

Countryside Matters



In this spring 2018 edition:

Powering ahead

Solar park helping us rise to the challenge of climate change: Pages 4&5

Hill fort restoration

Partnership is hard at work at ancient Woodbury Castle: Pages 6-8

Estates honoured

Landscape Institute Awards praise responsible stewardship: Pages 10-12

6-8

Keeping castle safe

Volunteers are helping Clinton Devon Estates restore the Iron Age hill fort known as Woodbury Castle



9

Plumb Park start

Work has officially started on the construction of hundreds of new homes at Plumb Park in Exmouth



10-12

Estates honoured

Clinton Devon Estates have been hailed as Client of the Year at the Landscape Institute Awards



16-17

Harvest mouse help

A new project has been launched to help save Britain's smallest rodent, the harvest mouse



19

Tenants appointed

A couple with a wealth of farming experience have been appointed as the new tenants at Stantyway Farm





CLINTON DEVON ESTATES

Welcome to the latest edition of Countryside Matters, the newsletter of the Clinton Devon Estates.

As usual, we have covered a broad range of the Estates' activities over recent months, as well as looking at some of the projects we have already been working on in 2018.

Responsible stewardship and sustainable development are at the heart of everything we do, and so it was with great pride that we received an award from the Landscape Institute.

The nomination was put forward by LHC Architecture + Urbanism, who have worked with us for over a decade, and among the projects highlighted was Plumb Park at Exmouth.

It is fitting then, that the turf has now been cut on the development, which will eventually see 350 new homes, along with 14 acres of parkland and public open space, including an orchard and allotments, delivered for the people of Exmouth.

We were also very pleased to see our friends at Woodbury Community Orchard win an award from the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership for their work.

We have working with a range of partners to help protect our precious wildlife, such as the harvest mouse, and rare birds, as well as continuing to preserve some of Devon's most fascinating historic sites, such as Woodbury Castle on the Pebblebed Heaths.

It has been a busy time for us all - but we hope that you can spare a few moments to share our news.

Powering ahead as we face the challenges of climate change

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing this generation, because what we do now will have such a massive impact on those who will follow us.

In this matter, perhaps more than any other, it's vital that we do the right things today.

The Met Office, a world leader in the study of climate change and global warming, is in no doubt: "There's overwhelming and growing evidence that the warming is due to vastly increased – and still increasing – quantities of greenhouse gas in the atmosphere.

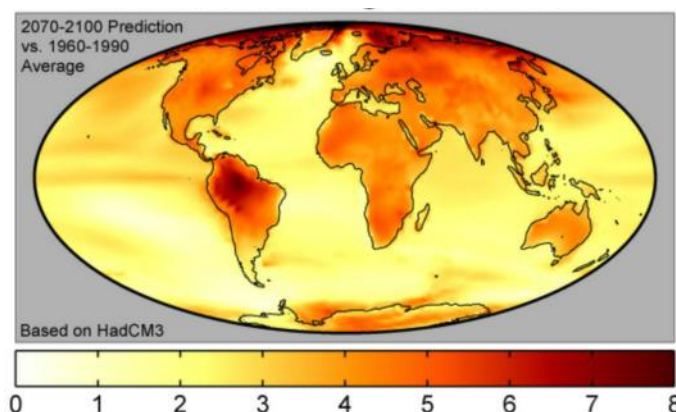
"The amount of CO₂ in the atmosphere has increased dramatically – by about 38% – since the Industrial Revolution. As we continue burning fossil fuels and other activities, the amount of CO₂ will continue to rise. This means the extra CO₂ will absorb and emit more and more of the earth's outgoing radiation, and this will further warm our climate. As the atmosphere warms, the amount of water vapour it holds also increases – which further adds to the warming effect."

Clinton Devon Estates have played a leading role locally in facing up to the challenge, both in terms of minimising our CO₂ output while also making sure we are well placed to face the consequences of climate change, such as rising sea levels and higher temperatures allied to greater and more varied rainfall patterns.

For many years, the Government has been encouraging the development of low-carbon energy generation projects in communities across the country, helping to reduce the nation's reliance on oil, coal and gas. In simple terms, this means generating electricity, or heat, off the main grid – and can be anything from a ground-source heat pump in someone's garden to a city-wide heating scheme.

