

New Entrants to Ecological Farming – the ELC wants you!

The Ecological Land Cooperative is on the hunt for passionate landworkers and ecological entrepreneurs to become farmers on their three new sites.

The Ecological Land Cooperative's (ELC) innovative model seeks to revitalise rural economies by creating affordable and residential small farms for those who would ordinarily be unable to afford a house in the countryside yet who wish to earn a living through farming.

Working across England and Wales the ELC have opened their application process looking to find future farmers for their three new sites in the following areas: Arlington, East Sussex; Sparkford, Somerset; and on the Gower Peninsula, South Wales.

Recognising that the barriers to accessing land are a complex mix of planning and policy, the ELC works to enable small, innovative and ecological entrepreneurs to get a foothold in the world of farming and agriculture.

One of the ELC's first tenants, and an experienced grower, James Dexter, says: "I always wanted a piece of land of my own. I'd been looking at buying some land and setting up a smallholding but I was aware that it was really complicated and our planning system wasn't friendly to sustainable farmers. I'd been looking and got discouraged because it was so difficult and expensive. Then I heard about the ELC – so I applied."

By focusing on access to land the ELC engages future farmers with real prospects of leading land-based livelihoods – and producing good, local, healthy food in a fast changing political, and rural, landscape.

"We're really excited about our open application process," says Oliver Bettany, Membership & Engagement Manager, for the ELC. "We know there are many talented people who would jump at the chance to have a land-based livelihood but are intimidated by planning laws or can't afford to purchase land outright. As the ELC we are the interface between the authorities and our tenants. We work to support our farmers so they can hit the ground running and get on with what they're passionate about: farming and food."

The UK faces multiple challenges in terms of food security, energy and climate change. A genuinely sustainable response to these immediate and long terms challenges is the ELC's cluster model of small mixed farms as low impact developments. By providing good, local and healthy food ELC plots contribute to rural regeneration and a more vibrant local food economy – whilst increasing biodiversity, wildlife habitat and soil health.

The realities of an ageing farming population, high land costs, and larger farms relying on EU subsidies and struggling to make a profit, the ELC focuses on removing such barriers and making land – and ecological farming – accessible to new entrants.

The ELC's collection of case studies [Small Farm Profits](#) provides proof that small-scale doesn't mean uncompetitive and that ecological agriculture can create economically viable, highly productive and sustainable enterprises on small acreages.

Over the course of the next two years the ELC is creating three new ecological small farm sites with eight plots to establish ecological farm businesses. Looking for future farmers the Ecological Land Cooperative's open application process is now live. www.ecologicalland.coop
The Arlington site is ready for new tenants now and the Sparkford and Gower sites are being developed over the next year. The ELC would like to work with our future farmers to get them ready to start their new farm businesses as the smallholdings become available.

EDITORS' NOTES

Contacts:

Lauren Simpson - communications@ecologicalland.coop

Oliver Bettany & Sonia Sinanan – 01273 766 672

Interviewees available.

Photos available on request.

THE ECOLOGICAL LAND COOPERATIVE

The Ecological Land Cooperative (ELC) is a community benefit society, co-operative in structure, established to address the lack of affordable sites for ecological land-based livelihoods in England and Wales. The Ecological Land Cooperative is supported by the Ecological Land Trust which is a registered charity no. 1158032.

They work to address a range of complex and deep-rooted social and environmental challenges in a simple and pragmatic way: by removing barriers to land access for sustainable uses.

Set up in 2009, the ELC's core business model is the acquisition of land, securing planning permission and installation of infrastructure for clusters of three or more affordable residential smallholdings. Smallholders are provided with permission to build their own sustainable home with off-grid utilities and road access.

The ELC's first project, Greenham Reach, in mid-Devon, was granted temporary planning permission in 2013 and has recently been granted permanent permission (pending final legal agreement). Now home to three thriving smallholdings – 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. The ELC has also purchased sites on the Gower Peninsular in South Wales and on the edge of Sparkford, South Somerset with planning applications in process.

For more about our business model please refer to our page 'Our Model'
<https://ecologicalland.coop/our-model>

For more detailed information about the application please read our 'Join the ELC as an Ecological Farmer' page
<https://ecologicalland.coop/join-elc-as-an-ecological-farmer/>

Find the ELC's booklet on 'Small Farm Profits' at <https://ecologicalland.coop/small-farm-profits>

<http://ecologicalland.coop>