

# RURAL VIEW

AUTUMN/WINTER 2018

From **Carter Jonas**

## INNOVATIVE THINKING

*Diversification ideas*

## CASH COW

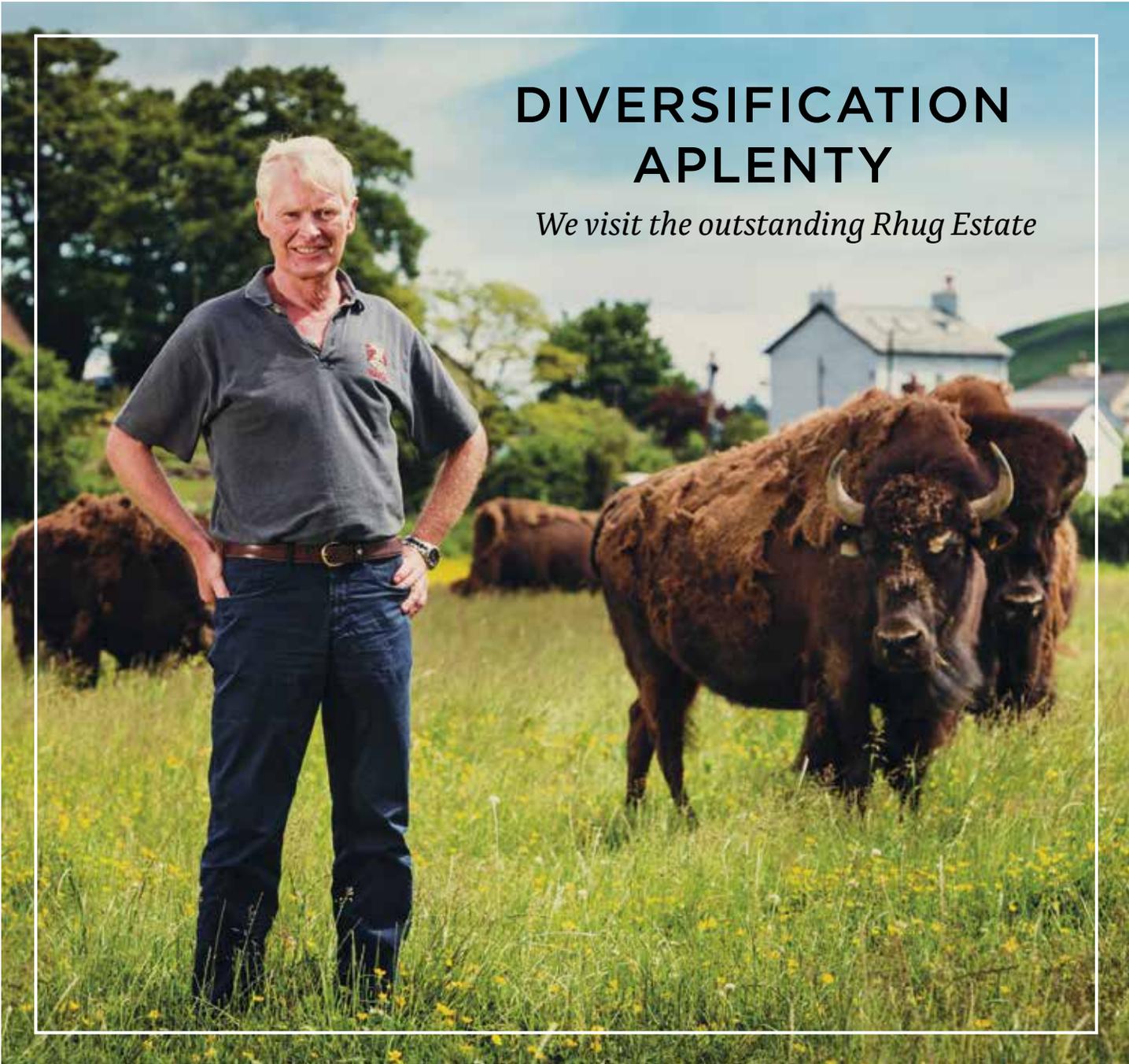
*How to secure farm finance*

## STRATEGY FIRST

*The assets at your disposal*

## PLANNING FRAMEWORK

*Getting permission for a project*

A photograph of a man with short, light-colored hair, wearing a grey polo shirt and dark blue jeans, standing in a lush green field. He has his hands on his hips and is smiling. In the background, several large brown bison are grazing. A white building is visible in the distance under a clear blue sky.

## DIVERSIFICATION APLENTY

*We visit the outstanding Rhug Estate*



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## Welcome to the winter issue of Rural View

In the last edition we focused on a subject which I know is front of mind for many Carter Jonas' clients – 'preparing for change'.

At the time we were waiting for Michael Gove to announce what the future held for UK landowners and as I write this I'm sure you are, like us, digesting the Agriculture Bill and evaluating what challenges and opportunities his vision will present to rural businesses.

More detail is needed, but one thing is clear; it is going to be quite different.

What that will mean is supporting our clients to adapt their enterprises and income streams.

Which brings me to the theme running through this Rural View.

For some farms and estates, diversification can mean consolidating assets to fund investment which allows them to broaden the markets they serve.

For others, it can be the creation of completely new business streams which compliment the core operation.

Any investment must be carefully considered, and on pages 6-13 our Rural Partner Tom Fawcett has provided an excellent summary of how we conduct strategic reviews for clients, which focusses on providing options, enabling clients to make decisions on how to move their businesses forward.

If you're searching for inspiration you'll find success stories throughout this edition – Carter Jonas-advised Rhug Estate in North Wales being a great example on pages 16-23.

We've also researched some of the most popular diversifications UK landowners get involved in on pages 34-37.

You can see how the next generation have helped drive change – the Singleton family's Cuckoo Gin enterprise in Lancashire and Chris Dickinson's Cumbrian goat business feature on pages 38-41.

As I alluded to in my last leader column, it's the people that make Carter Jonas different from other professional business.

On pages 30-33 you'll read about Amy Souter, a Partner in our Infrastructure & Energy Division.

As well as being a leading expert on the energy sector, she has represented Team GB in mountain biking at the European Championships and is about to embark on a world record attempt with a friend to become the fastest team to cross South America on a tandem bike!

What is fascinating is that Amy only began cycling a few years ago. Proof, if it were needed, that we can all make changes and with desire and determination we can succeed.

I hope you enjoy this edition and welcome all feedback. Contact your local office at [carterjonas.co.uk](http://carterjonas.co.uk) or email me at [tim.jones@carterjonas.co.uk](mailto:tim.jones@carterjonas.co.uk)



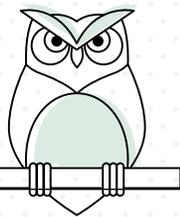
# NEWS & ANALYSIS

## *Agriculture Bill unveiled*

The long-awaited Agriculture Bill was unveiled by the government in September to mixed reviews.

Detailing how farmers and land managers will be paid for 'public goods' such as improved soil, higher animal welfare standards and public access to the countryside, the Bill scraps direct payments in favour of a new Environmental Land Management system.

Environment Secretary Michael Gove said: "After nearly 50 years of being tied to burdensome and outdated EU rules, we have an opportunity to deliver a Green Brexit."



*"After nearly 50 years of being tied to burdensome and outdated EU rules, we have an opportunity to deliver a Green Brexit."*

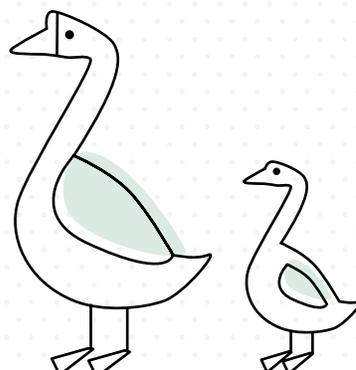
"This Bill will allow us to reward farmers who protect our environment, leaving the countryside in a cleaner, greener and healthier state for future generations.

"Critically, we will also provide the smooth and gradual transition that farmers and land managers need to plan ahead."

RSPB conservation director Martin Harper said the announcement feels like "an important step forward" and that "improving the sustainability of farming is key to realising the UK government's ambitions to restore nature in a generation."

However Tenant Farmers Association chief executive George Dunn believes the Bill falls short of what is required.

"We are not against moving from the status quo for agricultural policy but the opportunity of achieving a comprehensive reform, balancing the needs of food, farming and the countryside appears to have been missed," he said.



## *No deal Brexit advice*

The government has published technical notices containing advice for farm businesses on how to proceed in the event the UK leaves the European Union without a deal.

The CLA was positive about the guidance issued, with President Tim Breitmeyer stating it is encouraging to see the government making contingency plans.

"It is important to provide clear and comprehensive guidance to help farmers prepare for the eventuality that the UK leaves the EU without a withdrawal agreement," he said.

However he expressed concern regarding the impact a no deal Brexit could have on organic businesses in particular, following the publication of the notices.

"UK organic businesses will only be allowed to export to the EU if they are certified by a control body recognised and approved by the EU," he added.

"The application process could take nine months and can only begin after Brexit, leaving the organic sector in a state of uncertainty about the future.

"All farmers need certainty and do not wish to leave the European Union without an agreement firmly in place which is in the best interests of the industry. We are doing all we can within Europe to encourage our equivalent organisations to support a better deal for both UK and EU farmers."

## Pilot scheme for ag workers

A new nationwide pilot scheme to bring migrant workers to UK farms has been announced in a bid to support fruit and vegetable farmers.

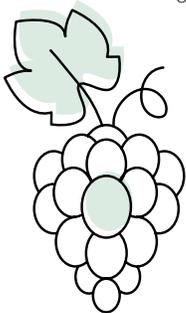
The pilot will mean that migrant workers can be employed for seasonal work for up to six months, allowing 2,500 workers from outside Europe to come to the UK every year.

Farmers are encouraged to explore ways that technology can reduce demands for labour, but the government accepts that automated harvesting solutions are not currently universally available.

