

FARMING

All welcome at machinery demo event



► The machinery demo day will be one of a number of upcoming DHFP events Dartmoor Hill Farm Project

FARMERS thinking of investing in grassland machinery are being invited to join the Dartmoor Hill Farm Project's (DHFP) first event of the season.

Taking place on Wednesday, May 8 at Tor Royal Farm near Princetown, the demonstration day is being organised by the group in association with local suppliers Vincent Tractors and Masons Kings.

The event, running from 11am until 2pm, will offer a chance to see establishment machinery such as direct drills and overseeding machines in action, as well as grassland management equipment including harrows and topers.

A range of tractors from 100 to 120 horsepower will also be present, along with brand representatives to explain the specific benefits of each machine.

■ To find out more about the machinery present and to book a ticket, visit the website www.dartmoorhillfarmproject.co.uk/events-workshops. Alternatively, email hfp@dartmoor.gov.uk or call 07805 329704.

Going whole hog to back British pork

LIDL has announced details of a major £500 million investment to support the British pork industry.

The discount retailer said the funding boost, which follows a £14m cash injection in 2022, will ensure the "continued production of high-quality British product" at the "best possible prices" - and doubling down on its 100% fresh British pork pledge.

As part of this, the Lidl has moved pork producers to an open-book model that includes the on-farm cost of production with guaranteed farmer margins.

It has also launched a 'Lidl Pork Producer Group' to aid industry collaboration, while investing in farm initiatives to decrease emissions and fund research into welfare enhancements.

Richard Bourns, chief commercial officer at Lidl GB, said: "With our pork market share significantly greater than our broader market share, it highlights the substantial influence we have in this area and we're embracing our responsibility to drive positive change."



► Biodiversity Net Gain is designed to help deliver the Government's target of halting species decline by 2030. All new building projects must achieve a 10% net gain in biodiversity or habitat Andrew Matthews / PA

BNG: Authorities have a 'lot of catching up to do'

AS all Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in England must now try and sort out how they are going to comply with their obligations under the National BNG Framework, launched on February 12, we continue to try and engage with them to create Habitat Banks for our clients.

So far there has been a mixed response from those LPAs who have always been ahead of the game, to those trying still to delegate some or all this work either to their county council, or other LPAs. There is a significant variation in each LPA's level of preparation across the country.

A Freedom of Information (FoI) request by Angus Walker from solicitors BDB Pitmans found, of those LPAs and National Parks who responded, only five had their own draft s106s ready with only 25 others working on them. Angus suggests there may be 19,000 developments in England caught monthly by BNG requirements. The LPAs have a lot of catching up to do and responsible bodies are not yet coming to the rescue. Although some approaches have been made to individual landowners already, only two commercial bodies have been registered so

Land agent and surveyor expert Hugh Townsend details 'the next frontier' in Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) project management



far and they are not yet going public as to what they are offering.

However some of our client's proposed offset sites have already been inspected by LPA ecologists, and we are receiving useful feedback on the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plans (HMMP). This is particularly useful as the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) / Natural England template requires a considerable amount of in-depth and multi-disciplined work, and not just in respect to the required ecological input.

However, different LPA ecologists are taking different approaches as of course this template is just that, a template and not a mandatory form. It could be considered more of a checklist, where not every item needs to be completed in-depth if considered not to be relevant.

Interestingly, not all ecologists who have been preparing baseline surveys and BNG reports feel able to

manage the HMMP on their own. We are finding our role in the process more and more relevant as experienced project managers for BNG creation are needed to coordinate the multiple professional inputs needed to create Habitat Banks.

From the start of any project, we provide the marketing expertise and experience which, for most, is essentially what a BNG project is all about. It is interesting how many nuances and alignments are needed between the HMMP and the s106. This needs to be understood to ensure that negotiations with the LPA ecologists, planning officers and their legal department are well coordinated, ideally with a project manager managing this and giving overall advice.

Deciding what habitats to create has multiple implications and there needs to be an alignment between the multiple disciplines involved, to ensure a landowner enters into this long-term commitment with their

"eyes wide open." As chartered surveyors and experienced land agents, managing Natural Capital projects, farms, and estates, throughout the UK, we can oversee a project and provide a "holistic" approach especially with the unique experience of 38 years of dealing with Government-created agricultural schemes and intangible asset markets.

Our environmental team includes metric surveyors, (who need to be regularly referred to throughout the process up to completion of each sale), ecologists, foresters, water specialists, and Nutrient Neutrality surveyors (which is always an important aspect not to be overlooked before committing to a BNG Habitat Bank). With this multiple input we are also able to work closely with some excellent planning, estate and tax solicitors to draft the s106s best suited for landowners.

Our next national sale by tender of BNG units is on Friday, May 31.

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