

Future Farmers for East Sussex

The Ecological Land Cooperative opens smallholder applications for their East Sussex site continuing the work of generating ecological farming opportunities and rural enterprise.

The Ecological Land Cooperative (ELC) has been granted temporary planning permission by Wealdon District Council to create three affordable smallholdings for new entrant farmers in Arlington, East Sussex and have announced the application process.

The deadline for applicants is 7th November (midnight). For more information on the application process please visit: <http://ecologicalland.coop/application>

The 7.5 hectare site was formerly a maize (corn) field. Industrial maize farming can cause soil erosion, compaction and surface water run-off increasing the risk of flooding. With the creation of three new smallholdings of mixed farms, the site at Arlington will be designed to become more biologically diverse and ecologically resilient.

The mission of the ELC is to provide affordable opportunities for ecological land-based businesses in England and Wales. The ELC supports rural regeneration by developing affordable residential sites for farming, forestry and other land-based enterprises which are ecologically beneficial and financially viable.

The ELC is primarily funded through community share issues — people powered investment — with the remaining funds from grant funding and loan financing. The ELC business model retains the freehold on each smallholding in order to protect it for agricultural and ecological use, and as affordable in perpetuity.

The application process aims to identify passionate and committed small-scale farmers with great ideas for bringing local food, employment and agricultural diversity to the area.

Oliver Bettany, Membership and Engagement Manager, says: “We’re really excited to open up the application process for Arlington and look forward to receiving applicants that share the mission and values of the ELC, particularly our commitment to co-operative working.”

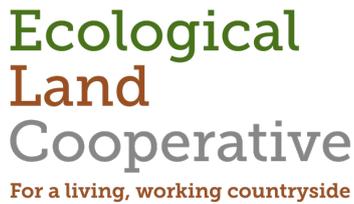
The application process to purchase a lease for one of the ELC's three smallholdings in Arlington requires a significant amount of work for applicants, including the submission of a detailed business plan.

The price of the holdings is fixed and the ELC is not looking for the highest bidder. Instead, they are looking for applicants who can demonstrate that they will be able to establish and manage an ecological farm business appropriate to the site, its natural resources and location.

The Ecological Land Cooperative is part of a growing movement recognising the value to local communities and the economic viability of small-scale farming, as the report 'Small is Successful: Creating sustainable livelihoods on ten acres or less' explains. See Editor's Notes.

The combined cost of agricultural land and rural housing makes it incredibly difficult for young farmers to live and work on their own land. Between 2000-2010 new farm entrants accounted for just 4% of agricultural land purchasers. The average age of the British farmer is now 59. The ELC was set up to address this issue and to create opportunities for future farmers.

EDITORS' NOTES



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Photos are available on request.

For more information on the application process please visit: <http://ecologicaland.coop/arlington>

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 smallholdings for future farmers.

The ELC's first project, Greenham Reach, in mid-Devon, was granted temporary planning permission in 2013 and is currently awaiting permanent permission. 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 has also purchased land in Wales with a planning application in process.

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

For information about the 'Small is Successful' report and to download a copy, please visit: <http://ecologicaland.coop/small-successful-0>