Home Secretary Sajid Javid said: "British farmers are vital to the UK's economy – and the government will look to support them in any way we can.

"This pilot will ensure farmers have access to the seasonal labour they need to remain productive and profitable during busy times of the year.

"I am committed to having an immigration system that reduces migration to sustainable levels, supports all industries and ensures we welcome those who benefit Britain."



## Rural crime

Farmers are being encouraged to take part in the government's Commercial Victimisation Survey in order to reveal the true extent of rural crime.

The survey, which is including agricultural businesses for the second year running, monitors crime trends and identifies action that needs to be taken.

NFU chief land management adviser Sam Durham said: "For the government to pass bills and put the correct legislation in place to tackle rural crime, it needs as much information as possible.

*"rural crime is one of the most serious issues affecting the countryside at the moment."*

"I encourage all farmers and growers to get involved in the survey and help to contribute to the growing base of statistical evidence that rural crime is one of the most serious issues affecting the countryside at the moment."

The businesses that are randomly selected to take part in the survey will receive a letter and subsequent phone call between October and December this year.

## Red Tractor inspections

Red Tractor is rolling out measures to strengthen its food chain assurance regime in order to maintain the trust of consumers.

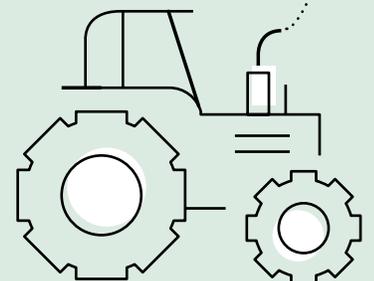
A new suite of standards will sit alongside its core offering to cover areas such as enhanced animal welfare and farms where an increased emphasis is placed on environmental enhancement.

New consumer-facing logos will be included to add clarity for shoppers, and poor-performing farms will be subject to more unannounced inspections.

The assurance scheme, which has 46,000 members, made the announcement on the eve of the launch of a £1.5m national TV campaign which will run throughout the autumn.

"Red Tractor is already a world-leading assurance scheme; however, we are constantly strengthening our standards in line with scientific advances and consumer demand," said Jim Moseley, CEO, Red Tractor Assurance.

"Increasing confidence in Red Tractor and the entire UK food industry is vital, particularly as we approach Brexit."





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## STRATEGY TRUMPS SPEED WHEN SEARCHING FOR THE RIGHT *diversification*

*It is often hailed as the silver bullet to squeezing more value from farms and estates, but landowners must find their individual strengths, not follow the crowd.*

*We meet some of the Carter Jonas Yorkshire team who are reviewing assets to maximise income.*

Success stories of businesses born in a barn pour out of the rural sector.

A strong asset base, space to grow and an innate entrepreneurial attitude mean the owners of farms and estates are well placed to look outside their core competencies and develop new income streams.

And, amid Brexit uncertainty, the ability to diversify has taken on renewed importance as landowners look to buffer themselves from the unknown.

But is there a diversification opportunity out there for everyone?

It's a question Carter Jonas Rural Partner Tom Fawcett is regularly asked.

He heads up the firm's Estate Management Team which works with estate owners to carry out a strategic review of their assets.

His remit is to take a dispassionate view of an estate; a fresh pair of eyes to appraise what the owner has at their disposal, then work with them to find a profitable, productive way forward.

The work he and his colleagues undertake always finds a way for a business to strengthen its position - whether that's by introducing diversity or not comes down to the raw components of the estate.



**EMMA WINTER** MRTPI  
ASSOCIATE

Emma is a member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and provides advice on all aspects of town and country planning including the development potential of land and property in urban and rural areas. “We regularly identify opportunities for diversification of farm buildings for conversion to residential and commercial, as well as getting planning consents for residential development for clients who own land close to villages and towns, which can be particularly profitable,” she said.



**HELEN MELLING**  
ENERGY SPECIALIST

Helen is an Energy Specialist with experience working in both the commercial and domestic sectors. She is leading on Carter Jonas' energy management and brokerage service, liaising with all the major UK energy suppliers to ensure clients with businesses of all sizes are on the right electricity contracts, an area that is often overlooked yet can save businesses a lot of money.

"A strategic review is all about working with a client to set objectives and aspirations, appraise assets and create a plan to strengthen their position for the future," Tom explained.

"It will always include an appraisal of land and buildings as well as a financial analysis to establish how successful the estate is currently. We need to know where clients are making and losing money.

"From that work we're able to look at what opportunities are on or off the table in terms of diversification and business restructuring.

"We're also likely to look at succession and tax planning, as they are often key considerations."

Central to the process is a clear definition of the estate owner's objectives.

Tom says not all clients will be clear from the outset what is and isn't acceptable in terms of new projects, and conversations need to take place

to establish what the goal of making changes actually is.

"An estate might have lots of land suited to large-scale solar, for example, but the owner may not want to invest in a project which impacts the landscape," Tom continued.

"Similarly, a large manor house might make an ideal wedding venue but are they prepared to have hundreds of people in the house?

"That is why defining what the estate owners want and what they feel is acceptable is a crucial part of the process."

Tom is keen to point out that while some landowners may have a clear idea of a diversification they want to pursue, they may benefit more from focussing on improving the profitability of their core, established business.

"Part of the review might be selling assets to generate cash to reinvest in something else. It's not always about diversifying for the sake of it," he said.



**SAM JOHNSON** MRICS FAAV  
ASSOCIATE

Sam is responsible for land and farm sales throughout the north of England. He also undertakes rural professional work including valuations of all types of rural property and assets. "Sometimes our Strategic Reviews highlight land or assets that don't fit with the future direction of the business," he said. "As a regional agent I have a good knowledge of what local buyers are looking for but equally as a national business we are able to market properties to a wider UK audience, ensuring we get the right purchaser and price for our clients."



*“We sold a number of farm buildings with planning permission and rolled that money over into a new grain store”*

In the case of one large estate on the Yorkshire Wolds, the Carter Jonas agri-business team helped move the in-hand farming business to a contracted operation and switched the rotation from combinable crops to carrots, potatoes and sugar beet.

“We sold a number of farm buildings with planning permission and rolled that money over into a new grain store,” Tom said.

“That was quite a traditional restructure which boosted the income of the farm but diversified the cropping and in doing so lowered the farm’s risk.”

A different example can be found in the work Carter Jonas has done with the Harewood Estate.

About 30 years ago Yorkshire Television made an approach to build a model village within its boundaries – the village now known to all as Emmerdale.

“It has been fantastic for the estate because they have lots of people visiting and while they didn’t have to

invest or be involved themselves they have been able to charge royalties and use the money to invest in other important areas such as biomass heating”

Elsewhere, The Harewood Business Park includes a range of magnificent Palladian buildings which are let to different businesses.

With the firm’s help, the estate is looking to move to serviced offices with meeting rooms and communal spaces. A range of holiday lets are also being developed.

“Of course it comes down to location – if it’s in the right place there may be lots of opportunities. If it’s remote, a lot of the ideas people think about won’t be available to them.

“That’s all part of the process too. Every change has to stand up to scrutiny and in many cases a diversification will sound good but when the financial analysis is done it may not stack up.”



**HELEN PARKER** MRICS,  
ASSOCIATE &  
**CHARLIE JOLLEYS** MRICS FAAV,  
SURVEYOR

Helen and Charlie look after several prestigious estates overseeing the management of commercial, residential and agricultural property portfolios, as well as general estate management matters. Part of their role is to identify opportunities for diversification and re-purposing of under performing assets. Helen said: "Having a good working knowledge of our clients' assets and working closely with them to understand their aims and objectives enables us to realise the right diversification projects."

**ADRIAN CAWOOD** FRICS FAAV  
CONSULTANT

Adrian recently returned to Carter Jonas following a career with AMC which involved finance for large agri-businesses and landed estates. Adrian brings a wealth of property investment and business strategy expertise, which he is able to impart with clients who are looking to finance diversification ideas.



Scale is not a barrier, and Tom says his team deals with estates of all sizes.

They include clients who have inherited a tenanted farm and don't know what direction to take it in, as well as the largest estates where significant investment in diversifications has already taken place.

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*“Quite a lot can flow from a small unit if the owner is open minded.”*

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“Quite a lot can flow from a small unit if the owner is open minded. Our job is to help them see what they have and what can be made of it,” Tom added.

Looking to the future, the next significant opportunities for those looking to diversify could be hidden

within the government's recently-published Agriculture Bill.

A strong focus on the environment from Secretary of State Michael Gove means those who can deliver public goods will be the ones able to attract public money as funding.

“Natural capital is a hot topic and a lot of our strategic reviews will be looking at payment for public goods and how our clients can make the most of stewardship,” Tom said.

Much is still to be decided, and Tom prefers a marathon to a sprint.

“There is a temptation to rush into decisions but I think you often don't get the right finished product if you hurry.

“We try to build a relationship with clients over a period of months to generate an open, honest conversation and together you produce something good.”

**For information on how to get the most from your estate, contact Tom on 01423 707806 or [tom.fawcett@carterjonas.co.uk](mailto:tom.fawcett@carterjonas.co.uk)**

# HOW TO FUND YOUR PROJECT

*How you fund a diversification project is a fundamental consideration and will often involve borrowing.*

*We spoke to two experts in agricultural lending to find out what they look for in an application.*

**LEE BAKER** is National Sales Director for the Agricultural Mortgage Corporation (AMC), which is part of Lloyds Banking Group.

## *How popular is lending for diversification projects?*

Over the 90 years AMC has been in existence the number one reason for borrowing has typically been to purchase land and property. However, during the first six months of 2018 refinancing and diversification became the number one and two reasons for the first time. We put this down to the wet spring holding up transactions in the land market because since then land purchase and property has reclaimed the top spot. We've seen every type of diversification project; wedding venues, golf courses, battery storage, yurts, car parks – and everything in between.

