



farms

Newsletter for tenants of Cambridgeshire County Farms Estate

Please note change in
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Standish the camliff

Who's who at the County Council



Mark Lloyd



Cllr Nichola Harrison



Cllr John Reynolds



Cllr Paul Sales

There have been several changes at Shire Hall which have an impact on County Farms. The senior member of staff at Cambridgeshire County Council is the new Chief Executive Mark Lloyd. He began work at the end of March and was before that the Chief Executive at Durham County Council.

John Reynolds, the Councillor for Bar Hill, is the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Corporate Services. County Farms is part of Corporate Services. He is the Chairman of the Policy, Resources and Performance Policy Development Group (PDG). This group comprises 7 Conservative Councillors, 3 Liberal Democrats and 1 Labour.

Reports on major issues such as policy changes or the County Farms Annual Report are made to the PDG initially.

Before matters reach the PDG or Cabinet they are first considered at monthly meetings of Party Spokespersons. These are John

Reynolds (Conservative), and Nichola Harrison (Liberal Democrat) and Paul Sales (Labour). Spokespersons will consider recommendations for new tenants, changes to Farm Management Plans and policy variations.

The Spokespersons are the closest to the historic "Farms Committee" but cover a much wider area of oversight including matters such as the Council's finances, Information Technology and Human Resources across all of the Council. In the past Spokespersons have been involved in the Farm Management Plan review and selecting new tenants. This year they attended the Tenants' meeting at Quy. ●

tenancy matters



Have you checked your central heating thermostats?

I am sure you have read about the recent tragic case of a baby being scalded to death by boiling water cascading over her cot from the hot water cylinder in the loft above due to a faulty thermostat on the cylinder.

A similar incident occurred at one of our farmhouses at Elm last year, thankfully without injury.

The Institute of Plumbing and Heating Engineers and the Health and Safety Executives have advised:

- Know the age of your system: if it was installed before 2004 (when the new regulations came into force) there is a good chance it is fitted with an old thermostat.
- Listen to whether your hot water tank is bubbling or gurgling when switched on.
- Test whether hot or warm water is running from your cold taps in the bathroom.
- Check if your toilet water is warm.
- Check whether your hot water is excessively hot, or noticeably hotter than previously.
- Check that any tanks in your loft are properly supported by waterproof materials (such as marine ply) around the whole of their base, especially if they are

positioned over bedrooms.

- Check for steam/moisture/condensation in the loft space.

Serious incidents are likely to be rare and an overheating cylinder should show obvious warning signs. If it does, or if any of the checks above give you cause for concern you should switch off the system and seek advice from a properly qualified plumber or Corgi registered heating engineer.

If you are responsible for the central heating system in your house (ie most tenancies starting after 1980), you should have your system checked.

All other tenants have been contacted and have had their central heating systems checked. Most thermostats have had to be changed and a number of hot water cylinders required stronger supports.

If you are unsure on any of the above please contact Sarah Matthews on (01223) 699095.

Cambridge Water Company to carry out checks

Over the next few months Cambridge Water Company will be carrying out checks for Water Regulations compliance. If your farm is checked you will have received a letter from Sarah Matthews. Here are a few questions and answers to help explain the reason for these checks.

What are they?

The Water Supply (Water Fittings) Regulations 1999 are national requirements for the design, installation and maintenance of plumbing systems, water fittings and water-using appliances. Their purpose is to safeguard drinking water by preventing contamination and to prevent waste, misuse, undue consumption or erroneous measurement.

Where do they not apply?

They do not apply where a property uses a private water supply and does not have a supply of water from Cambridge Water.

What will be checked?

The Inspector will look at things like cattle troughs, outside taps and spray tanks. The time required will obviously depend on the size of the farm but should take less than an hour.

What happens after the inspection?

The Government requires water suppliers to enforce the Regulations within their area of supply. Where breaches of the Regulations are found, Cambridge Water will require them to be remedied as soon as practicable.

If you have any queries over this or any Regulation issue please contact Matt Jackson (Water Regulation Officer) 01223 403033 or email mattjackson@cambridge-water.co.uk ●

Tenants' evening meetings

Two highly successful tenants' meetings were held at the end of January with 35 people attending at the Oliver Cromwell Hotel in March and with 30 tenants attending the Quy Mill Hotel at Stow-Cum-Quy. Councillor John Reynolds chaired both meetings and Councillors Nichola Harrison and Paul Sales, together with Nick Dawe, the Council's Director of Finance, attended the meeting held at Quy Mill Hotel.

