

# Knockbain Farm

## Land Opportunity

### June 2020



## Introduction

[Knockbain Farm](#) is a 200 ha mixed farm adjacent to the town of Dingwall, in the Scottish Highlands. The farm is currently divided into in-hand and tenanted units and is managed as a partnership by four members of the Lockett family. The land at Blackwells is one of the tenanted units and forms the basis of this opportunity.

The in-hand operation consists of arable land and a small herd of Luing cattle. In addition, other land at Knockbain is let to a neighbouring farm on a long-term basis and is not included in this offer.

Food production, wildlife conservation, biodiversity, landscape amenity, climate change, and the provision of public access are all important aspects of how the land is managed. The farm also provides tourist accommodation and hosts a [co-operatively owned wind turbine](#).

The land management objectives of the Knockbain Partners are:

- Economic:
  - To provide a source of income to the farm partners.
  - To promote and encourage sustainable, local economic activity.
  - To create opportunities for innovative, enterprising people who want opportunities to manage land.

- Environmental:
  - To produce quality food in a sustainable, wildlife and climate friendly manner.
  - To maximise biodiversity and carbon storage potential on the farm.
  - Manage existing wildlife habitats and to 'farm wilder' by creating a wide array of new native woodlands, wetlands, ponds, hedges and wildflower meadows.
- Social:
  - To provide opportunities for employment and new opportunities for farm business development.
  - Increase public engagement with land management.
  - Provide a welcoming environment for those taking public access.

The Scottish Government has a desire to see publicly owned land used to give opportunities to New Entrants to Agriculture and those progressing from New Entrant status. Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES) has already contributed to this by the creation of a number of Starter Farms. This offer has some similarities with the FES programme.

We will do this by weighting applications in favour of suitably qualified new entrants and progressors, or those with a positive, innovative, enterprising approach to land management.

## **Land at Blackwells, Dingwall, Ross-shire.**

The land at Blackwells, which forms this offer, consists of a 37.74 ha (93.75 acre) section of the farm.

We are offering an agricultural opportunity at Blackwells to help deliver the economic, environmental and social objectives of the farm partnership. This is targeted at those looking to enter / progress in farming and who take a positive, enterprising approach to the challenges of sustainable, climate friendly food production.

### **The Area:**

The land area extends to 37.94 ha as is marked in yellow on the separate plan. The land consists of a mix of grade 3.2 to 4.1 and is currently a mix of spring barley and improved grassland.

Additional land may be available elsewhere on the farm if there is a suitable case for this. This may offer opportunities for future expansion.

Applications that do not require all of the land will also be welcomed. For example, micro enterprises. Collaborative applications where individuals / groups that wish to work together using different sections of the land will also be considered.

### **Land Management Types:**

In order to help guide potential applicants we have listed some types of land management that we think would fit the objectives of the farm partners. Please note that this list is not exhaustive and other proposals are welcome:

General approaches:

- Systems based on regenerative agriculture techniques.
- Systems based on [agroecological](#) techniques.
- Sustainable land management that helps provide local, resilient food supply chains.
- Mixed, diverse operations.

Some specific examples include:

- Pasture based livestock systems.
- Horticulture.
- Micro dairy.

There are also types of land management that we would not generally consider:

- Intensive livestock operations. For example, intensive finishing cattle on predominantly cereal diets.
- Intensive, conventional arable operations. Conventional arable management may form part of a proposal but would preferably not be the core component.
- Large scale, intensive pig or poultry units.

## Tenure

The land will be offered initially on a five year Short Limited Duration Tenancy (SLDT).

We recognise that this is a short length of time to establish a land management business. The Knockbain Partners wish to find a long-term tenant and we fully expect that the initial five years would be extended into a much longer timeframe. Subject to the agreement of all parties, Knockbain Farm anticipate that this would be extended to a Modern Limited Duration Tenancy (MLDT) which would be for a minimum of a further 10 years.

Tenants will be permitted to sub-let fields on a year to year basis in order to aid establishment of a business and provide short term income. However, sub-letting should not be central to any proposal.

## Infrastructure:

Knockbain Farm is currently investing in infrastructure associated with the land at Blackwells and anticipate that fencing and other fixed equipment to be in suitable condition for the purpose of the lease. However, bidders are to satisfy themselves of this and will be responsible for maintaining the fixed equipment for the duration of the lease.

The principle agricultural building is a concrete portal framed loose court measuring approximately 41 metres x 25 metres (135' x 80'). A 41 metre x 9 metre (135' x 30') concrete silage pit with concrete walls runs adjacent to the steading building.

Where bidders consider that additional fixed equipment is required then they should make that known in their application.

## Housing:

It was hoped that this offer would also include a house at Blackwells and a planning application for a house was submitted in early 2019. However, this application was refused on the basis that the individual(s) to be farming the land had not been identified. More information on the planning application can be found [here](#).

The Knockbain Farm Partners may consider resubmitting the application for a house to be used by the new tenant. It is anticipated that planning is more likely to be granted if there is a newly established business on the land. However, this is not guaranteed.

## Additional Work at Knockbain Farm:

The in-hand farming operation at Knockbain continues to expand. The farming partners are either in full time employment or moving towards retirement. Additional labour is required at Knockbain to help with farming and general land management work. This could include, but not limited to: livestock management, machinery operation, fencing, digger operation, woodland management, general maintenance work and gardening.

The assessment process will favour bidders who have the skills and availability to provide this. It is expected that Knockbain Farm will guarantee a minimum of 4 days work per month

and the new tenant will be available to work for a minimum of 4 days per month. This minimum would apply unless both parties mutually agree to any change.

### **Application process, assessment and provisional timescale:**

More detail on the available land, including maps, aerial imagery and video footage of the land can be obtained by contacting email address supplied.

We hope that potential applicants have the opportunity to visit the land before submitting business proposals. Covid-19 restrictions are likely to present difficulties visiting the farm in the short term. The intention is that the land will be available from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021. Buildings would be available from 15<sup>th</sup> May 2021, which would also be the start of the lease period.

We have chosen not to set a deadline for the submission of proposals at the current time. This will allow potential applicants to begin thinking about possible proposals, pending changes to the Covid-19 restrictions. This will hopefully allow potential applicants to visit the farm later in the year. Applicants considering making an application should submit a brief expression of interest to ensure they kept informed on the application timescale and deadline.

Once a deadline has been set, applicants should submit a full detailed business proposal together with proposed rent. Applicants will be shortlisted for interview which will take place when Covid-19 restrictions allow.

**Please note that we will not necessarily favour the highest bidder.** Applications that fulfil the objectives of the Knockbain Farm partners, and other requirements described, will be strongly favoured.

### **Contact details:**

Richard Lockett is the contact for potential applicants.

Web site: [www.knockbainfarm.co.uk](http://www.knockbainfarm.co.uk)

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