



DUCHY of LANCASTER

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Welcome



The past year has undoubtedly been a difficult time for everyone. My thoughts and sympathies are with those who have suffered serious illness or personal loss from the Covid-19 pandemic as well as those who are vulnerable and have had to shield to keep themselves safe. Hopefully we are now working towards a more positive working environment for all as restrictions begin to ease.

The Duchy has been extremely fortunate in that we have seen relatively few business failures in the year and lower vacancy rates across the portfolio than might have been anticipated. This is largely due to the personal commitment and ingenuity of our tenant family, as well as the diverse nature of the Duchy's asset portfolio. Nevertheless, we recognise that the pace of recovery will vary, sector by sector, in the years ahead. We will continue to do all that we can to remain flexible in our approach as the longer-term impacts of the pandemic become clearer.

One of our key areas of focus continues to be the long-term sustainability of our estates. As we invest

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Environmental Responsibility



Working with our tenants, the Duchy is developing estate-level environmental and sustainability plans in which clear objectives are agreed and monitored. These action plans have, in part, been informed by the extensive biodiversity audit carried out in partnership with Natural England and the Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) over the last 3 years. This has allowed us to map the biodiversity on our holdings and work with our tenants to protect and enhance the wide variety of habitats present.

The capital grant scheme we introduced last year to help tenants address soil health remains available and the rural surveyors will continue to work with our tenant farmers to encourage appropriate minimum tillage and direct drilling practices. Many of our

farming tenants have already introduced environmentally friendly practices into their day-to-day operations. Examples include the introduction of wild bird seed and pollen and nectar mixtures for field boundaries, the addition of floristically enhanced grass margins, proactive hedgerow management and the restoration of redundant ponds to create reed beds for birds and other native wildlife.

In the year ahead, we will be developing our thinking still further to incorporate plans for sustainable water management, carbon capture and eco-friendly energy sources. Our objective is to minimise the impact of our actions and those of our tenants on the long-term sustainability of our estates in order to protect and preserve them for future generations.

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in our existing portfolio we are constantly looking at ways to find more sustainable solutions. We continue to encourage our tenant farmers to introduce environmentally friendly farming practices and are working with them to increase the take-up of appropriate countryside stewardship schemes across our holdings.

In the area of soil regeneration we are keen to encourage a move to cover cropping and away from ploughing to direct drilling where appropriate. Many of our farming tenants have already adopted this methodology after reading *Dirt to Soil: One Family's Journey Into Regenerative Agriculture* by Gabe Brown. Farmer, innovator and pioneer, Gabe recently featured in a Netflix documentary narrated by Woody Harrelson called *Kiss the Earth*. His passion for soil regeneration knows no bounds and the results in terms of improvement in soil quality and yields are remarkable.

As a business, the Duchy is committed to becoming carbon neutral as soon as is practicable. We have introduced a 12-point plan to make this a reality and to focus everyone's attention on the environmental impact of our day-to-day business dealings. This will be a recurrent theme in the years ahead as we report back on our progress.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone involved with the Duchy for their continued support and commitment over the last 12 months. By working collaboratively and with a common sense of purpose, you have helped to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on our operations, our estates and our tenants' businesses throughout a truly challenging time.

Nathan Thompson
CEO, Duchy of Lancaster



Castle Restoration Continues

The restoration of Lancaster Castle continues with the refurbishment of the Shire Hall, County Court and Robing Room completed in April of this year. Works included new leading and slates to the roofs, new roof lanterns, refurbishment and repair of windows, the restoration of plaster tracery, re-gilding of ceiling finials and repainting of interior walls and ceilings.

The Great Cowcher Explained



The Great Cowcher was produced circa 1402 on the orders of Henry IV to form a register of all the title deeds of the Duchy of Lancaster possessions. It spans two illuminated volumes, both of which are kept at The National Archives in Kew.