## *For those applying to borrow money now, will your decision take into account the potential Brexit effect?*

So much is still undecided about the future of agriculture. We know from the Agriculture Bill that direct subsidies are going to disappear and applicants will have to demonstrate how they plan to replace that income. We're not sure which direction this could take us in.

Some may want to borrow money to change or grow their businesses while others will pull the purse strings tighter because they can't afford the repayments.

## *Do you take into account an applicant's personal credentials or is it solely on serviceability and the business plan?*

When deciding on an application we follow the acronym CCC PARTS – character, capability, collateral, purpose, amount, repayment, term and security. If the applicant or the business has a good track record with us, or with another bank, by keeping up with repayments for example, they may possibly be looked upon favourably. Similarly, we will look at the capability of the applicant and their experience in a certain sector of farming or line of business, and that would be factored into our decision making.

## *How can the younger generation afford to borrow with limited capital, assets and track record?*

We all know that farming is a generation game and there are lots of family

members involved. We will look at each case individually but if an applicant is in the family business and can use the support of their parents or grandparents to make a strong application then we're all for encouraging the next generation to generate their own income streams.

## *How do you handle rejected applications? Is it game over?*

There are a number of reasons for declining an application and serviceability or unrealistic forecasting and budgets are two of them. But in the majority of cases we will try and work with the customer to reshape the deal. It may be that some lending could be restructured on an interest-only basis or the term could be extended to ease cashflow pressures. Alternatively, someone else might borrow in their own name if they have the creditworthiness. We have an in-house credit team which works directly with customers to break down barriers, not put them up. We look for reasons to do deals, not prevent them.

**MARK SUTHERN** is National Head of Agriculture for Barclays.

*Interest rates are low, but the political environment is uncertain, so is now a good or bad time to borrow?*

Overall demand for debt within UK agriculture is actually relatively steady at present – up around 1.6% year on year to the end of June 2018. This probably reflects relatively strong agricultural commodity markets for the past two years, reducing the need for borrowing, and caution as Brexit approaches. Low interest rates and strong balance sheets can help facilitate investments. At Barclays, we have developed and launched our Rural Project Loan. It effectively allows a farm or estate to leverage its asset base and take funding interest-only until the diversification is up and running and can start to meet capital repayments.

*As a lender, what are you looking for in an application?*

For a diversification project we need to see a sound and reasonable business plan, based on solid assumptions backed up by market research. The business plan should have an outline of the project and include financial projections

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*“For a diversification project we need to see a sound and reasonable business plan, based on solid assumptions backed up by market research.”*

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which run for as long as it takes for the project to become cash positive, which should usually be around two to three years. There should also be a marketing plan, based on sound research and assumptions. One additional point is that when reviewing a diversification project, we always like to see a plan B. What will the client do if the project does not perform as expected? Will it be sold, or wound down, and how would this work?

*Where might an application fall down or be refused?*

It’s important that business owners lead with their head not just their

heart, and grasp the figures. Something that feels like a great idea, might not actually stack up financially – so business plans that are over-exaggerated or over ambitious in the first couple of years might make a project look great, but will soon run into problems if the KPIs cannot be delivered.

*Can you advise on the process you recommend farmers should take if they’re thinking about a diversification project that will require lending?*

We would suggest engaging with us from an early stage and taking some strong independent advice – we might even be able to put them in touch with some specialists who can help develop the project. We have a huge client base and a huge network of agricultural managers covering the whole country, so the chances are we will have experience of similar projects, and we can draw on those experiences to help farmers developing diversification ideas.

*To understand how best to fund your diversification project speak to Dan Taylor, on 01904 558219 or [dan.taylor@carterjonas.co.uk](mailto:dan.taylor@carterjonas.co.uk)*

DRIVING  
*transformation*  
THROUGH  
*innovation*

*How the vision of a North Wales estate owner has revolutionised his business beyond recognition.*





There won't be many UK estates with more diversity than Rhug.

The way it has developed over two decades is a shining example of how vision, passion and determination can transform a business from run of the mill to one of a kind.

Twenty years sounds like a long time. But the pace of change has been rapid, and continues to this day.

Led by the unrelenting Lord Robert Newborough, who was taught by his father to never take 'no' for an answer, Rhug has transitioned from a mixed, traditional estate to a hugely diverse hub of rural innovation and enterprise.

Front and centre is a conversion from conventional to organic – a change Lord Newborough made after the death of this father.

He completed the process in 2000 and it became the watermark imprinted on everything that happens at the 12,500-acre estate.

"We had had a number of food scares such as BSE, foot-and-mouth disease and salmonella in the 1990s, and my wife and I were already eating organic food wherever we could," said Lord Newborough.

"I was very sensitive about the sustainability credentials of organic so as soon as the opportunity arose I told my farm manager, Gareth Jones, that's what I wanted to do.

"Looking at the global picture, I felt we were competing with a lower cost base so it was a good thing to be a niche operator on the world stage rather than just being one of many.

"Waitrose had the foresight to see a future for more organic produce on their shelves and were very supportive

to us through the difficult and lean conversion period. We have retained a good relationship with the group ever since."

It became a major customer for the estate's beef and lamb, but by 2002 the farm was growing and output was increasing and it was decided that a direct sales channel reaching consumers was needed.

One hot food van and a butchery trailer were purchased to take Rhug's produce on the show circuit, but such was the success of a trial at the farm gate, the vans never moved.

After seeing the level of demand, a farm shop and restaurant were built in 2011.

"And that's how Rhug's retail side started," Lord Newborough said.

"But we wanted to do more and in 2004 we visited six restaurants in London and got five new customers.

"We did the cuts in our butcher's van the best we could and in 2005 demand increased so we built a cutting plant where all our meat is now processed and butchered."

With Lord Newborough on the front line to tell Rhug's story, customers were willing to pay a premium for a product which had a story of quality and provenance behind it.

While beef and lamb were the bedrock, chefs and foodservice operators wanted more and the farm moved into chicken and pork.

More was to follow and today the estate has added chickens, turkeys, geese, game birds, bison, eggs and, most recently, venison to its sales portfolio.

"We can now offer chefs a one-stop shop for all their protein requirements."



A broader customer base which wasn't solely reliant on a supermarket contract helped insulate Rhug when the recession began to bite in 2008. By that time Lord Newborough had successfully sold into Singapore and Hong Kong.

"We were cushioned by the fact we were exporting our meat to the Far East which didn't know the meaning of the word recession," he said.

"It really got us through a very difficult time when it was a harder sell into the London market.

"Waitrose has always been a business that has borne its responsibilities to its suppliers and looked after us in the leaner years so we were lucky to be working with them and also to have direct sales to London and the Far East and still had burger vans flat out at the side of the road. The leaner periods were taken care of."

Business never stood still and Rhug now delivers to top London restaurants, hotels and delicatessens three days a week, plus a stand in

Borough Market which has been open for 10 years.

Exports continue to Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore, Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Amsterdam with the Maldives shortly to be added – a sales channel which accounts for nearly a quarter of Rhug's business.

A farm shop and restaurant were built in 2011 and, if that isn't inventive enough, what is believed to be the first UK drive-thru has just opened at the site next to the A5.




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*"I wanted to build a business that secured the estate for the future"*

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#### **A POTTED HISTORY**

Rhug came into the Newborough family in 1637 through marriage. Lord Newborough is now the seventh generation and feels he has made his mark.

He said: "My father wanted me to farm but I wanted to do anything but. Instead I went off and ran an airline charter company managing private aircraft for companies before selling the business and buying into a company which produced printed circuit boards.

"We built that from a business employing 10 people to 130 people over nine years and it was very much at the forefront of technology.

"I then went into a joint venture with the Sierra Leone government, which was a slight mistake!"

He came back to the farm in his father's twilight years.

"It was just a traditional low input, low output estate and my father had sheep and let grazing for cattle.

"Changes definitely had to be made. I wanted to build a business that secured the estate for the future."

Yet for all the hard work Lord Newborough doesn't consider himself 'Brexit-proof'.

"Most definitely not," he added, "I have no idea where we will be and I feel the same as any other business right now; vulnerable.

"We're lucky to have renewable energy – I wish we had a lot more of it – but all our export agreements for our meat could close overnight. We just don't know and uncertainty is not good for any business."

Lord Newborough believes the success of Rhug over the past 20 years comes down to six elements.

"Belief, brand, passion, people, story and USP," he said.

"Fundamentally you have to have the passion and believe in what you are doing or you can't sell with conviction.

"It is a mistake for anyone to think they can go from farming to retailing because they are two completely separate businesses so one must employ the right expertise who know what they are doing if they intend to get it right.

"We went organic, put a brand on it and started to tell the story about the farm and how the meat was produced.

"People started to sit up and listen which enabled us to sell a very expensive product to discerning customers because they wanted something special they could tell their customers about."





## ESTATE MANAGEMENT

Food production, vital though it has been, is only one part of the story.

Heading up estate management is former Carter Jonas employee Philip Hughes who has been with Lord Newborough for 18 years.

With the help of Carter Jonas, he takes a holistic view across the two principal holdings – Rhug at Corwen and Glynllifon near Caernarfon.

Together they make up 6,000 of the 12,500 acres with the remainder in short and long-term agricultural lettings.

Philip says his brief was initially to establish the retail and wholesale businesses for Lord Newborough between 2000 and 2010 both in the UK and overseas.

These were to compliment the conventional range of property management matters, including

residential, agricultural, commercial, shoots, fishing, and forestry enterprises and modern leisure pursuits.

Such is the diversity staffing numbers have grown from 10 to 130.

Tumble-down barns have been converted to residential lets and commercial space has been created, albeit for a limited local market.

Leisure activities include rally car testing, canoeing, gorge walking and bushcraft survival training.

Philip said: “We have had to manage change. The people and activities that we are developing are, at times, different to the traditional elements of a rural country estate and this creates a delicate balance that needs careful management in the early years.”

One of Philip’s biggest recent projects has been introducing a raft of green energy.

When the Labour government announced a policy commitment to renewables, Rhug dipped its toe in the water with small-scale hydroelectricity and a solar scheme.