In 2011, we built our first, small-scale, solar array at one of our East Devon farms, and this helped us learn more about solar and understand how best it can be implemented.

Buoyed by the success of this project, we looked at how we could take the next step, and began searching for a suitable location for a larger solar park. We needed somewhere which was not within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – this was actually quite difficult, as anyone who lives in East Devon will appreciate. We also wanted the park to be as near to potential consumers as possible: one of the key features of successful local energy projects is that they connect easily into existing facilities. At



Predicted global temperature increase, in degrees C, based on modelling by the Hadley Centre at the Met Office

the same time as we were considering expanding our solar energy production, we were also just starting out on plans to expand Liverton Business Park, so it made sense to us to try to develop them in parallel. Of course, neither project relies on the other for its success, but they do complement each other very well.

If a householder wants to put solar panels on their roof



John Wilding, Head of Forestry and Environment for Clinton Devon Estates, at Liverton Solar Park

they are pretty much free just to carry on as they please, but with larger-scale projects comes the need for approval from a number of different bodies, one of which was, of course, East Devon District Council as the local planning authority.

We were able to demonstrate that the location was a good one, and that the proposals were environmentally sound. The site was close to business and industry, was south-facing to get an optimum amount of light, was largely hidden thanks to the topography of the area, would be further screened by mature hedgerows and woodland, and was outside the AONB.

Prior to the construction of the solar park, the land had been used for grazing sheep. Many landowners who have, like us, built solar arrays continue to use the land they stand on for grazing.

But we chose not to. Of course, we still need to manage the land, but have decided to do so in a way which encourages biodiversity as much as possible. Not only is the land undisturbed by farm animals, there is, of course, a need for security which means it is also largely free of

human activity. We hope this enhanced biodiversity, in effect the creating of a new wildlife sanctuary, will prove to be yet another long-term environmental benefit of the project. We are currently undertaking a scientific survey of the area so we can begin to understand the full impacts of this move. But we are confident that already the site is providing a suitable home for a wide variety of flora and fauna.

With 16,000 panels, the solar park is producing in the region of 5900 MWh annually. Conservative calculations equate that to the same amount of electricity used by 1,200 households.

Over time, we expect that latter number to increase, not because we will be producing more electricity, but because household consumption is slowly decreasing with the growing use of more energy-efficient products such as LED bulbs and screens.

Of course, much of what we produce is used by the tenants at Liverton Business Park – by their nature they use more electricity in the daytime which is when we are generating it!

Major project launched to restore Iron Age hill fort

Hundreds of years before some unknown Romans buried a hoard of coins at Seaton Down, an Iron Age tribe of people dominated the South West of England.

They were the Dumnonii - the deep valley dwellers. Artefacts they left behind indicate that they spoke a language similar to what we today know as Cornish and Breton, and they called their home Dewnan, from where we get the word Devon.

Like many people throughout northern Europe, they were prolific builders of hill forts. They and their contemporaries across Britain have left us much evidence to study, and monuments for us to enjoy - it has been claimed that there are more than 1,000 Iron Age hill forts in England.

Among the most prominent in the South West of England is Woodbury Castle, which has proudly stood over the East Devon countryside for around 2,500 years. It is, like many of its kind, a scheduled ancient monument, which means it has been recognised as being nationally important. And it is, undoubtedly, hugely popular among local people who visit the castle and surrounding heaths.

But its popularity with visitors, ironically, is proving to be perhaps the greatest threat to its survival, and it is on Historic England's At Risk Register which notes that: "Woodbury Castle survives well, despite problems with visitor erosion and weathering, and evidence from partial excavations has revealed the longevity and importance of this multi-period site.

"The buried layers and deposits will contain further important archaeological and environmental evidence relating to its construction, use, and landscape context."

Today, Woodbury Castle is in the custodianship of Clinton Devon Estates, and the Estates have entrusted the Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust with its long-term care.



