



CLINTON DEVON ESTATES

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Chinese Visit to Devon Countryside To Learn About Countryside Diversification and Sustainability

Devon was visited today by a representative from China who is keen to learn from local landowners and farmers about their agricultural business practices and how they manage the Devon landscape for sustainability.

Representative Guihua Ma, from the Chinese News Agency, made the important visit to the county “to learn from the experiences of industrialised countries like the UK as to how rural development issues are being tackled – and Devon was recommended as an excellent example of sustainable farming and landscape practices.”

Devon based private landowner Clinton Devon Estates hosted the day which was organised in conjunction with the Countryside Agency. Visits were made to the Estate’s Home Farm – which was chosen amongst only 10 other UK farms to take part in the national Forum For The Future Sustainability study.

Farm’s Manager George Perrott who escorted Guihua around the farm commented “Investment in sustainable agricultural business practices such as a state of the art dairy unit not only helps to ensure the long term viability of the Estate’s farms in terms of our farming methods, but also other methods including the rejuvenation old buildings which are no longer viable for agricultural use for conversion into rural multi-use business premises.”

Other highlights included a visit to the 2,800 acre Triassic East Devon Pebblebed Heaths, a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest and the landowners woodlands which have been accredited by the Forestry Stewardship Council and are managed for multi-purpose use and biodiversity. Guihua also spent time with Peter Wastenage of Tidwell Barton, an Estate tenant farmer, discussing organic dairy and vegetable production methods.

Guihua Ma commented “China has undergone enormous development in the last decade and we are concerned about the impact this will have on rural communities. Therefore we are very interested in seeing how other countries tackle rural issues especially the relationship between farming and environmental protection.”

She continued “The Estate demonstrated a number of its business activities as excellent examples of sustainable and innovative methods including scientific management of its milking parlour, disposing of farm plastic waste, a community broadband strategy and the management of woodlands, heathlands and provision for rural communities.”

John Varley Estate’s Director commented “We are very pleased to be able to demonstrate examples of our work to Guihua, which recently received the prestigious Queen’s Award for Enterprise for Sustainable Development, awarded for our integration of sustainable business management practices in the running of our 500-year-old estate.

He continued “Not only were we able to demonstrate the delivery of significant social, economic and environmental benefits delivered by our land management, but also biodiversity, public access, affordable housing and opportunities for small businesses in the local community. We hope that Guihua enjoyed the experience and was able to take some of the lessons we have learnt from how our countryside and its communities have changed over the generations back to China.”

Matthew Heard of the Countryside Agency commented “The Chinese economy is one of the fastest growing in the world. Rapid expansion can have major consequences for rural people, places and nature. England’s rural areas, such as East Devon, have important experiences to share of striking the delicate balance between economic interests with those of the environment.”

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Further information for Editors;

Clinton Devon Estates

Clinton Devon Estates, manages around 25,000 acres of East and North Devon, 15,000 acres of which are designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and has a history stretching back over 500 years in Devon. Today in addition to traditional businesses of farming and forestry, the Estate encompasses conservation management of 2,800 acres of Triassic Pebblebed Heaths, which have been designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a wide portfolio of commercial property including an award winning regenerated rural business park and the provision of affordable housing for the local community.

Other business initiatives include the South West's leading equestrian arena Bicton Arena, Victoria Sawmills regional timber merchants, which have been awarded the Forestry Stewardship Council accreditation and an innovative film locations company utilising the landscape for film productions.

The Estate continues to remain a family concern and their commitment to the county and their investment into the Estate's core elements such as the landscape, natural environment and the community, underpins all activity, long term planning and purpose.

For further information on Clinton Devon Estates please visit;
www.clintondevon.com

Clinton Devon Estate's mission states;

"Our mission is a simple one – to secure the long term prosperity of the Estates, and the people who live and work on them, in ways which care for the countryside and assist the wider community.

It is our firm belief that it is possible for the countryside to be a place for people to enjoy while providing a platform for the economic activity necessary to maintain this enjoyment and sustain a viable local economy and society.

Through sensible development and careful preservation of our land, we are providing a fertile environment for business success, with the intention of passing it on in a better state for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations."



The Countryside Agency

The Countryside Agency is the statutory body working to make the quality of life better for people in the countryside and the quality of the countryside better for everyone. It is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs.

Following publication of the draft Natural Environment and Rural Communities Bill in February 2005, English Nature, the Rural Development Service and the Countryside Agency's Landscape, Access and Recreation division are working towards integration as a single body: Natural England. It will work for people, places and nature with responsibility for enhancing biodiversity, landscapes and wildlife in rural, urban, coastal and marine areas; promoting access, recreation and public wellbeing, and contributing to the way natural resources are managed – so they can be enjoyed now and for future generations.

The Countryside Agency's Landscape, Access and Recreation division aims to help everyone respect, protect and enjoy the countryside – protecting natural landscapes; and encouraging access to, enjoyment of and sustainable management and use of the countryside.

English Nature is the independent Government agency that champions the conservation of wildlife and geology throughout England.

The Rural Development Service is the largest deliverer of the England Rural Development Programme and a range of advisory and regulatory rural services. With the administration of a multi-million pound grant budget for schemes which support land management, rural businesses and rural communities, the Rural Development Service is the single largest organisation working for the benefit of rural areas in England.

For more information please visit www.countryside.gov.uk

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