

As the countryside gears up for major change post-Brexit, Rural Solutions director Rob Hindle gives his top tips to help farmers benefit from the 'leisure revolution'.

Countryside can become leisure hotspot

Britain's countryside could be better known as a holiday destination than for agriculture soon as it gears up for its biggest change in centuries.

But it will be about more than just bracing walks and pub lunches. It will become an extension of the city and offering leisure attractions, activities and experiences.

Rural Solutions director Rob Hindle says: "According to Defra, diversification makes up about 32 per cent of UK farmers' incomes. We predict this will reach more than 50 per cent by 2022, post Britain's exit from the EU."

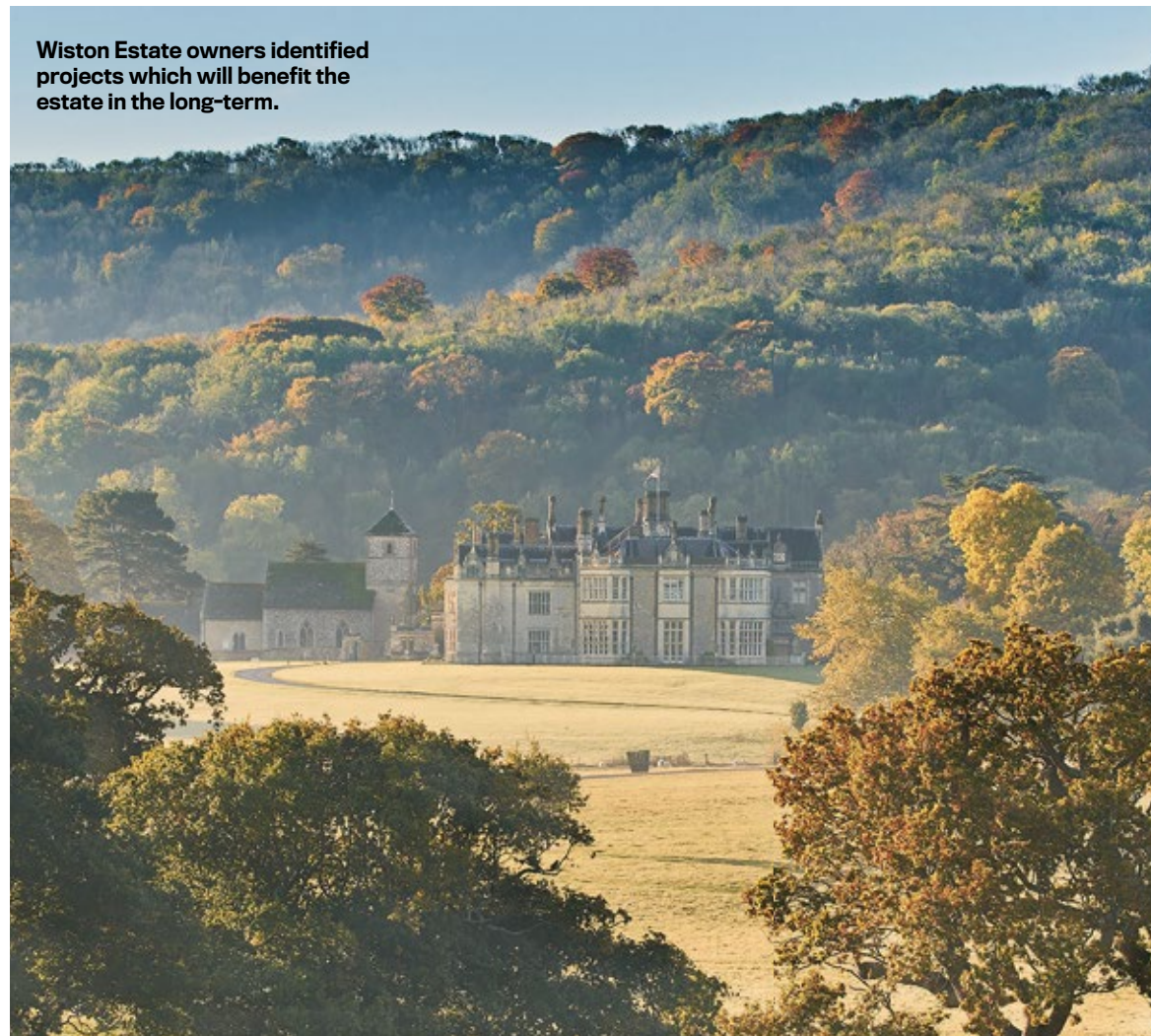
However, he adds it will not be the death of Britain's rural idyll but will breathe new life into family farms and rural communities, pro-

“We are getting calls every week from landowners who are keen to embrace a new approach to farming and land management

ROB HINDLE

viding new revenue streams which enable growth and investment into existing businesses.