John MacMillan gave a review of the Estate over the last year



before David Nuttycombe gave a presentation that focused on capital investment across the Estate over the next five years and a successful bid for £4.5m of extra money which has been made available.

The guest speaker at both meetings was Glen Buckingham, the Estate Manager from Helmingham Hall Farm in Norfolk, an 800 ha mainly arable farm. Glen talked about farming and climate change and explained how he had worked out the carbon footprint of his farm.

Both meetings generated a lot of discussion, which continued for some time in the bar afterwards. Thank you to all those who attended. ●

Spring into Springwatch!

We have been approached by a researcher for the BBC series 'Springwatch' that you may have seen on television. It is a live wildlife programme that lasts an hour and runs for 3 weeks from the end of May into June.

They are looking for 'ordinary people with extraordinary wildlife stories' with their presenter and cameraman travelling round the country to meet people who are in jobs that might give them an unusual chance to see

unique wildlife moments, eg. a policeman in Cornwall who regularly sees dolphins while out on his beat.

If you regularly see such moments of wildlife excitement when out and about on your farm or working in the countryside, please contact Christine Larham on (01223) 699046 or by email at christine.larham@cambridgeshire.gov.uk who will forward your details to the researchers. ●



£4.5m for reinvestment on the Estate

For many years tenants have asked for more money to be re-invested into the Estate. Following the 2006 Farm Management Plan review County Farms staff met with tenants to discuss how this might be done. The end result has been that the Council approved a £4.5 million re-investment scheme this Spring. The main focus will be to improve the investment return of the Estate, which will have benefits for tenants and the Council. Already under investigation are:

- several 3-phase electricity supplies
- purchase of a 10 acre field

- a farm visitors' centre
- a home extension
- farm access improvements
- house amalgamation
- refrigeration
- building conversion for a non-agricultural use
- a new crop store
- home insulation

This is a great opportunity to improve your business. Prospects in the arable sector look good so there could not be a better time to plan for the future. Further details will be available shortly but if you do have ideas that you would like to discuss please talk to the County Farms staff. ●

Environmental Compliance Workshop

The second workshop was held at Girton College in February 2008 and was presented by Ian Hill and Mel Cornwell from the Environment Agency, Ely Office. Twenty tenants and family members were present.

The presentations by Ian and Mel covered:

- Waste exemption updates
- Hazardous Waste Regulations update
- Waste management Duty of Care
- Waste management minimisation
- NVZ consultation update.

Ian took us through the "Good, Bad and Ugly", a series of slides of how not to comply with the Waste Regulations – entertaining but with clear messages. There were opportunities for questions during the talk and afterwards at a buffet lunch. We are much indebted to Ian and Mel for providing the informative and enjoyable Workshop and to those of you who attended. ●

Maintenance on the ESTATE

We are planning our investment programme for the coming year beginning at April 2008. This includes major maintenance such as painting and electrical repairs. Improvements we have previously considered include:

- Land drainage
- Insulation of houses and buildings
- New PVCu windows and doors
- Farm road repairs
- Beet pads.

Terms such as the tenant's contribution or additional rent can be discussed at that stage.

Making a request at this stage does not commit either party to a scheme but will ensure it is considered.

Please contact Sarah Mathews on (01223) 699095 to discuss any items that you think we should consider.

Tenant's Article John Barnett, Mere Farm, Soham

Wildlife thrives on Mere Farm

On my 358 acre holding at Soham Mere, which is predominantly heavy loam, I grow a range of crops: oil seed rape, sugar beet, potatoes and peas, allowing me to grow mainly first wheats. I am the third generation Barnett on the Estate and took over from my father in 2002. My late grandfather was a tenant at Slade Farm, Burwell.

At Soham a large range of traditional brick buildings, originally used for cattle fattening, were completely re-vamped three years ago with the assistance of Rural Development grants allowing me to install stables. After a very successful two years running full liveries I will soon be getting a return from this investment.

At the same time the farm was put into Entry Level Stewardship. Wildlife now thrives on the farm and nesting boxes for barn owls are fully occupied with four chicks having been ringed in the last



year by the Barn Owl Conservation Network. Also, a small herd of fallow deer can be seen most days and a dead otter found recently on the riverbank suggest otters are present in the area.

The main income still comes from the land with potatoes having done consistently well, with additional clean land being

rented when available. Looking ahead to the future, sugar beet looks vulnerable with 40% price reduction and with 50% additional growing costs. Likewise beef prices will have to greatly improve to cover the loss of subsidy and high feed prices. At the moment, prospects look good but very volatile. ●

climate change

Save money and keep warm – watch this space

Would you like to save money, stay warm, lessen the impact of rising fuel prices and reduce your carbon footprint? Help may be on the way.

