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## Property market showing green shoots of recovery

Despite fears last year that land prices were slipping, demand for land and farms has been encouraging, bringing a welcome lift to the sluggish property market.

Rural properties coming to the market are seeing strong enquiries from farmers and an increasingly wary investor market recognising the agricultural and land sector to be a more reliable investment base than many other property areas.

"We may be surprised by some of the prices being achieved this year," says Nick Bowman, a partner with Berrys at Kettering. "We are expecting prices to hold up where there is competitive interest but for the less attractive parcels, vendors may have to be a little more realistic."

Arable land is averaging around £5,500 per acre, but earlier this year Berrys sold a 400-acre block of productive arable land in Shropshire for in excess of £6,000 per acre, proving that there is good demand for quality land.

In Cheshire, demand for agricultural property is robust and Graham Bowcock, Berrys partner at Northwich, says he remains optimistic: "There is a shortage of farms and farmland on the market so prices are



Equestrian properties such as Hillwicket Cottage in Shropshire are in demand

holding firm except in the premium 'pony paddock' market where there is evidence that the £15,000 to £20,000 an acre sums paid in the past are not sustainable."

In the commercial sector, the bright spots are that those companies looking to expand are likely to be able to get a good deal and investment sales have picked up for well-let property.

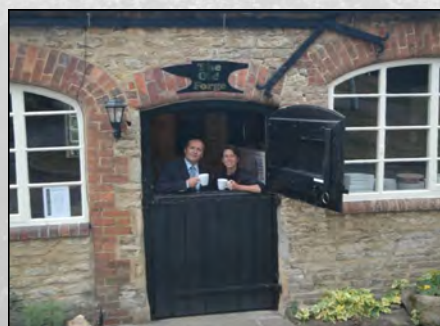
There is some cheer in the residential market with signs that house sales are finally turning the corner. "As Spring arrived, the number of properties coming onto the market increased as did viewings, confirming that purchasers are ready to get back into the market," said Adam Farnsworth, Berrys head of agency.

"But we must listen to our buyers and take on board evidence of the market and price accordingly. If we have 20 viewings and no sale, in most instances it is an issue of the property being priced above its place in a very sensitive market.

"Sales will only happen where the guide price reflects the market conditions and buyers can meet the more stringent mortgage funding assessments placed upon them," he added.

The green shoots of recovery are there. People are feeling more optimistic about their jobs, and the relationship between house prices and personal incomes is at long last getting closer to its long-term average, rather than the 40 per cent above average figure seen in March last year.

## New lease of life for The Old Forge



A former blacksmith's shop near Cranford Hall in Northamptonshire has taken on a new lease of life - as a tea shop - thanks to a tender restoration by Kettering businessman Mark Toseland. "When looking for a new tenant we wanted someone that would look after the historic Old Forge and also bring benefits to the village," said Gary Conaghan of Berrys, managing agents of Cranford Estate on behalf of owner Sir John Robinson. "The restoration of The Old Forge has changed the face of Cranford," he added.

Cheers: Gary Conaghan of Berrys with Cafe manager Mandy Toseland at The Old Forge tea shop

## Auction surprise - redundant barns exceed guide price by £50,000

A range of redundant barns in the centre of the old village of Shenley Brook End, Milton Keynes has gone under the hammer for £175,000 - £50,000 above the guide price.

Bidding was slow to start with at the auction of Valley Farm Barns, Shenley Brook End but soon picked up to pass the £125,000 guide price, with the hammer eventually falling at £175,000 to a local developer.

Agents Berrys auctioned the range of Grade II listed traditional barns on behalf of the Homes & Communities Agency.