Wiston Estate owners identified projects which will benefit the estate in the long-term.



"They will provide a future in the family business for those landowners and farm bosses who love people and are as keen to make a

success of their business as their predecessors," he says.

Mr Hindle says farmers and landowners are already catching on,

transforming steel framed barns into 'bustling play areas thronged with the happy sounds of playing children'.



Rob Hindle

"We are getting calls every week from landowners who are keen to embrace a new approach to farming and land management which gives people the chance to use farmland to have fun and spend money."

Examples of diversification include traditional buildings converted into cafes and treatment rooms and ponds, woodlands and quiet farmyard corners turned over to romantic retreats and family breaks.

Shift

With Brexit, Mr Hindle expects the landscape will shift for many rural landowners and farmers who previously relied on agriculture as a source of income, especially with changes to subsidy payments.

He says it is driving a 'monumental sea change' into rural leisure which will grow exponentially in the next decade.

Mr Hindle adds: "Tourists will be the major new cash crop on many

Top tips: How to succeed in diversification

THINK CREATIVELY

CONSIDER every innovative idea and think of ways to make your business stand out from the crowd.

Billy Bob's Ice Cream Parlour, Bolton Abbey, Yorkshire, began by travelling to the United States to find the right style for the diner theme.

A US architect was used to design the building, which was manufactured in 'kit form' to aid authenticity at roll-out.

This dedication to authenticity made his ice cream parlour stand out from the crowd and it has more than doubled in size since it opened, with quirky additions such as a full sized yellow American school bus in the middle of the restaurant and a separate, child-free dining area.

KNOW YOUR MARKET

BY identifying your target customer and working towards meeting their needs you will be making more informed decisions about your business.

It is wise to carry out a full market and opportunity appraisal to inform the development of any diversification strategy. Look in depth at the demographics of the local population, how to best use the land, any competition, how far people are willing to travel and

what attractions or leisure activities people will be interested in visiting.

SET GOALS

BY preparing a full estate plan for the Wiston Estate and Findon Park Farm initiative, introduced by the South Downs National Park Authority, the owners identified projects which worked for them personally and will benefit the estate in the long-term.

LEARN FROM OTHERS

ONE client prepared the marketing strategy for his farm shop by joining the National Farmers' Retail and Markets Association. He mystery shopped numerous farmshops and cafes to help make informed decisions on what would work when they developed their own farm retail business.

GET EXPERT ADVICE

JONATHAN Fell, of Cheshire Ice Cream Farm, carried out detailed research into customer volumes, flows, origin and 'dwell time' over a full year at the visitor attraction to inform the design process for its redevelopment in 2014. By using this data, the business has grown to become the largest free-to-enter farm visitor attraction in the UK.

British farms in a post-CAP world. And farm leisure will become ubiquitous rather than limited to holiday and tourism areas. Every town and city dweller will soon have their share of farm-based leisure attractions accessible within a 30- to 40-minute drive of their home in the suburbs.

"By 2027, the British countryside will be as much about cafes, spas and country clubs as it is hay bales and cattle herds. Look at children's drawings and you will find adventure playgrounds, zip wires and

tree houses alongside the tractors and animals."

But he adds it will bring the town and country closely together and make the countryside relevant to thousands of urban children, with recent research from Cadbury Dairy Milk Buttons showing a third of children were not aware milk came from cows and 12 per cent of London children did not know a cow moos.

He adds it would connect the next generation of farmers with their customers like never before.

Cheshire Ice Cream Farm has grown to become the largest free-to-enter farm visitor attraction in the UK.



Renewable Energy Systems

Biomass Heating & CHP systems

Poultry Litter, Straw (inc rape) Wood Chip, Manure, Tomato Stalks, Pellet, fully automated fuel feeding. Outputs from 500kw to 10Mw for drying, heating small & large scale district heating networks, hot water and steam production. Commercial ground source & underfloor heating. CHP from 25Kwe to 10MWe from Entrade & Nordheat. VDL Drying tunnels for drying poultry litter, woodchip, manure, fully automated, compost oversize.

Tel: 01609 775500 Yorkshire Office
Tel: 01305 755700 Dorchester Office
Email: andrew.clarke@futurumltd.co.uk
www.futurumltd.co.uk