



FELIX THORNLEY COBBOLD AGRICULTURAL TRUST

Also known as **FELIX COBBOLD TRUST**

Registered charity number: **211245**

The Willows, Lackford, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, IP28 6HT

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Report of the Trustees for the year ended March 31 2009

Trustees and Governance

There is provision for ten Trustees, three nominated by Suffolk County Council following each CC elections, three nominated by Suffolk Agricultural Association coinciding with SCC nominations, these six nominees may appoint up to four Independent members.

Nominated by Suffolk County Council:

Jeremy Clover (died 9 February 2009)

John Field

Selwyn Pryor

Nominated by Suffolk Agricultural Association:

Robert Baker (Acting-chairman to 28 October 2008, Vice-chairman)

Stephen Cobbald (Chairman from 28 October 2008)

George Harris

Independents appointed by the nominated trustees:

Dr Philip Draycott

John Forrest (Chairman, died 9 April 2008)

Bruce Hinton

Administrator

Colin Smith

Land and property agents

Lacy Scott & Knight

Bankers

Lloyds TSB plc

Solicitors

Birketts llp

Auditors

Baker Tilly llp

Investment managers

CCLA

John Forrest, Chairman

The Trust suffered a severe loss with the sudden and unexpected death of its Chairman, John Forrest, on 9 April 2008.

John Forrest was a man of great stature in the agricultural life of Suffolk and East Anglia, making significant contributions to many farming educational, commercial, development and research organisations. His own farming enterprise was a shining example of best farming practice; he was an accomplished engineer and inventor of farm machinery, and an enthusiastic improver of arable land through drainage. He recognised the value of sound research, and was an early adopter of new machinery, varieties and methods. Above all, he recognised the importance of sound education and training for young people. All of this knowledge, experience and wisdom he applied to his many voluntary and charitable interests, including the Felix Thornley Cobbold Agricultural Trust, where his contribution to its development is greatly valued, and his passing is sadly mourned.

Robert Baker presided as Acting Chairman until the Annual General Meeting on 28 October 2009, when Stephen Cobbald was elected Chairman.

Jeremy Clover, Trustee

The Trust suffered a further loss with the death of Jeremy Clover on 9 February 2009. Jeremy Clover had served the Trust as an appointee of Suffolk County Council for over 20 years. He was particularly concerned with the correct and ethical operation of the trust, and his thoughtful input to discussions, particularly when the trust has been undergoing a period of change, has been especially valuable.

Investment policy

The Trust's income is derived from rents on property and land, dividends on stock-market investments, and interest on cash holdings.

Property holdings consist of: the site of Otley College including Charity Farmhouse extending to 24.5 hectares; three blocks of farmland, Charity Farm, Stanaway Farm, and Hope Farm totalling 268.5 ha in the parishes of Otley, Ashbocking and Sproughton, let on agricultural leases; Allotments of 0.89 ha in the village of Sproughton; Stanaway Farmhouse, let on a residential lease; three former farm buildings at Stanaway Farm, let on commercial leases. The house at Hope Farm, together with the farm buildings and 2.1 ha of grassland has been let for combined residential and business use. Land and property holdings were valued at £3,540,000.

Equities are held in COIF Charities Investment Funds – Income Units. These funds are invested mainly in equities, both in the UK (about 63%) and overseas about 18%), and the balance in bonds and property funds. COIF holdings at 31 March 2009 totalled £564,608.

A cash reserve was held in a COIF deposit account. Cash in this deposit and current LTSB accounts at 31 March 2009 totalled £480,745.

Asset strategy

A review of the Trust's asset management policy was carried out during the preceding year. The policies agreed at that review were followed throughout the year. The Trust continued with its major holdings in land and property, no new investment in equities were made due to the downturn in stock markets and cash reserves from income and the proceeds of the sale of the small parcel of land at Nelson Field was placed in the COIF deposit account.

The land and property agents keep the condition of the Trust's holdings under review and recommend any works necessary to prevent deterioration of houses,

buildings, fencing and land. Necessary repairs and improvements were undertaken on Stanaway Farmhouse, and the former Conference Centre.

Management policy

The Trust was established in 1910 as the 'Felix T Cobbold's Smallholdings and Allotments Trust' and was subsequently varied by Schemes of the Charity Commission in 1966, 1968, 2003 and 2007 to meet the changing needs of Agriculture for charitable support. The Trust's Object is to provide grants to advance and improve agriculture, in particular to educate farmers and young persons in agricultural methods, developments and techniques, in Suffolk and the adjoining counties. Grants may be awarded in six categories, education and training, research and development, promotion and publicity, capital works and equipment, production and marketing, and environment and wildlife.