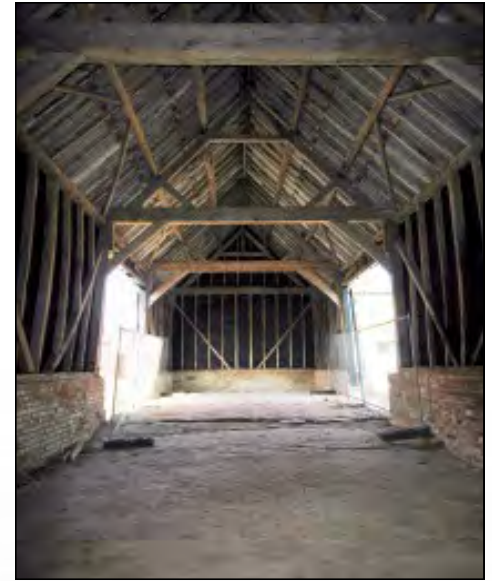
Conveniently situated within the old village area of Shenley Brook End to the south west of Central Milton Keynes, the barns had development potential for conversion to a single residential unit, subject to

planning and Listed Building Consent.

"The vendors had worked in conjunction with the Local Planning Authority to produce a planning brief for the barns in accordance with Milton Keynes Council's development aspiration," explained Nick Bowman, who handled the auction for Berrys.

"It is rare to find such a character property as this in the area, and these barns retained some interesting original features and impressive roof timbers offering a unique development opportunity.

"Unusually, the barns were sold without planning permission and it was encouraging to see such interest in a property when you hear so much in the press about the property market being in the doldrums," he added.



Valley Farm Barns, Milton Keynes

## Practical, professional farm management

Under the new Farming Connect programme in Wales, Berrys team of farm advisors provides assistance on a wide range of topics including, practical livestock husbandry, planning services, business finance and organisation, and cross compliance.

The team has also led a recent appeal against NVZ designation in the English Marches. In conjunction with a group of affected farming clients and other local professionals, a detailed rebuttal to the recent extension of the NVZ regulation was submitted to Defra. "It is to be hoped that this type of response from the industry will discourage ill thought out legislation in the future and will help our clients to run profitable businesses," says Simon Latter at Shrewsbury.

He also reminds farmers to look out for new maps in the post: "For next year's Single Payment application, the RPA have decided to re-map the whole country. Farms in England will receive a new set of RLR maps. DON'T just file them. You have **28 days** to check them and make representation for changes."

To find out more about our farm management team, contact Simon Latter on 01743 271697 or email [simon.latter@berrymbros.com](mailto:simon.latter@berrymbros.com)

## Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) From erosion problem to nature haven

A client of Berrys in Northamptonshire has restored land damaged by a broken drain, which once suffered soil erosion, water pollution and crop damage, to create a haven for nature.

Berrys submitted an application to Natural England for funding under Higher Level Stewardship (HLS) for capital works and annual management payments, which helped to manage the water-flow on more productive arable land and create a wildlife haven.

In just two years, the area became home to a variety of threatened farmland birds such as lapwing, snipe and yellow wagtail.

James Fulton of Berrys' at Kettering, who assists in the management of the farm at Cold Overton near Oakham said: "This is a great example of how we take the opportunities presented to us to improve the natural environment and optimise income to the farm business at the same time."

Berrys has an exceptional record of submitting successful HLS applications, with a focus on optimising income to the farm business whilst meeting the environmental expectations of the Scheme.

## Shooting spectacular

Berrys and clients from AMC, Brabners Solicitors, Lloyds TSB and United Utilities enjoyed a day out at the West Midlands Shooting Grounds on Wednesday 29 April 2009.

The day started with a welcome and group practice session, followed by lunch and a competition to end the day.

Winners on the day for the Flush were Andrew Connah (AMC) and Mark Lord (Lloyds TSB). The competition winner was Mike Lord (Lloyds TSB).

Peter Marsden from Brabners Solicitors said: "It was a great setting, very well organised and a thoroughly enjoyable day out."



From left: Heather Jefferies and Walter Winstanley from United Utilities

**Berrys will be attending several shows and events so please join us at:**

**NEWPORT SHOW**  
Saturday 18 July 2009

**NANTWICH SHOW**  
Wednesday 29 July 2009

**BURWARTON SHOW**  
Thursday 06 August 2009

**MINSTERLEY SHOW**  
Saturday 08 August 2009

**CHESHIRE PLOUGHING MATCH**  
Wednesday 30 September 2009

## Making the most of commercial property

The change in the economic outlook has made many people wary of commercial property transactions. For many, this is a time to set themselves up for the future with the possibility of purchasing freehold premises at a justifiable price and doing deals which would not have been possible in the boom market.