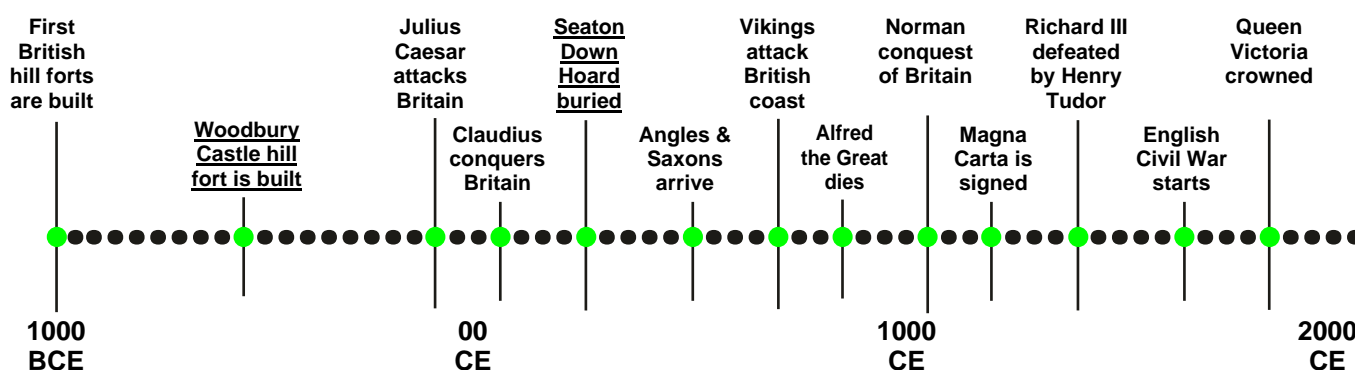
Volunteers hard at work at Woodbury Castle

Keen to ensure that people are still able to enjoy the castle, while minimising the erosion that inevitably results from thousands of boots passing through, the Trust has, with the help of Natural England, Historic England, Devon County Council and the Devon Archaeological Society, started work on a project to preserve and restore the ancient monument.

Charlotte Russell, Historic England Heritage at Risk Project officer, said: "Historic England are delighted to be supporting our partners at the Pebblebed Heath Conservation Trust and Clinton Devon Estates to develop this fantastic opportunity to repair and conserve Woodbury Castle Iron Age hill fort as part of the new Countryside Stewardship scheme for the Pebblebed Heaths which will remove the site from the Historic England Heritage At Risk Register and secure its survival for future generations.

"I am thrilled to see this project come to fruition, it's the culmination of a lot of work by a number of committed specialists all seeking to look after and improve this very fragile and nationally important site."

Woodbury Castle timeline





Woodbury Castle dominates the skyline on the Pebblebed Heaths - just as it has done for centuries

Kim Strawbridge is the Pebblebed Heaths Site Manager. She said: "Woodbury Castle is a fantastic site that is special to a lot of people for a whole range of reasons."

"We need to take people along with us on this project so that people value its archaeological significance as well as the personal value they have for the place. This is an exciting opportunity to celebrate the heritage of this landmark within the heaths."

There will be several stages to the work, which started in the autumn: access to the site has been improved with new steps, and deep erosion scars caused by visitor use on banks and ditches are being repaired under archaeological supervision.

The repaired banks are being seeded and selective tree and scrub removal will let in more light, allowing ground vegetation to establish which is vital for safeguarding the earthworks into the future.

Children from Woodbury Primary School, who have been studying Woodbury in the Iron Age, enjoyed some hands-on experience sowing seeds on the ramparts to help preserve the high mounds. Teacher Jo Sommers said: "The children had an action-packed afternoon learning all about the hill fort and about the importance of its preservation and how special it is to our heritage."

The careful removal and crown reduction of selected trees



Children from Woodbury Primary School have been helping with the restoration project

and scrub on the site of the castle itself and in the immediate vicinity will open up a view which has been blocked for many years, allowing people to appreciate the hill fort's original function as well as enhancing the monument's setting and its imposing ramparts.

Continued on Page 8



Work has been progressing well at Woodbury Castle

From Page 7

The work will also help to protect buried archaeology, including the remains of an Iron Age round house, which are at risk of damage from tree roots. Careful ongoing monitoring and management of the remaining large beech trees will help ensure the health of these specimen trees.

New information panels telling the story of the site with illustrations of the original hill fort and its inhabitants by Exeter based artist Jane Read are being installed, in addition to a sign at the entrance to the monument.

Temporary barriers will be in situ for two to three years while the repairs consolidate and the vegetation re-establishes, during which time signs will ask people to avoid walking on the areas undergoing restoration.

