

Ecological Land Cooperative to create new small farms on Gower

In December 2017, the Ecological Land Cooperative (ELC) purchased an 18-acre site on Gower continuing the work of making land accessible to ecological farming.

With the continued successes of the three small farm enterprises on their first site in Devon, temporary planning permission awarded on their second site in East Sussex the ELC's model of cluster farms fit for the future reflects an increasing desire for many to live and work on the land whilst producing ecologically grown food.

The site, known as 'Furzehill', made up of four agricultural fields between the village of Lunnon and the B4271 was previously used for sheep grazing. Since spring 2018, Wales's largest community supported agriculture scheme Cae Tan has stewarded the land and leased 5 five acres of the site to grow vegetables for their social enterprise providing weekly veg boxes for 120 local households.

The ELC will apply for planning permission to create a cluster of two residential small farms and one residential farm training project accompanying land-based businesses. Each would have an agricultural tie committing the stewards to operate farm businesses, bringing local food, employment and diversity - both ecologically and agriculturally - to the area.

The Ecological Land Cooperative works to create affordable ecological small farms for new entrants to farming – those who would ordinarily be unable to afford a house in the countryside yet who wish to earn a living through farming.

With the purchase of the Furzehill site, the first five year's permission would be temporary allowing land-based businesses to establish and grow. After the initial five years lapse the ELC would apply for permanent permission at which point the stewards would be able to build permanent dwellings (within a set footprint and height and working to stringent ecological principles). ELC tenants are legally tied to a Management Plan with strict ecological guidelines and an annual monitoring process carried out by the organisation who work closely with the local authorities.

The ELC will be hosting a community meeting at the Barham Centre in Parkmill on Wednesday 17th July 2019, 5pm – 7pm to present their model, answer any questions and consult the local community before submitting any planning application.

EDITORS' NOTES

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The Ecological Land Cooperative (ELC) is a social enterprise, co-operative in structure, established to address the lack of affordable sites for ecological land-based livelihoods in England and Wales.

Set up in 2009, the ELC purchases land, obtains planning permission, and installs the infrastructure to create clusters of three or more affordable small farms for future farmers.

The ELC's first project, Greenham Reach, in mid-Devon, was granted temporary planning permission in 2013 and has recently been granted permanent permission. Now home to three thriving small farms – including businesses such as veg box scheme, salad bags, micro goat dairy, tree nursery, medicinal herbs, meat and educational course. Greenham Reach is a living example of ecologically managed land providing truly sustainable land-based livelihoods.

The ELC's second site in Arlington, East Sussex has secured temporary planning permission and is the process of recruiting tenants to join the cooperative and start farming.

The ELC has also purchased land in Sparkford, South Somerset with a planning application in process.

You can find out more about applying to be a farmer with the ELC here.

<https://ecologicalland.coop/join-elc-as-an-ecological-farmer>

For more info about ELC please visit: <http://ecologicalland.coop>

The ELC has published the report '[Small is Successful: Creating sustainable livelihoods on ten acres or less](#)' and a [series of case studies of small farms making a profit in the UK](#).