“Now we have 29 renewable installations – everything from 4kW to 5MW solar, wind turbines, hydroelectric, ground and air source heat pumps and biomass,” he said.

“Having spent six or seven years delivering it, we are now optimising everything we have got.”

That includes battery storage which Philip says the estate is “very close to making a decision on” which could involve investing or leasing with a partner.

Three projects are being considered – the largest being a 1MW storage site which will store electricity and release it to the grid when the tariffs are higher.

The smallest aims to cut bills at Rhug’s various retail and production sites.

The pace of change continues.

A further idea is to use the estate’s vast open spaces to deliver mindfulness programmes through meditation and other countryside experiences.

The idea is still in its infancy but Philip hopes there could be a link into the NHS with both Cardiff and Westminster governments.

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*“We have had to manage change. The people and activities that we are developing are, at times, different to the traditional elements of a rural country estate”*

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“We probably have years to get there but it’s an example of more diversity.”

Philip is helped with the estate’s portfolio of let farms by Carter Jonas rural surveyor Toby Dunn.

Toby oversees the general management of the let residential, agricultural and commercial properties.

Over the past few years this role has included providing advice to Lord Newborough, his family and Philip when let agricultural holdings have become vacant, assessing the merits of taking the land back in hand versus re-letting and the financial considerations, such as tax, of each option.

The firm is the retained managing agent for the coastal Glynllifon estate and has been for the past 20 years.

Working with the team at the estate office, Toby reports back to Lord Newborough and Philip on three-quarters of the business while the remainder is in trust for Lord Newborough’s daughter.

## THE IMPACT OF DIVERSITY ON FARMING

Gareth Jones has been the farm manager for 25 years and says farming revolved around 3,500 sheep when Lord Newborough's father died.

"It was low input, low output with 60 acres of barley and a field of wheat for the pheasants," he said.

"We were starting from a fairly low base but we've become more productive by being organic.

"We introduced more white and red clover to build the grassland fertility which is an important part of the story.

"Now we use stubble turnips so we can finish lambs all through the winter and carry up to 600 cattle at any one time – that's coming from a base of no cattle at all.

"There I was making 30 acres of silage and now it's 500 acres and trying to get enough bulk to finish cattle during the winter."

It's been achieved by carefully selecting the right programme for the farm.

Using peas and vetches has enabled Gareth to fix nitrogen in the soil which is then undersown in the spring.

When silage is cut in July and August it leaves a fresh ley to fatten lambs on until the stubble turnips grow.

The five-year rotation is finished with two years of combinable crops.

"We have been growing oats and triticale because the straw length shades the soils and stops weed growth, but we have grown more barley to feed the cattle this year."

The beef herd comprises mainly Angus cattle bred from 180 dams which are finished slowly alongside 3,500 breeding ewes; mainly North of England Mules with Swaledales and Blue-faced Leicesters which graze

the mountains to satisfy the Glastir scheme requirements.

The estate's famous saltmarsh lamb is produced on the coast at Tŷ Mawr, near Caernarfon, by Deio Hughes and his family.

The choice of breed and finishing method is, of course, very market focussed.

Gareth said: "We started with a blank piece of paper to work out what we needed to retail our own meat.

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*"We were starting from a fairly low base but we've become more productive by being organic."*

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"We wanted quality and then worked out how we would reach that and what we needed to do as far as the farm was concerned to achieve it.

"Lord Newborough is selling around the world to chefs. In Dubai they will take as many racks of lamb as we can provide but they all need to be a specific size and that comes from an 18-20kg lamb. We have to get it right here to produce that product.

"It's the same with the venison. Lord Newborough saw it as opportunity and now we have about 30 Japanese Sika deer which are the Rolls-Royce of venison.

"We intend to grow the herd rapidly. Venison is the fastest growing sector of the meat market and it is our intention to hook into this by supplying something that our customers want."





# “EVERYTHING IS ABOUT THE STORY”

*Need an idea for a diversification?  
Use your family's talents and your farm's  
natural resources, and you can't lose...*






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*“...we asked our local pub if they would like to try it - they became our first customer and today our beer is stocked in 280 pubs.”*

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The saying ‘good things come in small packages’ could have been created with Church Farm Brewery in mind. Proving that diversification doesn’t need to be carried out on a huge scale to be successful, the Reynolds family has pooled its individual talents to turn fortunes around.

Church Farm near Warwick was forced to reconsider its dairy production and distribution business after “supermarkets decided to give away milk for free” in 2011.

“The dairy business began to shrink and margins got tighter and tighter until we just couldn’t compete with the supermarkets anymore,” Jo Reynolds said.

Jo’s husband Andrew had been experimenting with beer production for a few years on a purely personal basis. “He was making home brew for his friends for when they would come round to watch the rugby in his ‘man cave’ on weekends!” Jo explained.

When eldest son Sam returned from travelling around the US he encouraged his parents to take their hobby more seriously after witnessing

the rise in craft beer over the pond so they started experimenting with flavours to create something special.

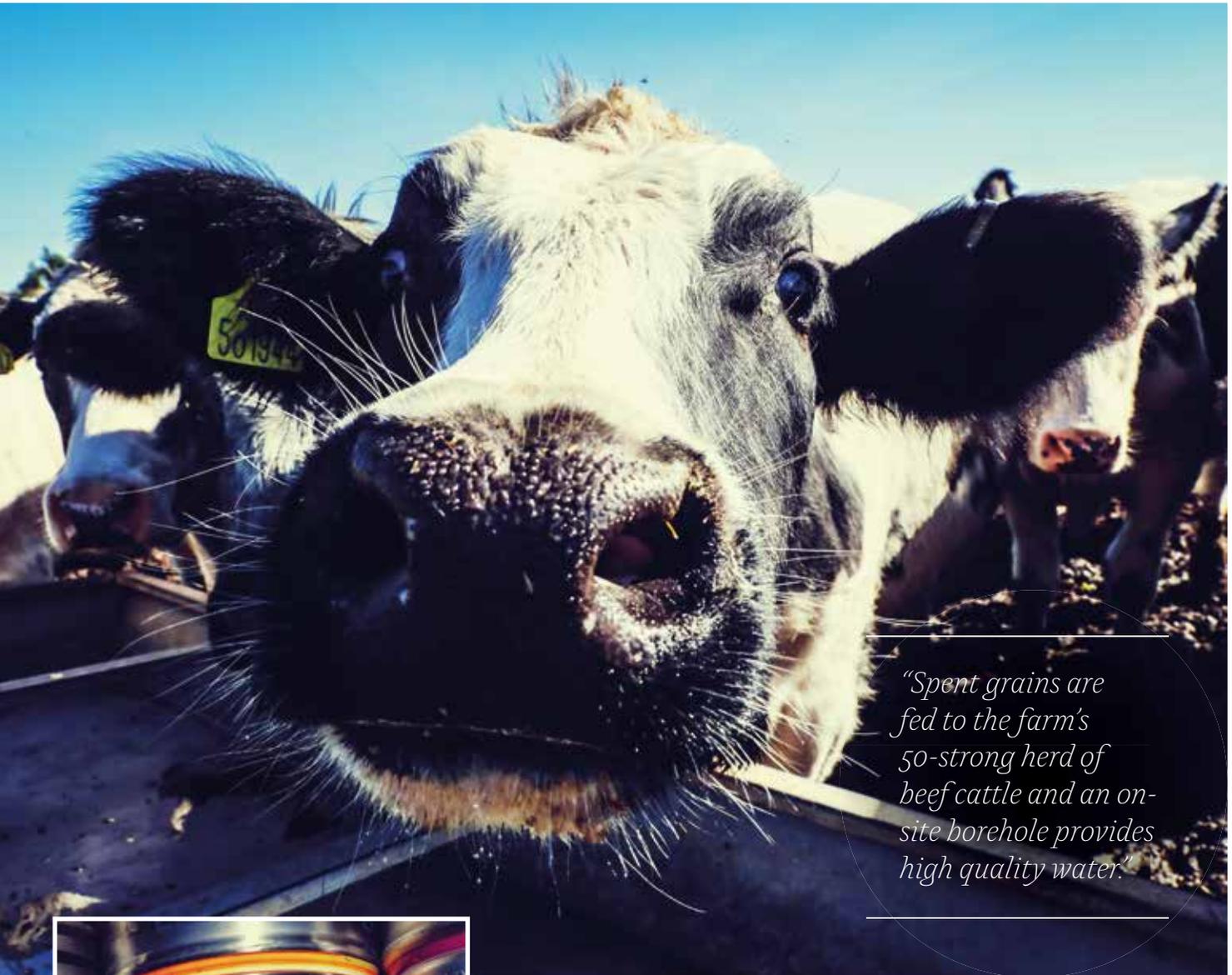
“The end result was fantastic so we asked our local pub if they would like to try it – they became our first customer and today our beer is stocked in 280 pubs,” Jo said.

Initially the family decided to make savings by repurposing the farm’s milking equipment into brewing kit. Fermentation vessels were fashioned from bulk milk tanks, the milk receiving tank was turned into a mash tun and the bottling machine turned its focus to a different kind of pint.

Together, the family pooled its natural talents and utilised the 80-acre farm’s natural assets to create a holistic business which, in turn, sets them apart from the competition.

Accountant Sam gives financial advice and provides projections to steer the company forward, leaving Andrew and Jo more time to focus on brewing and sales respectively.

Youngest son Harry’s degree in biological sciences inspired the purchase of laboratory equipment to



*“Spent grains are fed to the farm’s 50-strong herd of beef cattle and an on-site borehole provides high quality water.”*

allow the business to carry out its own testing, while also providing the service for surrounding breweries.

Spent grains are fed to the farm’s 50-strong herd of beef cattle and an on-site borehole provides high quality water.

“Beer is 96% water, so the fact that we can use our own straight from the ground, and it only needs to go through a filter, is a huge point of difference,” Jo explained.