For owners and tenants it is time to review your property holdings; whilst rents may be falling, and establishing the "market" price difficult at present, there is an opportunity for all parties to look at where they are and what they want for the future. Establishing a good relationship now may pay dividends in the future.

Landlords may be wary of instigating a lease renewal now, but doing so, and accepting the current market conditions, may tie in the tenant for a longer period and increase the capital value of an investment.

Understanding the market and adopting a pro-active approach is likely to reap rewards for those who stay on top of their property matters, and Berrys' experienced practitioners are well placed to advise.

For more information or to discuss your requirements, contact Andrew Tompson on 01604 630251 or email [andrew.tompson@berrymbros.com](mailto:andrew.tompson@berrymbros.com)

## Free business advice in the North West

Berrys has won part of a £30 million contract to deliver practical business advice to help new businesses starting up in the North West, financed through the Northwest Rural Development Agency (NWDA).

Business Start Up is a key priority, with the Northwest having some 18 per cent fewer businesses than the England average, a gap of 91,000 businesses.

The project will provide intensive and specialist support for those target people seeking to set up business in the Northwest, with Berrys particularly focussing upon women and young people.

"Berrys is delighted to be awarded this project which will operate for five years throughout west and east Cheshire, Cumbria and Lancashire," said Berrys' partner Jon Stables, who tendered for the contract.

"This contract demonstrates and recognises our ability to deliver business advice not only to the rural community but also to the wider commercial business environment. Start-up businesses need to be able to compete in a wide, domestic and global market place, drawing upon the local resources available aided by the business support provision highlighted in this project," he added.

The Start Up contract was awarded to Berrys following a competitive tendering process. The project will be co-ordinated from Berrys' office at Northwich, supported by specialist personnel from the firm's other offices in Shropshire and Northamptonshire.

For advice, contact Jon Stables on 01536 412464 or email [jon.stables@berrymbros.com](mailto:jon.stables@berrymbros.com)

## Ask the Experts

**Who is responsible for the safety of farm contractors working on my farm?**



Matthew Hague, DipNEBOSH at Kettering advises:

Common and criminal law dictate that landlords and those with control of business premises have a 'duty of care' to ensure the health & safety (H&S) of all visitors. This duty cannot be transferred to another party and affects any act that could reasonably foreseeably cause harm.

Although most farmers recognise their responsibilities to the public, not all consider the implications of an accident on-farm involving agricultural, building or maintenance contractors.

Whilst no farm accident is worth the emotional pain and distress, the assumption that liability and litigation worries are effectively covered by farm insurance is often misunderstood as the need for written evidence of H&S arrangements and safe working procedures must be clearly demonstrated.

Speak to Berrys about bespoke H&S policies designed to protect your business.

**I am considering making changes to my property which is a 'Listed Building' - what does this mean?**



Paul Johnson, MA (Cantab) MA TP MRTPI at Kettering advises:

A Listed Building is included on the national register of buildings because of its national importance in terms of its architectural or historic interest.

Any works that are likely to affect the special historic fabric or character of the building, both internal and external, require Listed Building Consent.

Unauthorised works to a Listed Building are a criminal offence.

Where Listed Building Consent is required, early involvement of the Council Conservation Officer is essential, as is a good knowledge of what is expected and required.

Good advice, taken early can help make the process as painless as possible. We at Berrys have a good working relationship with the Conservation Officers in a large number of local Councils, and can help in dealing with applications.

**Am I receiving the correct amount of wayleave payments for electricity lines crossing my land?**



Peter Baron, MRICS at Northwich advises:

Electricity apparatus or lines crossing your land for the benefit of other customers will generally be secured by means of a wayleave agreement for which you should receive an annual payment.

Wayleave payments are agreed nationally and are intended, in part, to address the additional element of agricultural work generated by the presence of the electricity line or equipment.

Many of these lines have been in-situ for a number of years and the levels of payment they attract are automatically assumed to be correct, when in fact they often are not.