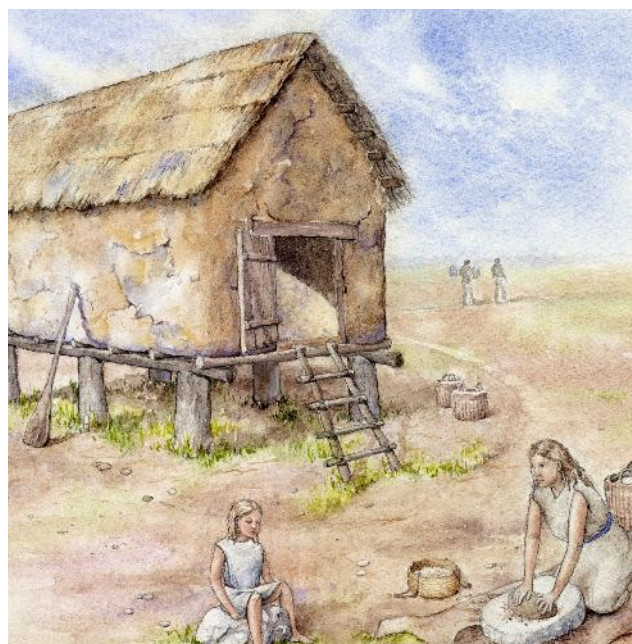
"We want people to be involved in the project and are keen for people to join us for our guided walks to learn more about this special monument and why the works are so important to securing its future," continued Kim.

"We're asking that people help us care for the hill fort in a number of ways; by accessing the site using the proper routes and keeping off the slopes and ditches, and not riding bikes or horses on the monument.

"We would like people to be part of the monument's story and help us protect it into the future."

Volunteers have already been helping with the work, filling 1,300 sandbags which are being used to shore up the ramparts.

To keep up to date with progress at Woodbury Castle, follow the [Pebblebed Heaths Conservation Trust on Facebook](#).



Artist Jane Read has been working on images for new interpretation boards at Woodbury Castle



Work under way on range of new homes in Exmouth

Work has now formally started on construction at Plumb Park, a prestigious development of high-quality new homes set around 14 acres of parkland in Exmouth.

The long-awaited development of stylish two, three and four-bedroom homes will be launched for sale in summer 2018 and has already attracted numerous enquiries from house hunters.

Leading local homebuilder Taylor Wimpey Exeter, working in partnership with Littleham 2010, a Clinton Devon Estates company, is inviting prospective homebuyers to register their interest online at www.taylorwimpey.co.uk.

The joint venture partnership was announced in 2015 following a rigorous selection process to ensure the delivery of a premium development that will provide a positive and lasting legacy for the Exmouth community.

Noel Staunton, Managing Director for Taylor Wimpey Exeter, says: "We're delighted to be working with Clinton Devon Estates to deliver this stunning collection of new homes and supporting facilities, which are guaranteed to create a thriving new community.

"This exciting new development is already generating a great deal of interest from potential buyers, which comes as no surprise thanks to its sought-after location in the seaside town of Exmouth on the East Devon coast."

Leigh Rix, Head of Property and Land for Clinton Devon Estates said: "For well over five years we have been working with specialist master planners and architects to produce a development that will not only fulfil the current and future housing need in Exmouth but will also provide a prestigious addition to the town in terms of design, public open space and access to employment hubs, shops and, of course, the stunning beach and coastal paths."

John Baulch, of the Exeter studio of LHC Architecture + Urbanism said: "The scheme has been inspired by the Avenues Design Statement which will complement the much-admired Douglas Avenue and other neighbouring Avenues. High specification materials are being used to create an attractive new place to live that will incorporate a major new hilltop park, play areas, allotments, orchard, tree lined avenues and enhancements to hedgerows."

As well as providing an exceptional range of new



Leigh Rix, Head of Property and Land for Clinton Devon Estates, left, and Noel Staunton, Managing Director of Taylor Wimpey Exeter, break the ground at the new Plumb Park development in Exmouth.

homes - 25% of which will be allocated as affordable housing - Taylor Wimpey is offering a range of homebuyer incentives to make moving to Plumb Park easier and more affordable.