Trustees are selected for nomination and appointment to provide the Trust with the range of knowledge and understanding of agricultural matters necessary to meet its obligations. The Trust meets in January, April, July and October to discuss and decide action on issues brought before it by its Land Agents and Administrator. A major item on the agenda at each meeting is to consider grant applications.

The Land Agents manage the Trust's estate of land and property, liaise with tenants and collect rents.

The Administrator manages the Trust's charitable activities, assesses and processes applications for grants, monitors progress of grant funded projects, manages the current bank account and keeps Trustees informed of the state of investments and reserves. The Administrator is responsible for the Trust's information, promotion and development services, and may also carry out any other business agreed with the trust.

Risk management

Trustees have considered risks appropriate to the trust's activities and are of the opinion that procedures and controls in place are sufficient to mitigate these risks. A procedure for annual review is established.

Milestones and achievements

- Lacy Scott & Knight were appointed Land and Property Agents, to manage all aspects of the Trust's estate, including sales and any acquisitions.
- The Trust was approached by the Board of Otley College with an offer to purchase the freehold of the 24.5 hectare college site. As this would yield a substantial sum for reinvestment elsewhere, Trustees agreed, and appointed Strutt & Parker, who had been responsible for the original valuation of the site, to conduct all negotiations. The deal eventually fell through when the Learning and Skills Council withdrew previously promised financial support.
- Sale of about 0.2 hectare of Nelson Field to a residential neighbour was concluded, and the proceeds added to capital reserves.
- An "as new" shipping container was purchased and sited at the Stanaway Farm site as a repository for archive materials.
- Four firms of accountants were interviewed during January 2009, and Baker Tilly LLP were reappointed as the Trust's auditors.
- The renovation of Hope Farmhouse was completed, and the property let to new tenants as a caravan storage and equestrian business.
- Advantage was taken of the vacancy of Stanaway Farmhouse from December 2008 to carry out renovations and improvement to drainage and car parking.

- The John Forrest Memorial Fund was established, in conjunction with The Morley Agricultural Foundation and The Arable Group to provide grants for the development of young people in agriculture.
- New grants were awarded for Senior Farm Management Training, English Partridge Survival, Soils Survey, Survey of Agricultural Trusts, Farming Teaching Aids in Schools, Veterinary Science Degree, Sustainable Trial in Arable Rotations (STAR) (extension), Phoma Stem Canker in Oilseed Rape, Suffolk School Farm and Country Fair, Essex Schools Food and Farming Day, Improving Soil Drainage and Sustainable Agriculture in Claylands.
- Promotion of the Trust was achieved through additions to the website, displaying the ringside banner at the Suffolk Show and strengthening contacts with agricultural organisations, and adding Trust information to the Agri Food Charities Partnership website.

Grant making policy

Grants may be awarded to deserving individuals, educational bodies, organisations or other charities to improve agricultural knowledge and efficiency in the defined region.

Grant applications are accepted only on the Trust's standardised application forms, to ensure that all required information is provided and that all submissions for grant are considered on a fair and equal basis. Applicants may provide additional written information, providing it is relevant. All applications are assessed by the Administrator for eligibility, processed into an appropriate format, and included on the agenda for consideration by Trustees at the next quarterly meeting.

Grant awards

Grants may be awarded in the following categories:

- Education and Training
- Research and Field Trials
- Promotion and Publicity
- Capital and equipment
- Production and Marketing
- Environment and Wildlife

16 applications for grants were received during the year ending 31 March 2009, of which 12 were approved and four refused. Two ongoing awards were renewed.

New awards comprised two for higher education, five for research, three for promoting public awareness of British food production, and two for environmental and wildlife projects. Some of these awards are planned for the year 2009-10.

Targets for 2009-10

Planned activities for 2009-10 include:

- To continue increasing the number and range of grants awarded.
- To make the Trust's activities more widely known by increasing publicity.
- To build cash reserves by selling small parcels of land with enhanced value.
- To seek opportunities for extending the Trust's investments.
- To replace an outdated barn at Stanaway Farm.
- To review rents for Stanaway Farm, Hope Farm and Otley College.
- To adopt a new strategy for appointing Trustees.
- To fill Trustee vacancies.
- To administer the John Forrest Memorial Awards in conjunction with the Forrest Family, The Arable Group and The Morley Agricultural Foundation.

Colin Smith, Administrator, 30 July 2009