“When we were milking cows our water bill was about £14,000 every year. We’re probably using the same amount now, so investing in the borehole has saved us a huge amount of money.

“The most important thing with diversification is looking at the natural resources you already have on your site, and using them to suit you.”

#### **PROMOTION**

Of course, as Jo points out, there’s no point making the most delicious beer in the world, only for no one to know about it.

“Selling our beer is the biggest challenge,” she said. “Micro and even nano breweries are very popular at the moment so getting your brand into outlets can be hard.

“Building your brand and getting it out there is where the hard work really starts.”



Events are the team's best form of marketing and have become a huge part of the business. "They give us the opportunity to go straight to the end user and get a lot more money for our beer, while also getting exposure," Jo explained.

However, the most publicity has undeniably been generated by an appearance on *Countryfile* two years ago.

"We were advised that our website might not be able to cope with the increased traffic that *Countryfile* inevitably generates," Jo said. "However, despite our IT guy getting involved we still didn't accurately predict the amount of interest and the site crashed at 8:04pm!

"Our web stats went off the scale, sales in our online shop soared and the number of brewery tours booked shot up. We got other interviews off the back of it, we were approached by (but turned down) *Dragon's Den* and people still come up to us to tell us they saw us on the programme."

The appearance also led to other worthwhile opportunities. "After our appearance on *Countryfile* and winning Small to Medium Diversification Innovator of the Year at the British Farming Awards, we were contacted by the local authority, who made us aware of grants we could apply for," Jo said.

The family ended up applying for, and securing, a grant from the Rural Payments Agency for £25,000, which helped them take their next big step; the creation of a brewery which helped them increase production from 20 barrels to 80 per batch. This in turn led to an increase in turnover of 66%.

### SPOTTING NICHE MARKETS

The success of a small diversification, like any business, appears to rest in the company's ability to spot potential niche markets and new opportunities – something Church Farm Brewery does particularly well.

Increased capacity enabled them to offer their brewing services to other companies. "We're not selling enough of our own beer to justify using the equipment every day," Jo said. "So we've started making beer for three other



breweries using their own recipes." The team also hopes to install a bottling production facility in the near future, which will save valuable time as all the bottles are currently filled and packaged by hand.

Five years ago, Andrew planted an orchard of 140 apple trees which are almost ready to be harvested for the first time. "Cider will be our next venture," Jo said. "We had the land and it seemed like a natural progression for us. The trees are now full of fruit so we're really excited about that."

And finally Harry will shortly turn his attention to another burgeoning marketplace; non-alcoholic drinks. In the past year, Nielson UK reports that £43 million was spent on no or low alcohol beers – an increase of 28%. And with a quarter of shoppers reporting that they are looking to cut down on alcohol consumption, developing a Church Farm Brewery non-alcoholic beer would appear to be a well-timed move.

Jo admits that the family has put a lot of pressure on itself, particularly at the beginning, but that this has helped steer it towards success.

"If I was to give anyone advice it would be to not rush to market – be 100% ready," she said.

"We didn't borrow any money until we decided to invest in a proper

brewery, we don't have an overdraft and we fund everything from the business. Doing these things would probably have enabled us to grow much more quickly and really hit the ground running – but it wasn't a gamble we wanted to take.

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### *"People love a story"*

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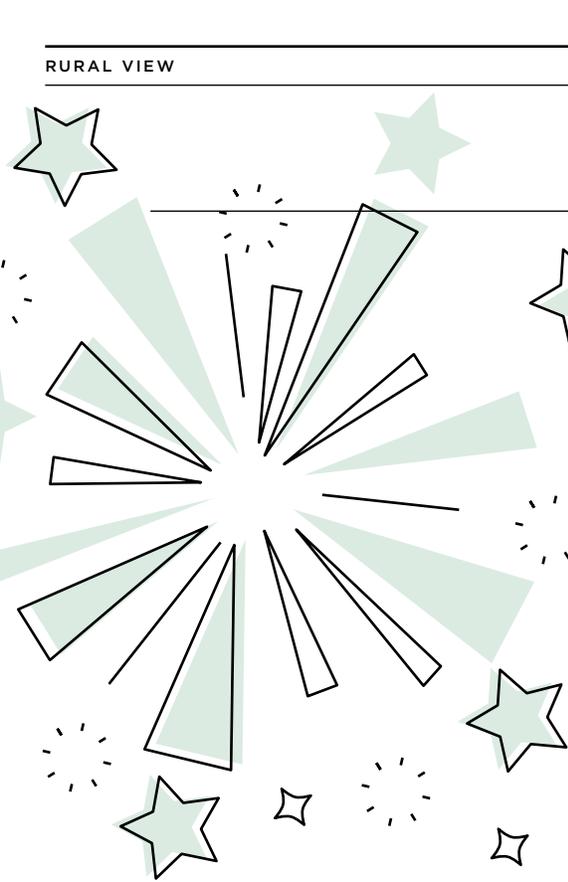
"I do sometimes wonder where we would be today if we had done it that way, but now I think we are going at the right pace and we have a solid five-year plan."

Slowly but surely, the Church Farm Brewery brand is starting to become more recognisable to customers and the family is finding that its hard work is really starting to pay off.

"People love a story," said Harry. "They don't just buy things for the sake of it anymore."

"One of our biggest selling beers is Harry's Heifer," said Jo. "I always point out Harry at events such as the Good Food Show and everyone loves the family link, as well as the label for Black IPA, which he drew when he was younger.

"At the end of the day, everything is about the story."



# PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

*Securing planning permission needn't be a hurdle to jump through. Instead, treat it as an opportunity to plan your diversification thoroughly, Charlene Sussums-Lewis says*



*"Diversification activities in particular are mostly looked upon favourably by councils because of the opportunities they bring to rural areas."*

Securing planning permission is assumed by many to be the thorn in diversification's side. Before you can get carried away with exciting plans, it's vital to secure the necessary permissions and permits.

This important step has, historically, carried with it tales of biased councils, extreme delays and difficult hurdles to jump.

But Carter Jonas planning expert Charlene Sussums-Lewis believes these assumptions are unjustified, particularly when recent government changes and law overhauls designed to help speed up the process are taken into account.

"In July the government released the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which has its own dedicated rural section for the first time," Charlene said. "It recognises the country needs housing and development in rural areas."

Although the government's housebuilding drive has typically focused on cities and towns, the Framework acknowledges growth in rural settlements is essential too.

"The NPPF recognises smaller settlements rely on the services of one

another and therefore the interplay between them can help achieve development in settlements which do not benefit from their own array of services," Charlene said. "This is a positive step forward which largely echoes the findings of the Matthew Taylor Report which outlined concerns over rural communities becoming the enclave of the wealthy and retired. Supporting the vitality of rural communities through housing delivery is key to stopping the diminution of services and businesses."

This, together with timescale targets for local authorities and changes to Permitted Development rights, has encouraged farmers and landowners to look at projects with a fresh pair of eyes.

By empowering landowners to convert buildings without needing to seek full planning permission, the government appears to have provided the means to fast-track building and diversification projects. However Charlene, who is based in the Carter Jonas Shrewsbury office, warns that although they have opened up more opportunities for landowners, there is still a strict process to follow.

“When you apply for Permitted Development you still have to give the council Prior Notification, which means you have to provide details of highways impacts, noise impact, contamination risks, flood risks, location, siting and design,” Charlene said. “They will then tell you if it falls within permitted development or if it’s gone too far and you need to submit a planning application.

“They can also write back and request further information – by which point, the ‘fast track’ system will have involved the same amount of information as that submitted with a planning application.

“Your local authority still has the final say as to whether you can proceed or not. However, needing to apply for planning permission isn’t the end of the world – the situation is very upbeat at the moment and there is no reason why a well planned project won’t be successful.”

When it comes to working up an application, rather than ignoring a scheme’s flaws, Charlene advises applicants to always be on the front foot.

“It doesn’t mean you have to do every report under the sun, but you do need to sit down and honestly identify the weaknesses in your scheme,” she said.

“If you know you haven’t got good access, or there will be ecological constraints, then look into these from the start because the problem isn’t going to go away.”

Diversification activities in particular are mostly looked upon favourably by councils because of the opportunities they bring to rural areas.

“The countryside is a living, working environment – it’s not just there for people to look at. People residing in rural areas need to make a living, so schemes that bring economic benefits to a location or provide job opportunities generally receive support,” she said.

## DOES MY SCHEME NEED PLANNING PERMISSION?

### A GLAMPING, CAMPING OR CARAVANNING SITE:

“There are a few different routes you could take,” said Charlene. “The first is securing planning permission and then the site is yours to design however you like.” But there are alternatives if this doesn’t appeal. “Organisations such as The Camping and Caravanning Club are granted an exemption status. If a landowner teamed up with them they wouldn’t need planning for a site of up to five caravans.” Alternatively, Permitted Development rights could provide means to establish a pop-up camping site, as long as it isn’t used for more than 28 days a year and isn’t located near a building. Charlene advises, however, that many councils aren’t always supportive of caravan sites and instead look favourably upon schemes proposing to improve existing sites and new higher end schemes for glamping pods and lodges.

### EVENTS:

There is a provision within planning regulations for the temporary use of land (Part 4 of Town & Country Planning General Permitted Development Order). “This effectively lets you use a site without having to get formal planning permission for a certain number of days per year,” Charlene said. There are a couple of rules to bear in mind. “Firstly the land to be used for an alternative temporary use must not be part of a residential

curtilage so residential gardens, car parks, etc. are excluded,” Charlene explained. “And the land can be used for no more than 28 days in any calendar year and allows for the siting of moveable structures in connection with the use (portable toilets, stalls etc).” It is worth bearing in mind that other licenses, such as an alcohol licence as well as public liability insurances, will need to be investigated and put in place.

### HOLIDAY LETS:

“The type of permission needed depends on the proposed size,” Charlene said. “Even if it doesn’t fall under permitted development and you have to go through planning, something like a holiday let probably won’t be an issue because they can bring a wider economic benefit to a rural area.”

