 It is recommended that Lower Parks Farm, Crediton be advertised to let on the open market to new entrants as a starter farm for a term of seven years commencing 25 March 2023 and terminating 25 March 2030, subject to the tenancy containing an open break clause capable of being triggered on the giving of 12 month's notice in writing by the landlord to terminate the agreement on any anniversary, subject to the landlord being able to offer the tenant an alternative holding and all other reasonable terms being agreed.

5.2 The Crediton Estate comprises:

Lower Parks Farm	28.54 hectares (70.56 acres)
Part Great Parks Farm	27.97 hectares (69.11 acres)
Total	56.51 hectares (139.67 acres)

5.3 At the County Farms Estate Committee meeting of 22 November 2012, members resolved under minute reference FE/160(b):

(i) *That the tenant of Lower Parks Farm, Crediton be offered an extension of tenancy for a term of nine years commencing 25 March 2014 and terminating 25 March 2023, subject to the tenancy containing an open break clause capable of being triggered by the landlord to terminate the agreement on the fourth anniversary of the lease and every anniversary thereafter, subject to the landlord being able to offer the tenant an alternative holding in the locality and all other reasonable terms being agreed.*

(ii) *The length of tenancy offered is in keeping with the current policy for starter holdings, which allows a tenant to stay on the starter farm for a maximum term of fourteen years.*

(iii) *The tenancy extension be granted to afford the tenant the security of tenure required to invest more capital into the next phase of the business development and expansion plans and to build capital to finance his progression plans within the local area.*

- 5.4 At 25 March 2023 the tenant of Lower Parks Farm will have enjoyed the maximum 14 years available on a Starter Farm.
- 5.5 The current tenant has established the highly successful Sandford Orchards Cider Press and a viable farm business on his own land nearby and is thus able to progress beyond the Estate at 25 March 2023.
- 5.6 Lower Parks Farm has been identified for many years as a holding with some development potential. The farm was only retained in the former Estate Strategy and Plan due to its development potential.
- 5.7 The land forming Lower Parks Farm has been promoted for residential development as part of the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan (GESp) call for sites and the more recent Mid Devon District Council call for sites as part of its Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). It is currently unknown if or when the land may be required for development to release invaluable capital receipts for the County Council.
- 5.8 It is important that the farm is occupied by an agricultural custodian until such times as the land may be required for development but it is equally important to be able to bring any agricultural tenancy to an end within a reasonable notice period should the land be required for development.
- 6.0 Great Blakewell Farm, Chittlehampton
- 6.1 It is recommended that Great Blakewell Farm, Chittlehampton be advertised to let internally to existing tenants as a progression farm for a term of up to 15 years commencing 25 March 2023 and terminating 25 March 2038, subject to terms being agreed.
- 6.2 The Chittlehampton Estate comprises:
- |                      |                               |
|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Great Blakewell Farm | 60.10 hectares (148.52 acres) |
| Total                | 60.10 hectares (148.52 acres) |
- 6.3 The current tenants Farm Business Tenancy expires 25 March 2023. The tenant, having been on the Estate for more than 25 years, intends to retire at the end of the term.
- 6.4 Great Blakewell Farm comprising a house, well equipped set of buildings and 148.52 acres or thereabouts of land represents a viable and productive dairy progression farm.

## 7.0 Part Little Allercombe Farm, Rockbeare

7.1 It is recommended that the 49.95 acres or thereabouts of land and buildings forming Part Little Allercombe Farm, Rockbeare be amalgamated with Topshayes Farm, Aylesbeare and let to the new tenant of that holding on a Farm Business Tenancy commencing 1 November 2021 (subject to availability) and terminating 25 March 2037, subject to terms being agreed.

7.2 The land and buildings forming Part Little Allercombe Farm, Rockbeare has, until recently, been farmed by the former tenant of Topshayes Farm, Aylesbeare. The former tenant of Topshayes Farm has recently progressed beyond the Estate and the holding has since been advertised and let internally as a progression opportunity.

7.3 At the County Farms Estate (interviewing) Committee meeting of 31 August 2020, members resolved under minute reference FE/10(e)(iii):

*'that the 49.95 acres or thereabouts of land at Little Allercombe Farm, Rockbeare formerly farmed with Topshayes Farm, be offered to the tenant of New Ford Farm, Rockbeare on a seven and a half year Farm Business tenancy Agreement commencing 1 October 2021 (subject to availability) and terminating 25 March 2029, subject to terms being agreed'.*

7.4 The committee resolution referred to above was made in the knowledge that the tenant of New Ford Farm might lose some land at Rockbeare should the proposed solar farm development proceed. Committee report BSS/21/07 refers.

7.5 The current tenant of New ford Farm has however elected not to take up the Councils offer of providing replacement land in the form of the land and buildings at Little Allercombe Farm, Rockbeare.

7.6 In the meantime, Topshayes Farm, Aylesbeare has been relet internally to an existing tenant of the Estate as a dairy progression opportunity and the new tenant of this holding has expressed interest in renting the Little Allercombe Farm land and buildings, subject to terms being agreed.

## 8.0 Options/Alternatives

8.1 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.

## 9.0 Consultations/Representations/Technical Data

9.1 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.

9.2 No other parties have been consulted and no other representations have been received

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

#### 10.0 Financial Considerations

10.1 The Author is not aware of any financial 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 Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change)

12.1 The Author is not aware of any environmental impact (including climate change) issues arising from this report.

#### 13.0 Equality Considerations

13.1 The Author is not aware of any equality issues arising from this report.

#### 14.0 Risk Management Considerations

14.1 The Author is not aware of any obvious risks to manage.

#### 15.0 Public Health Impact

15.1 The Author is not aware of any public health impact.

#### 16.0 Summary/Conclusions/Reasons for Recommendations

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

#### Name

Rob Parkhouse, Head of Digital Transformation and Business Support

#### Electoral Divisions:

Hatherleigh & Chagford; South Molton; Creedy, Taw & Mid Exe; Dawlish; Crediton; Chulmleigh & Landkey; Broadclyst

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

Contact for Enquiries:

Name: Dan Meek, Director of Property Management, NPS South West Ltd, Venture House, One Capital Court, Bittern Road, Sowton Industrial Estate, Exeter, EX2 7FW  
Contact: 01392 351066 or [dan.meek@nps.co.uk](mailto:dan.meek@nps.co.uk)

Background Paper	Date	File Reference
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Nil

The above mentioned Reports are published on the Council's Website at:  
<http://democracy.devon.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?bcr=1>