We are currently working with academics, archivists and heritage professionals from The National Archives, Lancaster University and Lincoln University on a major new research project exploring the origin and meaning of the Great Cowcher. The aim is to create an interactive, community-focused edition of the book which can be made available to everyone free of charge online. Specialist teams at The National Archives are also undertaking non-invasive multi-spectral imaging and pigment analysis of the original book to understand how this highly illustrated and detailed compendium was produced.



HMS Lancaster

HMS Lancaster has been extremely busy over the last 12 months, taking part in large-scale operations in the North Atlantic and Norwegian Sea as well as closer to home.

'The Queen's Frigate' is part of the Littoral Response Group established in 2020 to carry out regular operations in areas of interest to the UK. Led by HMS Albion, this deployment included more than 1,000 sailors and Royal Marines. HMS Lancaster then

returned to the UK to take part in another large operational exercise alongside HMS Queen Elizabeth and her Carrier Strike Group.

The Ship's Company also contributed to an intensive training course for new submarine commanders known as The Perisher, before returning to Portsmouth for essential maintenance. In July, the ship was tasked with escorting HMS Prince of Wales home from Gibraltar.

Open Day at Wood End Farm



The Whitaker family at Wood End Farm in Lancashire hosted a highly successful Open Day in July under the LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) banner. Some 500 people attended over the course of the day, viewing the displays at the farm and taking part in a series of tours, walks and talks on environmental issues and sustainable farming practices.

In addition to the farm machinery on display, there were a dozen craft stalls featuring local arts and crafts and visitors enjoyed demonstrations of sheep shearing, sheepdog training and dry-stone walling. Neighbouring Duchy tenant and organic farmer John Alpe gave a talk on agri-environment schemes and reducing the carbon footprint of a farm, while local soil advisor James Bretherton ran a Soil School to highlight the importance of sustainable soil management. Visitors also had an opportunity to 'meet and greet' the Farm's newest addition, a herd of 12 alpacas.

There was also plenty for the younger visitor to enjoy. Pupils from Thorneyholme Primary School had made and hidden groups of animals to create an Animal Number Hunt, the local forest school demonstrated the pleasures of learning in and about the great outdoors and there was even a demonstration of woodcarving.

Wood End Farm is a 1,400-acre traditional upland hill farm on the Duchy's Whitewell Estate. It has been farmed since 1906 by four generations of the Whitaker family. The Whitakers have been intentionally farming in accordance with environmentally sensitive practices for many years and are the stewards of a variety of important habitats and flora and fauna across the holding.

Creating New Woodland: Extending The National Forest

As part of our ongoing woodland creation plan, the Duchy has planted more than 175 new avenue trees on the Needwood estate in Staffordshire this year.

Working in partnership with specialist forestry consultants and the National Forest, we have planted trees within the existing hedgerow along the A515, created tree-lined entranceways to Hadley Farm and Eland Lodge Equestrian Centre and established a new avenue of trees along Pipey Lane which will provide both landscaping and habitat benefits.

We have also completed the first planting phase of our five-year plan to create 25 acres of new woodland on the estate. This will help to reintroduce indigenous species such as oak, lime, silver birch, sycamore, Scots pine and field maple to Needwood.

The new woodland areas will be accessible to the general public, extending the National Forest and increasing the biodiversity of natural habitats to support local wildlife.



Beagles About!

A tenant at Coulters Hill Cottage on the Needwood estate has been providing a valuable national service for the past nine years.



Beagle Welfare is a registered charity managed by volunteers which cares for, rehabilitates and re-homes pedigree beagles with deserving owners nationwide. No fewer than 2,163 beagles have been successfully re-homed by the charity since the organisation moved into this Duchy property in 2011.



In February 2020, a new purpose-built kennel block was opened on site to provide the dogs with space for indoor exercise and one-to-one training. The new facility was funded by the Fuller family in memory of their late son Will, a keen supporter of the charity's work.