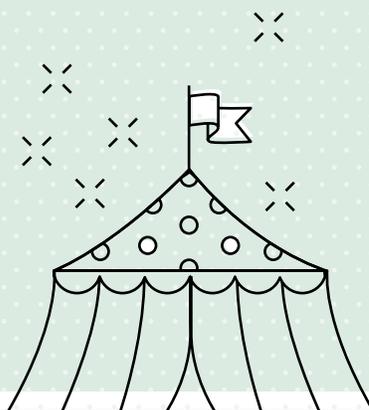
### A BREWERY:

This would require planning permission as it’s classified as ‘industrial use’. When submitting an application, Charlene says the potential for creating jobs will be viewed favourably. “Bear in mind that a council will look at what the local road network is like and how many deliveries there are likely to be,” she added. “If the surrounding roads are dreadful then it might hinder the project, but if it is of economic use you have an excellent case to put forward.”

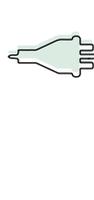
### FARM SHOP:

“It may fall under Permitted Development rights but it depends on the scale,” Charlene said. “As with all the other examples, the best thing to do is secure advice before you begin – the Carter Jonas team will be able to tell you exactly what you need to do.”

*For further information on planning for diversification contact Charlene Sussums-Lewis on [charlene.sussums-lewis@carterjonas.co.uk](mailto:charlene.sussums-lewis@carterjonas.co.uk) or call 01743 213261*







# POWERING THE ENERGY MARKET

*A Carter Jonas Partner on overcoming rocky terrain  
and adapting to new conditions*

From 2010 the UK enjoyed five years of expansion in the renewable energy market, driven in the main by government initiatives such as the Feed-in Tariff. However, all good things must come to an end and the cuts announced in 2016 led to businesses and developers being forced to adopt a different approach to energy developments.

Despite this, Amy Souter, Partner in Carter Jonas' Infrastructure and Energy division, is positive about the future and remains convinced there is still a worthwhile place for energy projects on farms and estates. She explains that government cuts did not take the industry by surprise; developers had been working on the assumption that its stabilisers would be removed for quite some time and new solutions and initiatives are coming forward.

"Solar has seen significant cuts but we are seeing continuous improvement in solar panel technology and consequently there is a developing subsidy-free market," Amy said.

"There is also an evolving market in delivering energy storage projects to balance supply and demand in order to keep power supplies stable. This is in part needed in response to renewable generation, because this makes the supply network less stable and leads to fluctuations in frequency."

Based in the Leeds office, Amy believes her decision to pursue a career in environmental consultancy was influenced by her rural childhood.

"I grew up on a farm in North Yorkshire, just on the edge of the moors and spent all of my childhood outside," she said.

A degree in geography and environmental science was quickly followed by a Masters in environmental consultancy, before she began pursuing a career in that field.

She is now in her seventh year at Carter Jonas and enjoys bringing energy projects to life.

"We do everything related to a project, from finding a site and undertaking the planning and project



management to carrying out due diligence for the banks and completing valuations," she said. "It's really rewarding to take projects from start to finish."

The big hurdle most projects face, before they've even started, is securing a grid connection. Unfortunately there is limited capacity on the network and consequently connections can be too expensive. Carter Jonas overcome this using our connections experience, which enables us to identify available capacity and propose an energy solution that can be feasibly connected.

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*"It's really rewarding to take projects from start to finish."*

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The development of 'behind the meter' battery technologies creates a new energy opportunity without the need for additional grid capacity. This technology enables a consumer to utilise their battery during times when electricity costs are highest, which will reduce their operating costs, and at the same time can address outages and potentially generate revenue from providing grid balancing services.

"It's a rapidly evolving market and a key opportunity for high energy consumers and those who may be generating renewable energy and want to get a higher revenue from any exported electricity," Amy said.

Another emerging sector is electric vehicles. "For us electric vehicle charging is fast becoming an important work stream," Amy explained. "The electric vehicle industry has been in development for a while but things are really ramping up now. There is a need for significant investment in electric vehicle infrastructure to support uptake, especially given the government's ambitious plan for all new cars to be effectively zero emissions by 2040."

Widespread rollout will only succeed if the consumer can access user friendly charging facilities across the country – something Amy believes presents a potential opportunity for rural landowners and businesses.

"We're working for private landowners and developers identifying sites for electric vehicle charge points and charging stations," she said.

"There are opportunities to install charge points that will not only support their own businesses and power their own fleets, but also help bring in customers and increase footfall.

There are also opportunities to host new super rapid charging stations to serve strategic road network users, which will be important to overcome that 'range anxiety' which is a current deterrent to potential electric vehicle owners."

Logistics concerning energy developments may take up a lot of Amy's time, but outside the office she swaps this interest for something with two wheels. Whereas most people get home from work and collapse on the sofa, Amy is an elite cyclist competing at the very top of the sport. Specialising in mountain biking, Amy has represented Team GB and secured the very top spot as National Champion. Impressive, considering she only started cycling regularly four years ago.

"I started on a road bike and quickly began taking part in road races," she said. "However, my sister was diagnosed with leukemia and I donated my stem cells as part of her treatment which meant I had to take a break from road racing.

"Instead I decided to try mountain biking – initially I thought it was horrendous, much harder than road racing! But I got really into it and ended up getting my elite license. This means you're racing at a professional level – although I just do it in my spare time because I have a full time job."

She raced for Team GB in the European Championships this year, just four months after breaking her leg, coming 24th overall.

And now she is undertaking an even bigger challenge. "I am taking a sabbatical for two months to try and set the world record for the fastest cycle across South America," she revealed. "I will be doing it on a tandem bike with my friend Matt (just to make it even harder!) and we will be covering 11,000km in hopefully 50 days, which works out to around 220km a day, to raise money for Bloodwise and Cancer Research."

On her return Amy will continue encouraging those considering energy forms of diversification to begin by taking a very close look at their business and considering their options fully.

Alongside the challenges there are also still major opportunities for businesses to be innovative and profit from effective energy management. It may not be the most exciting option, but analysing a business' current tariffs and considering energy saving options is often the best place to start.

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*"I am taking a sabbatical for two months to try and set the world record for the fastest cycle across South America"*

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"An easy win for a lot of high energy users is proactively managing their energy agreements to ensure they're on the most competitive tariff that is best suited for their business," she said. "You can make significant cost savings just from monitoring electricity usage more closely and switching to more suitable tariffs. That, alongside a behind the meter battery solution, could be a really good income generator and cost saver."

**If you would like to know more about our energy services contact Amy Souter on [amy.souter@carterjonas.co.uk](mailto:amy.souter@carterjonas.co.uk) or call 0113 203 1093.**



## DIVERSITY IN DIVERSIFICATION

*With so many diversification options, we look at the top five themes trending.*

### FOOD & DRINK

When it comes to launching your own food or drink product, the sky's the limit. From cheese and cured meats, to wine and gin, farmers are adding value to the fruits of their labour by developing their own brands. The processing and retailing of farm produce accounts for 9% of all diversifications and, if you hit the jackpot, the benefits are huge; just look at now-household names such as Chase, Daylesford and The Black Farmer. But how can you get your product off to the best start?

Jo Densley from Relish Marketing believes innovation is key. "Farm shops and supermarkets are inundated with 'new' products on a daily basis, so anything truly innovative will appeal," she said.

"It is much easier to get interest in a completely new product, than a 'me too'.

"As well as creating a unique product also consider the packaging format and the eco-credentials.

"And don't forget that they will also want proof that there is a real consumer need for the product and that it is in a growing category." A great example of innovation is Seedlip, the world's first non-alcoholic spirit. Founder Ben Branson said: "My family's 300-year farming heritage and a career working on drinks brands laid the foundations to spend two years working with distillers, growers and historians to create a solution to the what-to-drink-when-you're-not-drinking conundrum."

## SPORT AND RECREATION

The Farm Business Survey reveals that 13% of diversified farms have embraced the 'sport and recreation' route. The scope within this category is huge – from tourist attractions to staging athletic events, and those within this category have proved there is no ceiling to innovation.

James Helliwell created a business from a childhood passion when he set up Robin Hood Raceway on his family's arable farm in 2006.

For years they had given their local model car club use of a small grass field for their racing, but James realised there was a space in the market to run a more professional facility.

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*“Enthusiasm for this among the model racing community was high, I had many years experience, there were no direct competitors and it would be the only facility of its type in the country.”*

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“Enthusiasm for this among the model racing community was high, I had many years experience, there were no direct competitors and it would be the only facility of its type in the country,” he said.

His gut feeling that such a venture could prove successful was correct. The venue is hugely popular and events such as the 2015 European Championships have brought thousands of people to the farm.

The family has invested a great deal of time and money into the project, but the popularity of the Raceway has insured this investment has paid off. “The venue has enjoyed around 10% growth

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*“The venue is hugely popular and events such as the 2015 European Championships have brought thousands of people to the farm.”*

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year on year since our initial investment of £20,000 in the scheme,” James explained. “We also received a grant from the LEADER programme for our contribution to rural tourism.”

Add-ons to maximise profit include an on-site cafe and camping and caravanning facilities, turning a previously quiet spot into a thriving, social destination.

“In arable farming you don't see a huge amount of people from day to day,” he said. “Having people on the site every weekend is fantastic.”

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*“Having people on the site every weekend is fantastic.”*

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*“We’ve planted for aesthetics, for the environment and for the practicalities of farming.”*

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## WOODLAND

Adding value to woodland or planting new trees is a form of diversification growing in popularity, in part thanks to the funding available. Only this September the Countryside Stewardship Woodland Creation Grant scheme became a year-round initiative in order to encourage more projects. Agroforestry in particular is capturing landowners’ imagination (not least, Tom on *The Archers*).

Roger and Rachel Howison from Parkhill Farm in Fife have worked alongside the Woodland Trust to introduce a type of agroforestry called alley cropping to their site, planting 750 apple trees in ten rows among their malting barley to give them an additional cash crop. They managed to secure funding from AccorHotels through their Plant for the Planet initiative.

