



Rosebary's Farm  
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## About us

We (Rose & Barry) are an enthusiastic couple who are passionate about farming and the environment. Keeping livestock initially started as a hobby for us and over the past ten years we have slowly increased our stock numbers until it has become a full-time commitment and we consider ourselves to be farmers first and foremost. Owning livestock has further fed our passion for farming and is what has led our interest to farm with a more sustainable approach. Food production is central to what we do, and this has involved pork, chicken, turkey, geese and ducks for direct sale to clients and through local organizations. The opportunity to ensure a long-term residential future at Rosebary's Farm would allow us to grow and develop still further. When we farm, we are continuously looking to find ways of improving animal welfare and ultimately improve our productivity. This continual reflection means we are learning every day and constantly building on our experience and skills. We plan to implement this knowledge at Rosebary's Farm and develop it even further as we strive to enhance biodiversity and farm the land in a regenerative way.

We have always been passionate about farming and the environment, particularly embracing ways for a more sustainable approach. Currently, we raise and finish our laying hens in an open barn with an outside pasture and foraging area with similar areas for the ducks and geese. The eggs we produce are sustainably and ethically raised in a way that is good for the environment and this is something our consumers tell us they really value. Sustainability and regenerative agriculture are now central to our farming policy. Our values and current production system support this approach, and we would like the opportunity to develop it further.

## Business Plan

Having owned Rosebary's Farm since 2012, we have explored a number of different livestock enterprises which have included broiler chickens, laying hens, laying geese, Christmas turkeys and farrowing sows. As the business has evolved, it has become clear that free-range egg production is markedly more profitable and less labour-intensive than others and we plan to focus on this alone.

As the other enterprises are wound down, this will free up and land and time to expand the number of chickens on site and to allow the creation of 3-4 separate laying units with separate flocks of differing age groups to ensure stable and continuous production. Chicks will be brought in as day-old hatchlings and raised in a secure unit before being brought into production as outgoing age-groups move off site.

At present, the farm houses a single large laying barn (edged blue on plan below) with planning permission for a second mobile unit soon to be applied for. This barn opens onto an area of pasture and rough grazing for the chickens to forage on. It is our intention to expand the external area to the north (blue dashed line on plan below) to allow a greater foraging area and so increase the available habitat for the hens.

Our plan is then to create a second, similar unit (edged dashed green on the plan below) and as the business grows, potentially two further units to the east of this. The buildings currently used for geese (to the west of the laying units) will be repurposed for the rearing unit which is currently housed adjacent to the existing laying barn.



Further to this, we would like to create an 'honesty-box' sales point on the hard standing inside the gate where the orange circle is located. This will be fenced to create a hard barrier between customers and the livestock but will allow customers to see the chickens in their outdoor habitat. We have recognised that people are becoming more interested in the environment and knowing more about what they are eating. This is something we believe needs promoting and endeavour to support.

We calculate that a new mobile laying unit will cost circa £17,500 for a new 500 bird unit - with additional costs to prepare the ground and fence and secure the outdoor areas. A second-hand or repurposed mobile

shelter will of course be cheaper. Our plan is to erect the second mobile unit (for which we have permission) and then to erect a further unit every two or three years until full capacity is reached. The benefit of differing age groups over the current single flock is that staggered ages in separate laying units allows a continuity of supply whereas a single age group requires a cessation of production to bring a new flock on stream. This modular approach to growth allows easily scalable expansion in a very controllable way.

The major barriers to the expansion of the business are the lack of planning certainty on the site and investment needed to grow and the two issues are heavily interlinked. As it stands, the business exists without borrowing and all machinery and equipment is owned outright. We will access grant schemes where possible to fund expansion but if bank loans are required, we will be under extreme pressure to provide sufficient security without the benefit of a permanent residential permission on the site.

Furthermore, with the increase in livestock and the requirements of commercial egg production, it becomes imperative that there will be a 24-hour presence on the site as before the temporary permission was granted, the farm was plagued by vandalism, theft and attacks on the livestock. Without a permanent presence, the business may well become unviable.

As part of the expansion, we also aim to revitalise the pasture areas and incorporate herbal leys. This will allow us to increase biodiversity, produce more growth from grass and will make the grass more resilient in extreme weather conditions.

We will grow our customer base further and introduce new sales outlets using the internet, a farm page on Instagram and a website. As we expand, we will develop a local supply chain and link with local village stores and pubs/restaurants in the community. Farm gate sales could be introduced and if successful we would like to work towards a small onsite shop with a fridge and honesty box type of provision. This would further engage with our local community so that people can see the farm and get a feel for 'what we do'. We pride ourselves on our high animal welfare standards and will go above and beyond to ensure the welfare of our stock. Ensuring our food is produced in sustainable operation is also important to us. This farming system is centred around sustainable food production. Our farming system aligns with the Regenerative principles of increasing biodiversity, enriching soils, enhancing ecosystems and capturing carbon.

Industry standard figures from ABC (Agro-Business Consultants) suggest a gross output per bird of £40.50 per 60 week cycle based on a sales price of £1.50 per dozen (approx. 27 dozen per bird, per cycle) and following through the standard costings gives a net margin of £8.73 per bird – but it is important to note that the egg prices used are based on wholesale sales to a packer rather than farm gate or direct to consumer prices as in this case, which can be significantly higher and thus allows for a much improved net margin of approximately £31.67 per bird (based on a per dozen price of £2.35). Using these figures therefore, an additional unit of 500 birds would generate approximately £15,835 extra gross margin per annum, more than enough to service the debt of borrowing funds to expand the flock and construct the extra units.

### **Community Engagement**

Community engagement is extremely important to us. We would like to have community open days and work with educational groups to provide visits around the farm. We envisage an area where people attending could look at educational resources, and over time we would like to convert one of the traditional buildings on the farm into a workshop/visiting area so that we could provide a space for this. This could also be used to promote and sell our produce from the farm to provide farm gate sales (small shop honesty box approach) and increase engagement with the public. We are aware through the SFI/CS Schemes we can receive funding to help with the costs of implementing these visits. This is something we are very eager to engage with as well as open farm Sundays through LEAF.

## **SWOT analysis**

### Strengths

- Experience
- Established business with machinery and equipment and livestock.
- Passion and drive
- A willingness to drive the business forward
- Scalable, achievable and realistic expansion plan
- Property and equipment owned outright – no current borrowing

### Weaknesses

- Lack of certainty over planning to remain on site.
- Opportunity for funding limited by temporary permission for dwelling.

### Opportunities

- Increase the livestock numbers and grow our customer base and outlets.
- Source local suppliers and businesses to reduce food miles and reduce carbon footprint.
- Linking with neighbouring farmers, sharing practices, machinery and labour.
- Connecting with the community - hosting open days and food tasting events as a promotion for our produce but also as an educational tool to develop our visitors knowledge and understanding.
- Utilising environmental schemes and Government incentives.
- Increasing the wildlife and biodiversity on the farm.
- Ample capacity to expand on a modular basis within the existing footprint.

### Threats

- Adapting to climate change
- Maintaining the farm's productivity alongside high animal welfare standards
- Maintaining financial resilience and farm productivity throughout with volatile prices and change of government.
- Risks from pathogens/animal diseases.

### **Agri-environment Schemes**

We would look to explore the availability of grant schemes such as Countryside Stewardship, the Sustainable Farm Incentive and the Farming Equipment and Technology Fund to assist with future development and machinery costs. We will undertake to register with the Rural Land Register at the earliest possible opportunity.

### **Contingency Plans**

We believe that our system is extremely resilient to most scenarios. We are fortunate to not have any outstanding debt on machinery and equipment, and that we have built up our livestock numbers organically over the years. We have strong connections with end markets. Our business model has been sensitivity checked.



### **Summary**

The Local Planning Authority and their consultants have previously confirmed that 24/7 onsite farmer presence is essential on this site to ensure the security and well-being of the livestock and to prevent vandalism. Rosebary's Farm has a real opportunity to expend and grow and become a stronger local business but is hampered by the uncertainty over planning. The business is healthy and viable but is constrained by the limited asset value of the land and the inability to borrow against it. Were a permanent planning permission granted, then not only would it grant the owners the confidence to grow and expand but would create an asset for lenders to underwrite against to fund the expansion.

| Task/Goal                                         | Action                                                                                                                                                            | Outcomes                                                                                                                                                                        | Timescales                                                                              |
|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Increase flock numbers                            | Buying in chicks to rear on site at regular intervals                                                                                                             | Increased product sales<br><br>Flocks of different ages to ensure continuity of production production schedule                                                                  | Aim to introduce one more flock and production unit every 2/3 years until 4 are on site |
| Farm Sustainably                                  | Source from local suppliers<br><br>Access Government grant schemes<br><br>Improve biodiversity and grassland                                                      | Increased productivity<br><br>Lower inputs to reduce carbon footprint Improved reputation and business image<br><br>Improved stock health and productivity                      | Register with Rural Payments Agency and submit grant applications within first year     |
| Improve pasture<br><br>Introduce herb-rich swards | Overseeding unproductive areas                                                                                                                                    | Improved soils<br><br>Improved bio-diversity<br><br>Improve stock health and productivity                                                                                       | Clear scrub and establish herbal leys within 12-18 months                               |
| Uphold highest animal welfare standards           | Implement flock health plan and review yearly<br><br>Continue to access Animal Health and Welfare pathways<br><br>Attend information & training days and seminars | Increased stock health<br>Reduced antibiotic use<br><br>Customer reassurance<br><br>Increased stock prices and end product                                                      | Explore accreditation within 12-18 months                                               |
| Boost biodiversity on farm                        | Planting of herb-rich swards<br><br>Introduce wild bird and pollinator mixes to margins<br><br>Restore, replant and maintain hedges                               | Healthier ecosystem<br><br>Increase in wildlife insects and pollinators<br><br>Increased soil health and productivity                                                           | Carry out annual biodiversity on farm and monitor annually                              |
| Engage with Public and Local Community            | Host open day<br><br>Farm gate sales to be explored<br><br>Engage with local farming community                                                                    | Build positive relationships<br><br>Promotion of farm and produce<br><br>Connect with local and wider community sharing practice and knowledge<br><br>Wider audience engagement | Host educational groups<br>Register with LEAF to host open farm events                  |