New Farm Shop



The Helme family in Lancashire have converted their dairy parlour into a fully equipped farm shop selling home reared lamb, pork and beef to wholesale and retail customers. Richard Helme took over the tenancy of Wards House Farm on the Salwick estate from his father in 1996. During the Covid-19 crisis the shop recorded record sales as consumers take a greater interest in the quality and provenance of their food.

Restoration and Renewal

In the year to 31st March 2021, despite national restrictions and the need to maintain social distancing measures, the Duchy invested £1.51m in the restoration and refurbishment of the rural residential portfolio. This expenditure continues to focus on the fabric and setting of the buildings, including the eradication of damp, the replacement of single glazed and uPVC units with hardwood double-glazed windows and the restoration of adjacent outbuildings and walling.

We have also continued to invest in the preservation and protection of listed building assets, working in partnership with local conservation officers on a number of period properties across the residential portfolio.



New Life for Old Buildings

The redevelopment of Gleaves Hill Barn on the Wyreside estate in Lancashire is our first refurbishment to gain a 'B' in its energy efficiency rating.

The disused barn has been converted into two spacious family homes, using traditional materials and retaining as many of the original architectural features as possible.

A ground source heating system and a smart Wi-Fi-enabled thermostat have been installed to optimize internal temperatures and conserve energy. Electric charging points have also been installed to encourage the use of sustainable transport options.

Kitchens in the new units have been made from sustainable renewable wood sources and local Lancashire slates have been installed in a traditional graduated course on the roofs. Local craftsmen and contractors were employed to work on the project in support of the local economy and to minimise travel during the pandemic.

The restored building offers sustainable, energy-efficient accommodation for local families in the heart of the Lancashire countryside. It exemplifies the focus on energy efficiency, carbon footprint and renewable energy technologies that we are seeking to bring to our residential refurbishments and small-scale developments in the future.

Both properties received multiple applications from would-be tenants, proving the demand for high quality rental accommodation in rural areas. The barns were let to local families within weeks of completion.



Restoring Natural Habitats



One of our long-standing tenant families in Staffordshire has been working hard to encourage the return of pollinators, waterfowl and other species of indigenous wildlife to their hedgerows, ponds and field margins.

Mrs Mary Brown and her son Graham entered into a 5-year Mid-Tier Countryside Stewardship Scheme in 2019 after completing a five-year ELS scheme. Along with growing wild bird seed mixtures they have introduced pollen and nectar mixtures around the farm, added floristically enhanced grass margins beside watercourses and proactively managed their hedgerows to provide feeding sources for farmland birds. They are also restoring a number of redundant ponds on the holding, creating reed beds and aquatic habitats to attract insects, birds and native wildlife.

Minimal cultivations have been adopted across the 220 acres of arable land at Hanbury Park Farm, which operates an arable rotation of wheat, spring barley and winter beans, with catch and cover crops being grown whenever the weather allows.

The Brown family has farmed at Hanbury Park Farm for over 35 years and it is currently home to three generations, with grandson Christopher playing a key role in the day-to-day farming and grassland management at the holding.



Responding to Changing Market Needs



This year, the commercial property market has slowed in most major city centres as many companies chose not to expand or to rationalize their requirements into smaller floorplates. A number of new projects were also put on hold because of this very volatile market. In response to this the Duchy completed its first ever speculative fully fitted and furnished lettable space, transforming one of the office suites at 9 Savoy Street into a bright, open plan and contemporary office space.

Pre-let prior to completion, the new offices reflect 21st century working practices with a series of break-out rooms and a large communal social/dining space at its core. The new tenants also benefit from the purpose-built end of journey cycle storage and shower facilities available in the basement of the building, as well as a private open-air terrace with views over the Thames.



Sustainable Workspaces

The Duchy of Lancaster is committed to improving the environmental sustainability and energy efficiency of its commercial portfolio.

Areas of focus include the introduction of roof mounted solar panels to power office buildings, thermostatically controlled heating and ventilation systems to minimise energy consumption and the expansion of wellbeing facilities. Communal areas, social spaces, locker rooms, showers and cycle storage facilities will all be considered as part of a holistic approach to any refurbishment or fit-out.