“Alley cropping gives us more yield, but we’ve only lost 5% of the barley to do it,” Roger said.

“For us it was a win-win. We still want to be an arable farm but with an interest in forestry. Agroforestry has it all – we’ve planted for aesthetics, for the environment and for the practicalities of farming”

Woodland Trust outreach adviser Iain Moss said: “At a time when farms and forestry are still largely seen in Scotland as conflicting land uses, Roger and Rachel risked both agricultural productivity and local farming reputation by drastically altering the use of several of their land parcels.

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*“For us it was a win-win.”*

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“But the results are there for all to see. Despite only being in the ground for just over two years, the apple trees are doing superbly well. The other native trees are also establishing themselves in their new homes in Roger’s fields and it’s not difficult to imagine the positive impact they will have in years to come.”

## HOLIDAY ACCOMMODATION

According to the Farm Business Survey, around 6% of diversifying farmers decide to create tourist accommodation and catering, and the reasons are clear. Staycations have risen rapidly in popularity over recent years and venturing into the countryside has never been more appealing thanks to consumer demand for activities such as glamping.

Standing out from the crowd is necessary for those considering this path. A great example of doing things differently is Hoe Grange Farm in the Peak District, which won ‘Champion of Champions’ at last year’s Rural Business Awards for its self-catering cottages.

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*“We spotted a gap in the market to provide quality accessible accommodation with a ‘home from home’ feel.”*

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Proving that targeting a niche market is a smart move when it comes to such a saturated marketplace, David and Felicity Brown decided to put accessibility at the heart of their business.

“Market research showed there was a large supply of standard self-catering properties in the Peak District but a lack of accessible accommodation,” said David, who is also Director of Farm Stay UK. “Nationally there were nine million registered disabled, but only 1,000 National Accessible Scheme rated holiday properties. We spotted a gap in the market to provide quality accessible accommodation with a ‘home from home’ feel”

What started as a sound business decision became a passion, and the site now constantly innovates in order to provide the best experience possible – something they are able to do thanks to their loyal guests who return regularly, often book well ahead and visit during off-peak times.

*Bill Lewis, a Norfolk miscanthus grower*



## ALTERNATIVE CROPS

If you don't want your diversification to venture too far away from your day job, planting alternative crops such as willow, quinoa or hemp could prove a lucrative side project.

In particular, more miscanthus planting is needed to meet a sustainable growth in demand.

A perennial energy crop, miscanthus is harvested every spring and has the potential to yield 15-17 tonnes per hectare, which can give a farmer a return of over £900 per hectare from mature yield.

The crop life-cycle is more than 20 years and growers consider it a long-term, low-maintenance investment that provides an assured income well into the future.

"Growers can expect an average 14% annual return on investment, and an average of 647% over 15 years," said Jacob Duce from miscanthus specialist, Terravesta.

It requires minimal inputs and no fertiliser, out-competes blackgrass and thrives on poor grade, marginal land.

The market for miscanthus is seeing sustainable growth and Terravesta is expanding with several end-markets including whole bale power stations – currently supplying 50,000 tonnes of miscanthus annually to Brigg in Lincolnshire and Snetterton in Norfolk, on long-term contracts.

Bill Lewis, a Norfolk miscanthus grower, is keen to promote the opportunity to others after being pleased with his results.

"In 2013, we made the decision to plant 15 hectares of miscanthus on a field that historically was poor permanent pasture, prone to flooding," he said. "We tried growing winter wheat, sugar beet and linseed, but they all failed. We've had 90% establishment with miscanthus."

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*"We've had 90% establishment with miscanthus."*

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**For advice on alternative crops contact Jon Birchall on [john.birchall@carterjonas.co.uk](mailto:john.birchall@carterjonas.co.uk) or call 01743 213284**

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*“I’m setting the agenda rather than falling in line – and what small business owner doesn’t want that?”*

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# THE NEXT GENERATION ARE LEADING THE WAY

*Breathing new life into a business takes energy, passion and thinking outside the box. Often that can come from the sons and daughters of farming families.*

## NEW KID ON THE BLOCK

Chris Dickinson's grand plan was always to move back to the family farm, but he knew he would need to set up his own enterprise.

His parents run a mixed farm comprising beef, sheep, poultry and arable enterprises.

Diversity aplenty, but third-generation Chris spotted a niche market in need of a champion.

Globally, goat meat is one of the most consumed meats and although the UK is one of the only countries in the world where this consumption isn't common, Chris recognised that interest was rising.

"Goat meat is low in fat but high in protein and iron," Chris said. "People often have a pre-conceived idea about it – that it's tough or fatty – but once you convince them to try it, they realise goat meat is a fantastic alternative to the more mainstream options.

"The popularity of protein-based meals and clean eating has also led people to try it for the first time, because it's the perfect product for health-conscious consumers."

His breed of choice was the Boer and, in a stroke of luck, a 120-strong herd came up for sale following a local farmer's decision to emigrate.

"I couldn't believe it when I saw a herd of that size was being sold as it's very rare," he said. "In order to minimise the risk of disease and because I was aiming to establish a closed herd I bought them all."

Recognising The Tailored Goat Company's potential, Chris was awarded a scholarship of £3,000 and a mentor from the Henry Plumb Foundation in 2014.

Today he is finishing more than 350 goats a year, selling the finished product to local restaurants and butchers in Cumbria.

"By creating a business which has less competition I can set the price, rather than be beholden to the market," he said.

"I'm currently selling my goat meat for double the price of lamb and I have extremely loyal customers.

"I was selling to Selfridges in London, but actually made the decision to stop as I had more than enough local business, which in turn keeps my transport costs down.

"I am now supplying goat to high end restaurants in Scotland such as Gleneagles through an excellent catering butchers called John Gilmour.

"I'm setting the agenda rather than falling in line – and what small business owner doesn't want that?"



## FROM DISCONNECT TO RECONNECT

Jess Gibbs didn't always plan on launching a business from her family's farm.

Initially she trained as a lawyer and moved to London, but it wasn't long before the lure of the countryside tempted her back.

Situated in Elstree, just three miles from the end of the Jubilee line, Home Farm has been in the Gibbs family for 300 years.

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*"...the farm's close proximity to London meant that a potential audience of nearly nine million people was right on their doorstep"*

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Jess realised that the farm's close proximity to London meant that a potential audience of nearly nine million people was right on their doorstep and decided to seize upon a new trend to entice them to the countryside: glamping.

No one understood more than Jess how important escape from the city can be, as she commutes to the farm every day from her home in Brixton.

"This is the place to come if you want to escape London but can't face the thought of a long drive or crowded, expensive train," she said. "No need for a car, you can grab your overnight bag, hop on the tube or overland straight from work and be with us in 40 minutes."

Jess's dad was initially sceptical: "He joked 'why would anyone want to sleep in a field?'" Jess said.

However, her hunch that a rural escape was exactly what Londoners needed turned out to be well placed and Home Farm Glamping opened its doors in early 2015 with three yurts and nine bell tents.

Far from being just a destination for weekends away, Jess has used



her corporate experience to market the site as the perfect place for organisations to hold team building away days or for businesses offering their staff stay incentives, as part of HR schemes that encourage staff to take positive time out.

Businesses that have used Home Farm include Samsung, Sainsbury's and Investec. Each organisation used the site to build an experience for their staff that met their specific objectives.

"The activities each group chose were very different but all of them commented on what a great experience it was and how different it was from any other team away day they had taken part in," she said.

"People come here wearing their suits, clutching their mobile phones. By the end of their stay, they're talking to one another around campfires, bonding over adventure trails, and they've got muddy wellies on their feet. People are very inspired by the glamping experience and Home Farm is a real escape from the city.

"We're here to enable people to disconnect in order to reconnect."

## GIN FLIES OUT THE CUCKOO'S NEST

Few spirits can claim to have enjoyed such a resurgence as gin.

The Wine and Spirit Trade Association says combined yearly sales



of gin in the UK and British gin overseas have doubled in the past five years.

In the 12 months to June this year sales in the UK were worth over £1.6bn, up 38% on last year.

For one Lancastrian farming family, it has meant the farm remains viable for the future generations.

Gerard and Cath Singleton set about transforming Holmes Farm in Brindle, near Chorley, in 2017 with the help of their children Alice, William, Liz and her husband, Mark Long.

“When we first set up it was all hands on deck for the family to do everything ourselves,” said Alice.

Growing the barley, which is the base for the Cuckoo gin brand, and

general farm maintenance is carried out by Gerard and William. Marketing and sales is headed up by Mark, and everything else is a team effort.

By-products of the distilling process are fed to pedigree cattle and free range chickens and straw from the barley is used for their bedding, and also used in the packaging to keep bottles safe in transit.

Further assistance comes in the form of Tom Fitzpatrick who takes the pressure off the family to travel and attends all hired events. But even with the extra support, there is still plenty to do at the Brindle Distillery.

Alice said: “We are a family unit and even if it means posting social media

posts, taking photographs or filling in awards applications forms, we all chip in and that’s part of our USP.”

She hopes the diversification will mean Holmes Farm can remain in the Singleton family for another 80 years or more.

“Developing the Cuckoo gin brand has meant we can continue to rear our pedigree Hereford and Aberdeen Angus cattle without having to rely on this solely for income,” Alice said.

“The land is once again being worked, which it hasn’t been in all my life time, and it’s providing employment for local people, and providing a community spirit – no pun intended – for those living in Brindle and the surrounding areas.”

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# TOP TIPS

*for marketing  
your idea*

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*Coming up with a great idea is just the start;  
letting people know you exist and convincing them  
to love your product is the bigger challenge.  
We talk to brand, marketing and PR experts plus  
a farmer with the benefit of experience who tell us  
why promotion and communication should be vital  
parts of your business plan*

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## THE FARMER PERSPECTIVE

Geoff Roper,  
Wessex Lowlines

A Dorset farm business which set out to change attitudes towards beef production found it difficult to communicate their messages to farmers and smallholders.

