

NEW HORIZONS FARM UNIT

PROJECT SUMMARY

To provide a first class purpose built training facility which meets the training needs of both young people and adults in the land based sector in West Somerset. To make training accessible across a 600 square mile rural catchment area and provide progression routes for students wishing to progress to higher education in land based studies. Through this the project aims to address the skills gap in the land based sector in an isolated rural area experiencing significant social and economic deprivation

THE WEST SOMERSET COMMUNITY COLLEGE FARM.

Rural Renaissance and European Regional Development Fund support is enabling the WSCC Farm Unit to relocate to a new 17 acre site and to provide a first class training facility for land based studies for both young people and adults.

Over recent years there has been a huge increase in student demand for land based courses, and a corresponding demand amongst local land based employers for skilled young people who can contribute to a sustainable rural economy. Research identifies a significant skills gap in the land based sector, and the Farm Unit will provide a wide range of agricultural, horticultural and environmental courses to meet these identified needs.

From September 2008 the facilities at the College Farm will comprise:

- 23 acres of land made up from existing land and 17 acres rented from the Crown Estate.
- A teaching block which has been designed to incorporate a wide range of environmentally friendly and sustainable features and will serve as a focus of study in its own right.
- A barn to accommodate livestock during the winter and provide space for a workshop, feed and machinery storage.
- A landscaped horticultural area to include glasshouses with environmental control systems surrounded by a range of gardens.
- A flock of Exmoor Mule sheep
- A suckler herd of Red Devon cattle
- Pedigree Gloucester Old Spot pigs
- A range of poultry including turkeys, ducks, geese and chickens.

Students will be able to gain qualifications through from entry level to the new Specialised Diploma in Environmental and Land Based Studies (equivalent of 'A' levels). This will allow local young people to progress to careers such as land management, conservation or veterinary science, and will also allow the College to offer courses for the wider community which support vital understanding of environmental issues, and the need for sustainability.

As the College Farm develops it will become a resource for all students at all stages in their education through a range of cross curricular projects, and will provide virtual Farm resources through the College web site.

The support from Rural Renaissance funding will help the College to develop this unique facility for the whole community. It will produce skilled individuals who will have the ability to help maintain our local environment, and will ensure that Exmoor and West Somerset remains a sustainable place to live and work for future generations.

WEBLINKS:

<http://www.westsomerset.somerset.sch.uk/New%20Horizons/newhorizons.html>

(under construction)