Where appropriate, electric charging points will also be introduced to encourage cleaner modes of transport and minimise carbon emissions from delivery vehicles.

Supporting Local Communities

Over the last 12 months, the Duchy of Lancaster Benevolent Fund has awarded an additional £600,000 to local good causes supporting rural communities during the Covid-19 crisis.

Funds have been administered via the Palatinate Lieutenancies and for North Yorkshire, Cheshire East and Staffordshire through the nationwide charity, UK Community Foundation.

SavoyStrand Completion



The transformation of the Art Deco building on the Strand formerly known as Norman House is nearing completion. Four floors of the building have been pre-let, together with the ground floor retail space where Boots The Chemist is already actively trading.

We are under offer to a leisure/restaurant operator for the ground and lower ground areas and expect them to complete fitting out early in 2022.

SavoyStrand has been designed to reflect new and contemporary ways of working. This includes flexible interior layouts, communal amenity spaces, ambient and energy efficient lighting systems and touch-free access to lifts and floors. It includes a state-of-the-art 'clean air' ventilation system.

The team is currently working with architects and landscape designers to finalise the planting of the 4,575 sq ft of open air terraces on the 4th and 9th floors of the refurbished building.

New Appointments

As part of our journey of continuous improvement, we have made a number of strategic appointments this year, with a new Head of Rural, Head of Urban, Interim CFO and Chief Transformation Officer joining the senior team.



Carol Hawkey has been promoted to Head of Rural, Adrian Bayliss joins us as our new Head of Urban, Stewart McGarrity has been appointed as Interim Chief Finance Officer and Despina Don-Wauchope takes on a new role as Chief Transformation Officer.

All have extensive experience of senior roles within leading UK and international organisations.

We have also restructured our team of Rural Surveyors now that the management of all Surveys is undertaken in house. New appointments include Alex Morrison as Estates Director for Yorkshire and the Foreshore Surveys, Alexandra Carr as Estates Surveyor for Yorkshire and Archie Rose as Estates Surveyor for Foreshore and Southern. Laura Airton has been promoted to Estates Director for our Cheshire and Lancashire Surveys and Katie Warden has been appointed as Estates Director for Staffordshire. Lydia Richards also joins the Duchy as our new Estates Surveyor for Cheshire and Lancashire.

At The Queen's Chapel of the Savoy we have appointed a new Steward in Richard Buck who takes over the role following the retirement of Thomas Leyland in April.



You will hopefully have an opportunity to meet many of these new additions to the Duchy family over the coming months.



Getting to know...

Despina Don-Wauchope



What is your role within the Duchy?

I have joined the Duchy as 'Chief Transformation Officer'. The role involves working alongside everyone in the organisation driving change and streamlining and improving our processes.

What does a typical day entail?

As this is very much a project role, I don't know if there will be such a thing as 'typical day'. In the early days I will be spending time with everyone trying to understand what they do, how they do it and also understand what frustrates or limits them in their roles. Once I have done that, I will be scoping out what needs to be done and will then start to implement the various initiatives and/or changes required. I suspect every day will be different!

What do you do to relax?

I have two teenage children so a lot of my time is taken up as a 'taxi driver'! Outside of that I enjoy going to the theatre and the ballet, playing and watching tennis and travelling. I have been fortunate enough to go to Wimbledon on numerous occasions and also to the US Open. The French Open and Australian Open are next on my list – if the pandemic allows!

Who would your ideal dinner guest be?

Andy Murray – I love watching tennis and he is an amazing tennis player. He has a very dry sense of humour and is often misunderstood.

What super power would you most like to have?

Being able to create extra hours in the day when trying to juggle everything.

What's the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

Be true to yourself – always act with integrity and do what feels right. This has always worked for me in both my personal and professional life. It is so much easier to give 110% if you truly believe in, and are passionate about, what you are doing.