That was until a sustained public relations campaign began to gain the traction required to perk the interests of landowners across Europe.

Geoff Roper started out with a handful of Lowline cattle eight years

ago with the aim of showing small-acreage farmers that you could produce more beef per acre by using smaller cattle at a higher stocking rate.

Lowlines are 100% Aberdeen Angus but 30% smaller in size, meaning they can efficiently convert grass to meat.

“What we are proposing requires a change of mindset among those who may have kept the same cattle or run highly commercial systems for their entire career,” Geoff said.

“Articles in the farming press, smallholder titles and social media channels have been really important to us in getting our message out there.

“We host open days and attend shows but need a bigger reach and have been

able to do that with a public relations campaign over the past few years.”

The company’s biggest public relations success was undoubtedly the visit of Adam Henson and the BBC *Countryfile* cameras in August.

“There are about seven million people who watch the programme on a Sunday night so that sort of exposure doesn’t come along every day,” Geoff said.

“It’s a difficult programme to get on because it is the flagship show for countryside life, but we have had an enormous response from people who now want to come and see the cattle and learn more about what we are trying to do in our little corner of Dorset.”

## THE BRAND GURU

Helen Stuart,  
Farm Creative

*“If you have a clean, crisp and modern brand it should help you compete and stand out.”*

### *Is branding just creating a fancy logo?*

Branding is so much more than just a logo. It’s the creative execution of the narrative that tells your story, it’s what makes your business distinctive and unique. It should harness and communicate the values of your product or service.

### *Do we need a brand if we’re just producing a bit of meat or ice cream direct from the farm?*

Branding will enable you to communicate the story behind your products, the generations that have been involved. Maybe you’ve been established in farming for 60 years – that has weight. With food in particular, look at the trends at the moment – food miles, origin etc – how does your brand fit into what consumers are looking for?

### *What value does it add to my business?*

If you have a clean, crisp and modern brand it should help you compete and stand out. It needs to be visible on all your products, your website, your social media and your printed literature to ensure consistency every time you engage with your target market.

### *How much is it going to cost me, and is it one-off or continuous?*

It’s very difficult to give a one-size-fits-all answer because everyone is different. Branding is more than just creating a logo and a set of brand guidelines. Find an agency that works in your field and understands what you are trying to achieve. Speak to their clients; have they done a good job in the past? Look at the culture of the agency – are their values and skills compatible with yours?

***When it comes to marketing, where should you start?***

Marketing is often forgotten among those who are starting a diversification project. Yet it's key to the success and growth of your business.

Before launching headfirst into your new project, it's vital to do your market research. This will identify if there is the need and desire for your product or service and help you decide which direction to go in.

Look at what similar businesses are doing, undertake feedback surveys and ask for honest opinions. The more insight you get, the more you will start to understand what your target audience wants and whether you can match this with your offering.

The most important factor is to tailor your marketing efforts to your target audience. For example, if you are targeting the elderly, traditional forms of marketing such as leaflets, print advertising in local or regional publications or even your parish magazine may be a good place to start. For a younger audience, a digital focus may be more fitting.

***How important is social media?***

The latest statistics reveal that there are now 3.2 billion active social media users in the world (Hootsuite, 2018). Facebook sees 2.23 billion active users each month, Twitter sees 335 million, and Instagram 1 billion (Statista, 2018).

Think of the potential audience you could be targeting through the use of these digital marketing platforms that are totally free to access and use.

The main factor to consider is which platform(s) is best for your business and the messages you are planning to share,

as this will influence the quality and level of engagement you may receive on your posts.

The social media world can be daunting to start with, but there are so many opportunities to try different things across the platforms, from sponsored posts to Facebook pixels, which make it a very appealing marketing tool.

***Is it essential to have a website?***

In this day and age, having an online presence is key. People expect to be able to find a business online.

But to start with it doesn't have to be anything fancy or cost an arm and a leg. There are free tools out there which will allow you to build your own website.

As your business grows, you may decide to enlist the help of a web designer, but there is a cost associated with this, and it's likely that you will be quoted on a cost per hour basis, but ask yourself 'will it be money well spent?'

Remember, your website is your shop window. It is an element of your business that should always keep evolving to reflect the development of your business.

***What content on your website gets the most views?***

With farm diversification such a hot topic at the moment, particularly due to the uncertainty around what Brexit has in store for the agricultural sector, our articles on diversification trends, assessing on-farm assets for diversification and five key steps before diversifying your farm business have consistently been our most viewed articles over the past couple of months.

**THE  
MARKETING  
WHIZZ**

Rosie Hopkins  
The Business Barn

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*"In this day and age, having an online presence is key. People expect to be able to find a business online."*

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## THE PR EXPERT

Megan Allen  
Rural Roots

### *Why is PR important?*

PR is an effective and budget-friendly way of managing your reputation. It's especially important when thinking about diversifying your land, from the planning stages right through to the grand opening. By effectively communicating your vision, your story and how your project will positively impact your community, you will start building the reputation of your business from day one.

For example, if the local press want to interview you about the project following a planning application submission, my advice would always be to speak to them and put across your side of the story as there may be some objections from the wider public.

Equally important is keeping the PR going once you've started your project. Make sure you update social media or the local press regularly, share photos and create some anticipation in your target market before you even break ground.

By regularly communicating, you are in control of what's being said and when.

### *How can you get press coverage?*

Getting press coverage very much depends on the story you're trying to tell. When diversifying, it's much more likely that the local press, rather than the nationals, will be interested in your project as it's in the public interest.

*"Always start by profiling your target market and thinking about what would drive them to visit you or buy your product."*

Usually, the press will pick up on any interesting planning applications that go into the local council, which is when they will first get in touch.

The best thing you can do is to be prepared and work with them. Make sure you have facts, figures and supporting images available. And share your vision; your passion for the project will come across in your answers.

Be sure to keep them up to date during the project work and invite relevant journalists along for a tour of the site once it's completed. PR is just as much about building a relationship with journalists as it is getting coverage, so offering review opportunities, product samples or looking out for opportunities to work with a journalist on a relevant story are great ways to break the ice.

### *What are your top tips for developing a PR strategy?*

Always start by profiling your target market and thinking about what would drive them to visit you or buy your product. Think about what types of media they use for information; do they read a particular newspaper, magazine or social media platform? If so then that's the media outlet you should be working with.

Do some research into the types of articles they produce and come up with a strategy that will work to their specifications, rather than your own.

# A SELECTION OF PROPERTY

*brought to market this Autumn*

*In changeable times it's good to work with a business that's fit for the future.*

*By selling a wide variety of farmland and estates over the past year, Carter Jonas has adapted to an evolving market and sold more than 50% privately off market.*

*We live in busy and exciting times – not least for launches – and here is a section properties from across the Carter Jonas regions brought to the market this Autumn.*

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**READING, BERKSHIRE**  
*Guide price £2,600,000*

A well-located residential farm with a period detached dwelling in need of improvement & modernisation. In all approx 156.27 acres (63.25 hectares).

Period 5 bedroom farmhouse •  
 Farmyard, outbuildings & off-lying barn suitable for a variety of uses (STP) •  
 Mix of mainly well-established permanent & some temporary pasture • Mature woodland & infield trees • Ponds & sporting potential • For sale by private treaty as a whole or in up to 5 lots

**Contact Andrew Chandler**  
[andrew.chandler@carterjonas.co.uk](mailto:andrew.chandler@carterjonas.co.uk)  
 or 01635 263012



**WANTAGE,  
OXFORDSHIRE**  
*Guide price £2,400,000*

A substantial unlisted family house & adjacent barns set in just under 14 acres (5.67 hectares) in a truly magnificent location with beautiful far-reaching views.

5/6 reception rooms • 10/11 bedrooms • 2 bathrooms • 2 shower rooms • Kitchen/breakfast room • Extensive outbuildings • Range of barns with planning permission to convert to 5 dwellings • Established garden • EPC rating G

Contact **Andrew Chandler**  
[andrew.chandler@carterjonas.co.uk](mailto:andrew.chandler@carterjonas.co.uk)  
or **01635 263012**





**LAXTON, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE**  
*Guide price £7,000,000*

The Laxton Estate, Nottinghamshire, is the last remaining example of the Open Field System & Court Leet in the country, a unique heritage estate of significant educational & curatorial interest.

17 tenanted farms • Traditional agricultural strip farming used on 3 open fields • 10 let residential properties • A substantial range of traditional buildings • For sale as a whole

**Contact Ben Ainscough**  
*ben.ainscough@carterjonas.co.uk*  
*or 01604 608210*



**PENRHYNDEUDRAETH,  
GWYNEDD**  
*Guide price £850,000*

An attractive lifestyle farm with approx 94 acres of mixed pasture & woodland & stunning views over the surrounding mountains & coastline.

Traditional Welsh 3/4 bedroom farmhouse • A good sized detached stone cottage with three bedrooms managed as a successful holiday let • Landscaped garden including flower & vegetable beds • Traditional & modern agricultural outbuildings

**Contact Hugh O'Donnell**  
*[hugh.odonnell@carterjonas.co.uk](mailto:hugh.odonnell@carterjonas.co.uk)*  
or 01248 360414



**WESTBURY, WILTSHIRE**  
*Guide price as a whole*  
**£2,800,000**

A delightful residential, arable & livestock holding set in approx 209.83 acres (84.917 hectares).

7 bedroom detached farmhouse for renovation with adjoining walled garden • Extensive traditional buildings with development potential (STP) • Further modern livestock & arable farm buildings • Productive arable, pasture & woodland • Available as a whole or in up to 6 lots

**Contact David Hebditch**  
**david.hebditch@carterjonas.co.uk**  
**or 01823 428590**

*Contact your regional agent today to discuss your property requirements and book a free market appraisal.*

*carterjonas.co.uk/  
 rural-consultants*

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# EGGS

## IT ALL DEPENDS ON THE BASKET

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