Located on the fringes of Exmouth and bordered by the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Plumb Park is within walking distance of a wide variety of local facilities, including supermarkets, shops and cafés.

Award highlights Estates' responsible stewardship

A sustainable community which has its roots in the past but looks to the future, sits naturally with the history and landscape of its location.

This is the sentiment of the architects who have helped bring Clinton Devon Estates' vision, for the creation of a sustainable future for the Estate, the environment and the community, to life.

This vision has now been recognised as part of a prestigious national awards scheme: out of scores of entrants, the Estate has been chosen as the winner of the Client of the Year category for the Landscape Institute Awards 2017.

The award recognises the Estates' commitment to delivering high quality development and sustainable landscape management, in keeping with its precious surrounding environment.

The award is an endorsement of the Estates' efforts as the owners and managers of 25,000 acres of land across East Devon, much of which is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Submission for the award was made by LHC Architecture + Urbanism whose architects have brought the Estates' vision to life over the years, sensitively designing the Rolle Estate Office which is set within the Grade I listed parkland of Bickton Arena, and Horizon, a 48-home development incorporating

allotments and adjoining an AONB at Greenway Lane, Budleigh Salterton.

LHC is also behind the design of the Estates' forthcoming Plumb Park development comprising approximately 350 energy-efficient homes, an orchard, allotments and parkland amid agricultural land on the outskirts of Exmouth, Devon's biggest town.

The scheme forms part of the Estates' strategy of wider responsible stewardship and countryside management, and was the project that was used as part of the Landscape Institute's award application, showcasing how landscape-led masterplanning can create both sustainable and high-quality development.

Plumb Park is an example of a legacy scheme, demonstrating the Estates' ethos of 'handing over something more valuable than we have today'.



LHC's plans for the Rolle Estate Office, and, left, the office in real life



The site was assessed as being the most sustainable option for providing strategic housing in Exmouth and will include 25 per cent affordable housing. The plans, devised and submitted by LHC, were granted outline planning permission in 2014. The development got under way in November 2017, with the first houses due to be occupied in 2018.

The development will respect and enhance the biodiversity and the habitats in the surrounding countryside, with Donkey Hill forming a green hilltop park with views to the sea.

Plumb Park facilitates the Estates' vision for sustainable environmental stewardship, demonstrating that landscape-led sustainable development can provide multiple outcomes that benefit the community and landscape, while facilitating reinvestment in countryside and farm management: the scheme will release funds to provide much-needed investment in Exmouth and East Devon to ensure that dairy farming can continue to meet the increasing demands of markets and consumers, industry regulation and our changing climate.

Plumb Park also demonstrates the importance of integrating landscape design into the development process at an early stage; facilitating increased

development value, securing public support for development, supporting ecological and landscape enhancement and generating wider benefits for the community and future residents.

Plumb Park is a good example of how the early appointment of the landscape team enables the creation of high-quality places that enhance and benefit the wider landscape. This approach enabled the landscape team to develop an approach to on-site Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS) that was supported by Natural England.

The SANGS provide high-quality, healthy and productive public spaces (with natural space, natural play, orchards and allotments) that benefit the existing and future community and enhance values on the site, and avoid a requirement for financial contributions to mitigate potential impacts of the development on the nearby Exe Estuary and Pebblebed Heaths Special Protection Areas.

LHC architects were also responsible for creating the award-winning Rolle Estate Office at Bicton Arena which was listed as an example of historic conservation-led projects that have contributed to regional economic growth by English Heritage in 2013.

The Estates' HQ opened amid the Grade 1 registered landscape of national importance in 2008.

The scheme was supported by English Heritage because of its potential to rejuvenate a run-down part of the

Continued on Page 12





Clinton Devon Estates were named Client of the Year at the Landscape Institute Awards 2017

From Page 11

parkland and restore lost landscape elements such as historic tree clumps and estate railings which had once protected historic tree clumps from grazing damage.

According to English Heritage in its publication 'Constructive Conservation - Sustainable Growth for Historic Places': "the design of the new building responded to the historic setting, incorporated local materials and achieved high levels of sustainability".

LHC chose a curved organic shape for the Rolle Estate Office so it was sympathetic to the contours of the landscape and the natural fluid formation of the tree clumps.