Wayleave payments are periodically reviewed and monies due to landowners should theoretically be uplifted by the electricity company involved when such reviews occur.

Contact Berrys for more information and advice on these issues.

## Company expansion continues

The commercial and professional services arm of Berrys has been strengthened by the merger with Bartram Commercial Properties Limited in Towcester.

Berrys now has two offices in Northamptonshire dedicated to providing advice to clients in respect of commercial property agency, valuation, and landlord and tenant matters.

Specialists at Berrys are members of the valuation panels of most major banks, and undertake valuations of a wide range of commercial and residential property for lenders, private individuals and companies.

For more information or to discuss your requirements, contact Tony Gray on 01327 359820 or Andrew Tompson on 01604 630251 or email [commercial@berrymbros.com](mailto:commercial@berrymbros.com)

*Merger celebration, from left: Berrys' trio of Nick Bowman, Adam Farnsworth and Richard Conn, the Town Mayor and Mayoress of Towcester - Cllr Charles Stanger and Janet Stanger, and Tony Gray*



## New appointments and promotions

**Sarah Reece** has been promoted to Associate Partner. Based in Shrewsbury, Sarah joined Berrys in 2003 having graduated in Rural Estate Management from Seale Hayne. She is a member of the RICS

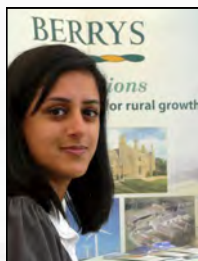


and Fellow of the CAAV. Sarah works on property valuations and sales, management and other professional services, including compensation. Sarah combines her understanding of property and passion for equestrian pursuits to provide specialist equestrian property and business services through Berrys Equestrian.



**Emily Barber** joined Berrys in July 2008 having completed her A Level exams. Since joining the Northwich Office, Emily has been assisting Graham Bowcock and Sarah Massey with the development and promotion of agency services, along with other core areas such as property asset management.

**Rakhee Karia** was appointed Marketing Manager for Berrys in August 2008. Having completed her degree in Marketing and Management, and her previous role at The University of Nottingham, Rakhee is based in Kettering and co-ordinates the marketing and promotional material across all offices.



**David Knowles** joined Berrys in Northwich in September 2008. He is working towards completing an MSc in Rural Enterprise and Land Management at Harper Adams, and is working towards full membership of the RICS. David works alongside Peter Baron in the Utilities sector of the business.

**Tony Gray** joined Berrys in October 2008 following the merger of Tony's firm Bartram Commercial Properties Limited with Berrys. Now working under the Berrys title from Towcester, Northamptonshire, Tony has vast experience in dealing with estate

development, commercial property management, and the sale and leasing of all types of commercial property.

**Joanna Smith** joined Berrys in November 2008 having graduated from The Royal Agricultural College in Rural Land Management, and is working towards her RICS and CAAV qualifications. Joanna



is involved in all aspects of rural management, with specific responsibilities for agency, planning and estate management.



**Stephen Evans** joined Berrys in July 2009 and is working towards a PgD in Rural Environment and Land Management at Harper Adams. Stephen graduated from Aberystwyth University in July 2008, and has worked on the family dairy farm and is an active member of the local young farmers club. He will be assisting Graham Bowcock at Berrys' office in Northwich.

### BERRYS OFFICES

**Kettering Office**  
01536 412464

**Northampton Office**  
01604 630251

**Northwich Office**  
01606 49200

**Shrewsbury Office**  
01743 271697

**Towcester Office**  
01327 359820

[enquiries@berrymbros.com](mailto:enquiries@berrymbros.com)

[www.berrymbros.com](http://www.berrymbros.com)

This newsletter covers topics of general interest to farmers, landowners and businesses. The articles are brief and cannot deal with the specific points of any particular case in detail. These articles must never be relied upon as giving sufficient advice to a particular individual. Professional advice must always be taken before making a decision.

**BUSINESS CONSULTANCY • PROFESSIONAL & LEGAL SERVICES • VALUATIONS  
RURAL, COMMERCIAL & RESIDENTIAL AGENCY • PROPERTY ASSET MANAGEMENT • PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT**