

Statement for Council Meeting – 18 October 2018

We, the trustees of Torbay Coast & Countryside Trust, wish to speak to you regarding the proposal to use compulsory purchase powers to force the Trust to surrender land and urge the Council to seek negotiated settlements instead.

We believe that compulsory purchase has considerable risks, which have been down-played in the report to Council:

- a) It is not guaranteed to be cheaper for the Council than a negotiated settlement;
- b) It will severely damage relations, undermine trust and destroy any sense of partnership between the Council and the Trust.
- c) Lastly, we believe that CPO could lead to the overall failure of the Trust.

We believe that fair negotiated settlements are vital if the Trust is contribute to the future success of Torbay. Fair settlement would put the Trust on a firm financial footing. It would us turn Ocombe Farm into a profitable retail and visitor enterprise, providing substantial revenue for the Trust.

In respect of Preston Down Road, a settlement appears possible. Our respective agents have agreed a figure (within a range approved by the District Valuer) and the trustees are minded to settle. We therefore ask the Council for an offer in writing rather than wasting resources on compulsory purchase preparations.

In respect of Little Blagdon Farm, the Trust has not been in 'ongoing discussions' regarding early surrender for many years. Rather, we remind you that Little Blagdon Farm was leased to the Trust until 2059 as compensation for land given up at Ocombe for Suttons Seeds. At the time, the Council down-played the likelihood of breaking the lease after fifteen years and the Trust has invested in the land on the basis that we would be farming this land until 2059.

The loss of Little Blagdon Farm will cripple the Trust's farming operation, an operation through which 38% of the leased land is managed without recourse to council funding. We have therefore asked officers to prioritise sourcing alternative land over financial compensation. Progress has been frustratingly slow and we now urge you to recognise the consequences if alternative land is not found.

We assure you that the Trust will continue to work with the Council as long as matters are handled in a collaborative manner. However, please understand that we will resist most strongly any action that seeks to force the Trust to surrender land.