As well as fitting with the surroundings, it was also important to Clinton Devon Estates that the building should be contemporary and sustainable. Five years later the carbon footprint was estimated at being around 75% less than the former headquarters.

Location and the natural environment were the axis points for the design of Horizon in Budleigh Salterton which was completed in the summer of 2015.



Click on the image above or visit our YouTube channel to watch a video shown at the awards

The site surrounded existing allotments on the periphery of the town backing on to an AONB. After much consultation with allotment holders and the local community, the retention, improvement and expansion of the allotments was a priority that shone through the consultation.

LHC placed the allotments at the centre of the development, and increased the allotment plots from 56 to 87.



Woodbury Community Orchard won the 2017 Acland Award

Community effort praised

Congratulations to everyone at the Woodbury Community Orchard, which won the 2017 Acland Award, honouring its commitment to caring for the local environment.

The award, presented by the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership (AONB), was this year specifically designed to highlight excellence in wildlife, environment and heritage projects. In total, 15 groups, organisations or individuals were put forward for the award, and four were shortlisted: in addition to the community orchard, they were the Thelma Hubert Gallery in Honiton, Shute Community Primary School, and Beer Village Heritage.

The community orchard's nomination said: "Woodbury Community Orchard was founded in 2013 on land adjacent to the village cricket pitch. Over 66 locally sourced apples, pears, plums and cherry trees have been planted with total community involvement. Local primary school children designed posters and created a logo and the Rainbows and Guides helped subsequent planting and wild flower planting sessions.

"Grants, fundraising, business donations and community tree sponsors made the project possible. The project has revived the village wassail and runs apple juicing days. A retired orchard man leads pruning classes and workshops for us every spring. Groups use the area for picnics and the local wildlife expert has built a bug house, bat and bird nest boxes."

The community orchard was planted on land in Town Lane which is leased by the parish council from Clinton Devon Estates.

The Acland Award is presented to honour the work of Brigadier Peter Acland, who was instrumental in the AONB being designated in the early 1960s. The first award was given in 2013 to mark the 50th anniversary of that designation.

Kate Ponting, Countryside Learning Officer for Clinton Devon Estates, said: "Everyone here would like to add our hearty congratulations to the team at Woodbury for their fantastic work which has been quite rightly recognised by the AONB.

"The orchard has proven to be a real asset to Woodbury, bringing people together, and connecting them with the environment, in a really special way."

In addition to the four shortlisted organisations, also nominated for the award were: Axewoods Cooperative; Blackbury Honey Farm; Doug and Joan Cullen, volunteer wardens on the Otter Estuary SSSI; the East Devon Countryside Services team at Seaton Marshes; Gillie Graham and Graham Bell at Exmouth Art Club; The Branscombe Project; Mill Water School; Sidmouth Coastal Community Hub; Tale Valley Trust; and Louise Wooley in association with the Sidmouth Science Festival.

Restoration of former quarry praised as plan for jobs is lodged

A ten-year project to return the redundant Blackhill Quarry on the edge of the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths to lowland heathland with open water habitats has received a national commendation just five years into the programme.

The dramatic transformation of the 63 hectare site which will become a nature reserve was recognised in the 2017 Mineral Product Association's Biodiversity Awards, landscape scale category sponsored by Natural England. So far 35 hectares of the site have been restored and the programme is expected to be completed by 2023.

Species recorded on site include nightjar, Dartford warbler, small red damselfly and the silver studded blue butterfly. Also, the common lizard and adder are regularly recorded, and great crested newts were found for the first time in 2017, thanks to breeding ponds that were created by extracting minerals.

Gravel extraction at the site, near Woodbury began in the early 1930s and ended in 2011 at which point a Restoration and Aftercare Scheme was drawn up and approved by Devon County Council, East Devon District Council and other stakeholders. Under the terms of the scheme it was agreed that a planning application could later be lodged to consider alternative use at the site of the quarry processing plant and other buildings. This is an area of around 1.5 hectares and represents two per cent of the total quarry site.

Leigh Rix, Head of Property and Land at landowner Clinton Devon Estates, said: "We're extremely pleased at how well the restoration at the quarry site is progressing, and we're grateful to both Aggregate Industries and the team from the RSPB for their efforts.

"While quarrying and related work at Blackhill has ceased, Blackhill Engineering are still based there and we have been asked to help them find extra space in situ so they can expand locally, creating extra jobs and apprenticeships.

"The company, which supplies products to the UK Civil Engineering Industry and Defence and exports to the USA, New Zealand, Africa and Europe, already employs 34 full-time staff at the site, and hopes to increase this. As a result, in line with the previously agreed Restoration and Aftercare Scheme, we have applied for planning permission to give the firm room for growth.

"It would entail the removal of existing sifting and grading plant structures, and replacing them with purpose-built



Blackhill Engineering, left in the picture, and the redundant quarrying works, right.

Image: Google Earth

units which would be lower and less intrusive on the landscape. All the existing screening on site would be maintained, and studies have shown that the traffic generated by the new use would be less than that associated with the previous quarrying and processing work."





The site, like much of East Devon, lies within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is also a County Wildlife Site, but is outside the East Devon Pebblebed Heaths Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and outside the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the Special Protection Area (SPA).

Mr Rix said: "Prior to submitting this application, we commissioned a comprehensive ecology report, which shows that, because the application involves replacing existing industrial equipment, the work is unlikely to impact on nearby designated sites, nor the County Wildlife Site.

"This application will help a successful local company to grow, creating high-quality, full-time jobs for local people, without damaging the local environment and not causing any interruption to the highly successful restoration work already under way.

"We believe that approval of this application will result in a major boost for the local economy, while at the same time protecting the environment for the benefit of people and wildlife."



The effects of the award-winning restoration programme can be seen in the pictures above and top.

Pictures: Jake Newman/KOR Communications

How we're helping in the fight to save the UK's smallest rodent

It's probably best known for being Britain's smallest rodent, with each individual weighing in at around five grammes.

What may be less well known about the harvest mouse – aka *Micromys minutus* – is that it is listed as a priority conservation species in England.

It's native to the whole of the country from Yorkshire down, but it is now generally considered to be rare. Its conservation status reflects that fact that numbers have been in steep decline – they fell 71% in one 18-year period – and also that it is vulnerable to habitat loss. Field margins, wet habitats and hedgerows are noted as particularly important to its survival.

Clinton Devon Estates have been working with the Devon Mammal Group to train volunteers to survey for harvest mice.

Kate Ponting, Countryside Learning Officer, explains: "We ran a training day which included a presentation at the Estate Office looking into the background to the project, methodology and surveying techniques, which was followed by field visits to local farmland.

"The volunteers will feed data into the Devon Harvest Mouse Project and will also provide useful knowledge on the Estates' biodiversity.

"Pete Cooper, who is the Devon Mammal Group's Harvest Mouse Project Officer, showed us how to look for last season's nests in areas of rough grass on farmland in the Otter Valley. Initially the volunteers were uncertain, but surveying is very straightforward and we discovered over 20 nests; beautiful balls of woven grass, which are evidence that harvest mice were breeding here between April and October.

"We held a BioBlitz in the area in 2016, and found more than 800 different species of animals and plants living there, although interestingly the harvest mouse wasn't among them, so this is a really

interesting start. Some of those Pete trained went to other locations in the afternoon to put their new knowledge into practice and found more nests by themselves. It is very addictive!

"Understanding where species are present is a very important part of any conservation project. Harvest mice make nests from grass, above the ground, and in the summer months these are extremely hard to find, being so well camouflaged. But in winter they're much easier to spot, and of course give a good idea of whether mice are occupying any given area."

The training was held on Friday, January 19. To learn more about the Harvest Mouse Project, please go to: <http://www.devonmammalgroup.org/harvest-mouse-project/>



FactFile

- The harvest mouse's Latin name, *Micromys minutus*, means small, small rodent.
- It is just 6cm long, with a tail about the same length.
- It is the only British mammal with a truly prehensile tail which it can use like another limb.
- It has golden brown fur with a white belly, with relatively small eyes and ears.
- Harvest mice are mostly vegetarian, but it is rare that they noticeably damage cereal crops.

Picture: Sue Cro/Flickr



Hundreds of people are expected to take part in the Big Farmland Bird Count.

Picture courtesy of Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust

Trust offers ID lessons for Big Farmland Bird Count

Clinton Devon Estates have been working with the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust in the run-up to the fifth Big Farmland Bird Count.