The Government has tasked all power supply companies to reduce carbon emissions. One way they have found of doing this is by providing home insulation grants to householders.

Until now it has been difficult to include farm tenants in energy saving grant schemes. However, recently a number of providers have become more flexible.

As a trial 15 tenants who are over 70 are having cavity wall and roof insulation fitted to their homes. If this is successful the scheme will be rolled out to other properties

on the Estate.

Those who are over 70 or on benefits receive a 100% grant with others receiving a discounted rate.

How big is your Carbon Footprint?

Farmers will need to assess their environmental impact much more in the future. In Cambridgeshire with so much of our best land below sea level climate change has always been on the agenda. The Middle Level Commissioners began work recently on the new St Germans pumping station, which will be the biggest pumping station in Britain when it opens in 2010.

The existing station, built in 1934, is at the end of its working life. Experts fear its two diesel and two electric



Artist's impression of new pumping station

pumps are not powerful enough to cope with rising sea levels and the increasing need to pump water "uphill" against the tide as our climate changes.

When Farming Futures (www.farmingfutures.org.uk) surveyed 385 farmers across England they found that:

- 53% of farmers already affected by climate change
- 62% expect to be affected in the next 10 years
- 49% feel that they can personally limit climate change
- 50% are improving their energy efficiency
- 70% believe climate change offers benefits
- 24% are interested in measuring their on farm emissions.

What can you do? Become more aware. One way you can do this is by trying CALM! CALM stands for Carbon Accounting for Land Managers.

CALM is a web-based calculator to help land managers work out the balance of greenhouse gases emitted by their farming business, and carbon stored in their trees and soil. Its free to use and can be found at the

Country Land & Business Association's website www.cla.org.uk. They developed the calculator in partnership with Savills, and the East of England Development Agency. It will provide you with a carbon footprint or allow you to compare your results accurately with the farm next door but it is ideal for monitoring the progress of your own farm.

Cottenham farm business consultants, Increment, whose Managing Director, Simon Ward, spoke at a tenants' meeting in 2005, did much of the technical work behind the calculator.

This is a topic for now and for the future. The supermarket, Tesco, has said that it would like to carbon label all its products. Every house sold or let on the Estate will soon require, by law, an Energy Performance Certificate. Expect farm Carbon Footprints to become an essential features of the Government's agri-environment schemes.

Greenhouse gases and Carbon Footprints are near the top of the agenda for Cambridgeshire County Council so expect to see more in future newsletters. ●

competitions

Coronation Bowl and Jubilee Cup Competition

Now that you have all had a year off from the challenge of trying to win the Coronation Bowl, Jubilee Cup and Millennium Cup, the competitions are back with avengence!

We are therefore looking for lots of applicants this year and whether you have applied for this before or not everyone is welcome to have a go.

Please contact us if you are interested and we will remind you again in early summer. Don't forget there's a cash prize! The Coronation Bowl attracts a cash prize of £200 for the winner and £150 for the Millennium Cup.

As always, judging for both Competitions will take place in July. If you would like to

enter this year, or would like to nominate someone, please contact Christine Larham either by email at Christine.Larham@cambridgeshire.gov.uk or telephone her on (01223) 699046 for an application form.

Mucksreaders' Cup – 6 June

Our annual Cricket match will be held on Friday 6 June 2008 at Sutton Cricket Club. There will be a bar and barbecue so please come along and support this infamous sporting event!

If you would like to take part please get in touch with John MacMillan on (01223) 699092 or Dale Abblitt on (07798) 643002 and even if you do not play, please come along for a beer and a burger on what has always been a most enjoyable event.

Mrs Butler shows a clean pair of heels

Sandra Butler is a familiar figure running on the highways and byways between Warboys and Chatteris and featured on a recent Look East programme. The wife of Mick Butler, the tenant at Roundhouse Farm, Warboys is a marathon running veteran with more than 18 marathons under her belt, including 14 London marathons. Her first marathon was in 1992 when she ran to raise money for Leukemia Research. Since



Caring for young lives
Children's Liver Disease Foundation

then she has raised more than £20k and now runs for the Children's Liver Disease Foundation. She ran in the recent London Marathon in a very creditable 4 hours and 45 mins. If you want to make a donation to Mrs Butler's charity runs please contact her on (01354) 677372. ●