The Estates, along with the Devon Wildlife Trust, hosted a bird identification workshop which will help participants understand the difference between birds which can be tricky to differentiate such as the Dunnock and the Tree Sparrow.

Kate Ponting, the Estates' Countryside Learning Officer, said: "At the end of the workshop we hope that the participants were better able to identify the birds on their farms, providing valuable information on biodiversity."

Jim Egan, founder of the Big Farmland Bird Count (BFBC) and Head of Training and Development at the GWCT's Allerton Project, says the identification days are invaluable preparation for the count itself: "This is a fantastic opportunity for farmers to gain a better understanding of how to identify a range of farmland birds.

"The days are set up across the country to provide lots of information on how to identify certain birds and

what they can do in the future to preserve them. I would say to anyone thinking about taking part – do it. Get out and enjoy the birds on your farm and give us the opportunity to shout about the great work you're doing."

In addition, a colour ID guide is provided to those who attend, with a focus on birds that are harder to identify.

The ID day took place on January 24th and the count runs from Friday, February 9th to Sunday February 18th.

GWCT biodiversity officer Peter Thompson said: "It is vital that farmers and keepers start to consider the long-game by demonstrating more effectively what they are achieving.

"The BFBC is certainly one very positive way to do this and we'd also like to see people take part in ID days, which are crucial ahead of the count."

Hundreds of people took part in last year's ID days and there was lots of positive feedback with participants saying GWCT inspired them to take part in the count.

For more details see <https://www.gwct.org.uk/BFBCID>

Sam and Nell appointed to take over at Stantyway

A couple with a wealth of experience has been appointed as the new tenants of Stantyway Farm, Otterton, by Clinton Devon Estates.

Sam and Nell Walker were tenants of North Ground Farm, a 113-acre starter farm at Milton Abbot, near Tavistock, part of Devon County Council's Farms Estate.

Stantyway is a 264-acre arable organic farm on the stunning Jurassic Coast, and was the first farm to be let on the open market by Clinton Devon Estates in 20 years. It had been farmed by the same family for two generations until the previous tenant's retirement three years ago when it became part of the Estates' in-hand operations.

Sam Walker is a part-time agricultural lecturer at Duchy College and is experienced in many different areas of farming. His focus at North Ground has been rearing youngstock onto fat cattle, adapting the former dairy farm into a fit-for-purpose beef unit.

Sam has also established a herbal grass ley trial field in collaboration with Reading University and has hosted many visits from students and the public at North Ground, establishing an Open Farm Sunday event. He has also been an enthusiastic supporter of Devon County Council's Farmwise events, helping to demonstrate agriculture to Devon's school children.

He said: "We're incredibly grateful for this opportunity. Clinton Devon Estates are highly regarded landlords and Stantyway Farm will give us the chance to expand our business in new and exciting ways.

"We'd like to thank Clinton Devon Estates for putting their faith in us, as well as the Devon County Farms Estates for giving us the chance to prove ourselves at North Ground."

Leigh Rix, Clinton Devon Estates' Head of Property and Land, said: "We were overwhelmed by the number of talented and ambitious applicants to take on Stantyway Farm. Sam and Nell were chosen because they impressed us with the work they have already done at North Ground Farm and with their vision for what they hope to achieve at Stantyway.

"We are proud of the close, enduring relationships we have with our tenant farmers and look forward to working with Sam and Nell to help them achieve their ambitions."

Devon County Council has a Farms Estate totalling



Nell and Sam Walker are the new tenants at Stantyway Farm, Otterton

almost 10,000 acres. Its 68 dairy and mixed livestock farms are made up of starter and progression units. They are let with a view to tenants moving on to secure independent livelihoods in due course.

Devon County Councillor Caroline Chugg, Chair of the Farms Estate Committee, said "Congratulations to Sam and Nell. They have done an excellent job at North Ground Farm and we're delighted that they're now able to use the expertise, knowledge and experience they've gained to take on this new and exciting opportunity.

"It is yet another successful outcome for the Estate, using it as a stepping stone to a career in farming and proving the effectiveness and necessity of the Estate."



CLINTON DEVON ESTATES

Rolle Estate Office,
Bicton Arena,
East Budleigh,
Budleigh Salterton,
Devon EX9 7BL

mail@clintondevon.com